

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2016 REVIEW : The Pajama Men 2 Man 3 Musketeers **** (last chance – ends 25 August)

☒ Alexandre Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* has enjoyed many a different interpretation over the years; none, however, will be quite as memorable as the latest offering by Albuquerque's finest comedy duo, The Pajama Men.

Armed only with two plastic chairs and the musical accompaniment of Kevin Hume, Shenoah Allen and Mark Chavez' *Two Man Three Musketeers* takes the audience on an hour-long journey through 17th Century France, retelling the literary classic through their unique blend of absurdist theatre, quick character changes and occasional turn of improvisation. The result is a dizzying but nevertheless hilarious piece which will leave you aching at the sides and longing for more.

The Pajama Men are known for their ability to visualise and perform multiple characters, and never has this been better exemplified than in *Two Man Three Musketeers*, which introduces us to several memorable creations, from camp centaurs to adulterous monarchs. Stealing the show however is the Monty Python-esque Cardinal Richelieu. Allen has truly outdone himself here with this ghastly villain, whose morbid obesity is brought to life through a series of squelching movements and hideous, guttural gargling.

Both performers excel in creating a lot out of what is essentially a bare stage, and their physical performance skills are exceptional. Whether portraying the ample bosom of the Queen or a distinctive moustache, their creativity knows no bounds. What lets the performance down at times is

the pace; condensing the narrative into such a short time was always going to be a challenge, and at times the story can be lost on the audience. Similarly, the quick-flitting between characters can be a little hard to follow, and leave some of their creations feeling a little under-developed.

Thankfully, our performers are self-aware and handle the problem well – at one point they even break away from the story to perform a sketch as two members of the audience debating whether or not to stay or go. It's a cunning ploy, but one that works well, and one which sits well with the overall nature of the performance – after all, this is not a show you would need or want to take seriously. That being said, Chavez and Allen are highly intelligent performers, both in terms of their interpretive skill and their quick-witted word play – a fact demonstrated in their brilliant (mis)interpretation of an 'avant garde' duel...

If you're looking for serious drama, turn the other way. If you're looking for bizarrely brilliant, slightly childish, tears-rolling-down-your cheek-humour, catch this show before it leaves town!

Catch the Pajama Men's final performance tonight, Thursday 25th August, at the Assembly George Square Studios, 8pm.