

# Edinburgh Festival Fringe Review – The Rap Guide To Religion \*\*\*\*\*

Baba Brinkman's primeval soup-stirring Fringe First Winner, A Rap Guide To Evolution (2009), really did have the egg/chicken first debate chasing its own tail-feathers around a mobius strip of perpetual conjecture. Either cast as the Bible Belt Devil incarnate or being celebrated as Richard Hawkins in da hood, the show toured extensively and roused both passionate and rigorous discussion. So, just to stir things up a little more, he has chosen to frame his latest conceit – or, as some will have it target, that of the origin, meanings and, heavens' forbid, contemporary relevance of Religion.

[Promising in pre-show](#) gossip that, 'I include no Theology because it is not a guide to anything but itself,' and true to his word, the entity of God as the omnipresent deity hardly gets a look in during this devilishly insightful and dazzlingly witty show (He/She may well have been taking notes mind).

A trinity of TED-talk, comedy and performance Rap, Brinkman, helter-skelters through a discourse on the evolutionary necessity of organised religions and concludes with the volatile thesis (for some, say half the planet) that it is becoming redundant. Where now the need for Classical Pantheism that informed the rise of humanism through the Renaissance?

With over 10000 religions coming and going throughout the rise of Civilisation, Brinkman's argument that is that the former declined, and continues to decline, because of the latter. Never an atheist's polemic, Brinkman's canny pluralist tolerance (just!) eschews easy targets for ridicule or moral castigation – though a brief glance at TV breaking news might

give him leave to choose otherwise. Drawing on a number of psycho/sociological research papers – no, don't run away – they are highly engaging, honestly, he illustrates, for example, that there is a direct correlation between religious observation/worship and higher birthrate within those cohorts.

That incremental degrees of misfortune leading up to disasters – the perception of harm – has correlation with a higher belief in the probability, even inevitability of divine intervention by means of explanation. Even when Science has already filled the gaps.

His Rap to Calvinist ancestor, Andrew Murray, and his fecund progeny across the Transvaal make for fascinating listening – with the closing coda riffing to the repetitive line – “I have a preacher's blood with a scientist's brain”. The closing Rap on the evolutionary importance of tribal worship and that of fertility symbolism took on a hypnotic trance as he moved between light and dark around the auditorium. It is clever, it is smart – sincere and beguilingly convincing. Provocative? Oh yes, devilishly so.

A Fringe must see.

Gilded Ballon. Venue 14. 14.30 1 hr. £10.50 (£9)