

Press Reviews

The Sidcup Family Portrait

Star rating: * * * * *

by Alison Kerr

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What larks; what a laugh this show is. It's utterly irresistible.

When asked for directions to the correct room in the Merchants' Hall, the guy on the door declared that he hadn't seen The Sidcup [Family](#) Portrait, and didn't know what it was about. All he knew was that everyone comes out of it grinning from ear to ear and laughing.

No wonder. It's a fast-moving, very funny and very endearing cross between The Royal Tenenbaums, Bedazzled (the Pete 'n' Dud version, natch) and Monty Python.

The plot – for, contrary to what the guy on the door had been told by some punters, there is one – concerns the wacky and frightfully posh Sidcup family, the young generation of which is struggling with overwhelming debts. We know this because the opening song is the Les Misérables-like One More Debt, during the course of which we learn that the only option for Jonty, Wilbur and Stella (who, as the song goes, is “a tragic tranny at 22”) is to sell the [family](#) pile. Unless they can do what frightfully posh people usually do: borrow money from their relatives.

The trouble is that the only relatives with dosh are quite far up the family tree – and charmingly cheeky chappy Jonty (Jonnie Bayfield) has to time-travel to find the funds. And so we embark on a trip through time, stopping off in different centuries so that Jonty can go on the scrounge. Of course, as with all great time-travel adventures, turning up unannounced in another century can get you into sticky situations – unless, that is, you don't mind being burned at the stake.

This high-energy production is just the right mix of madcap physical comedy (much of that down to Stewart Agnew who, even when he's not playing a horse trying to learn to walk like a human, bounds about with a John Cleese-like gait), hilarious dialogue, extremely likable performers (Will Cowell is the third member of the trio) and moments of inspired (but logical) madness.

Special mention should go to the wine-bottle openers who have a starring role in the Salem episode; TV fame beckons.

Note to the guy on the door: go see it – you might not follow the plot, but you will understand why everyone comes out laughing.

ThreeWeeks Edinburgh

star rating: * * * *

"Rather random; but the three actors certainly had a lot of fun and so did the audience. There's a difference between shows that make no sense and shows that make no sense, and this made no sense in a good way: it was completely all over the place, yet the vague storyline was enough to keep the audience enthralled, as they were invited to be the oil paint on the canvas the performers provided. Stillborn rabbits, a naughty wood-cut squirrel, a horse that doesn't want to walk like a human: you get the idea, I think, but the basic plot is this: the Sidcup family needs more money to pay all their bills and one goes out to beg from distant relatives. There's also some music. And they mention ThreeWeeks."

