

EDMONTON JOURNAL

2 for Tea

5 stars out of 5 (★★★★★)

Every week, Jamesy has his friend James 'round for a cup of tea. This all sounds quite ordinary, but 2 for Tea is anything but.

Vancouver-based Brits Aaron Malkin and Alastair Knowles star in this extraordinary, eccentric production that blends physical theatre with comedy, improv and word play in a tale of male friendship steeped in misadventure. We first meet Jamesy, the agile, prancing love child of Austin Powers and Amadeus (minus the bad teeth and crazy laugh), flitting, shrieking and leprechaun-leaping about the stage as he prepares for company. To call him particular would be a gross understatement. Jamesy's world is one of ritual and order, of acrobatic, convoluted, ridiculous movement. He uses himself as a human measuring tape to set up his tea party, pokes out his bony little bum before placing it on his chair, snips off the tea streaming from the spout with his pretend scissors (two fingers). Knowles has created a hilarious, bizarre and quite wonderful character we won't soon forget.

His dear friend is James, a gentlemanly, kind-hearted chap who embraces the neuroses of his pal. Malkin, a strapping fellow with a shaved head who bears an uncanny resemblance to Matt Damon (I digress), grounds the show and performs amazing movement: caught in a rainstorm, running after an ambulance, drawing up a letter to the general on an invisible typewriter (to the tune of the satirical orchestral piece, *The Typewriter*). And while his character is at first deliberately outshone by his garrulous, deer-like, OCD counterpart, A & A (as J & J) conclude as a beautiful match.

Audience participation is integral to the storyline, but no need for alarm. The performers make it so enjoyable for their involuntary volunteers, you find yourself wishing you'd been called upon (this reviewer would have killed it as the Russian doctor).

2 for Tea is my favourite at the 2014 Edmonton Fringe so far and I suspect you'll love it, too, but, in the words of James, I wouldn't want to be presumptuous.

— Elizabeth Withey

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