

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 – A Joke *****

A new comedy by Dan Freeman starring Sylvester McCoy, Richard Oliver and Robert Picardo. An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman walk into a joke...

Who knew that three men, a massage table and a pair of spoons could cause such hilarity? [Dan Freeman](#), the writer of [A Joke](#), obviously did. Then again, this performance is gifted with three very talented actors. You may come for McCoy and Picardo due to their appearance in various skiffy roles but you'll be glad that Richard Oliver is in it too.



The idea, like the staging, is simple. What happens when you put an Irishman, an Englishman and a Scotsman together? Hilarity is what, with razor sharp, rapid-fire one-liners, exquisite word play and a Beckettian exploration of identity, language, preconceptions and what constitutes happiness. Do you need answers to the biggies like why are we here or is simply enjoying the journey enough? I'd definitely plump for the latter, especially having seen this play.

The play does explore the stereotypes we expect of the three nationalities. I'd say the Englishman comes off the worse though. The Scotsman role includes a gentle dig at the U.S. diaspora but there's no malice in it. All three end up feeling the butt of several jokes, proving you don't need to take yourself seriously.

All three actors are a delight to watch. McCoy is quick footed and musical. Oliver portrays the right level of anger and desire for structure even if it leads to unhappiness. Picardo is a clowning buffoon, which is a revelation given we're used to seeing him in extremely straight-laced, if not

pompous roles. They interact we together, never crowding the other and making full use of the stage. The play includes a great Doctor joke, which is almost worth the cost of the ticket alone. The show even features a song, but rather than something shoe-horned in it's part of the script and the story, as well as providing McCoy and Picardo a chance to do their best Flanagan and Allen.

I think this might be my favourite show this year at the Fringe. If it's not then it has certainly set the bar VERY high.

[Tickets here](#)