

***Three Men in a Boat* – Press Previews and Reviews**

NOW Magazine - Toronto

Review by Debbie Fein-Goldbach NOW Rating: NNNNN

This enchanting show, based on English writer Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 travelogue and adapted for the stage by Mark Brownell, is the witty account of three friends and a dog who take a boating holiday along the Thames and encounter hilarious, often self-imposed obstacles.

Actors Matt Pilipiak, Victor Pokinko and Scott Garland go beyond the eccentricities of the period to define their individual characters amidst squabbles, anxieties and parochial viewpoints. All theatrical elements - Nina Okens's meticulous costumes (with especially wonderful shoes), lighting, props and J. Rigzin Tute's whimsical musical arrangements - come together beautifully under Sue Miner's superb direction.

Now Magazine Fringe Wrap-up:

Chosen Best Production, Best Ensemble, Best Direction and Best Design

Toronto Star – “Highly Recommended”

"This is the most charming show to come out of the Fringe this year. Three English gentlemen of leisure decide to go on a boating trip down the Thames. Predictably, as none possess anything resembling useful skills, they run aground into disaster. The accents are impeccable, as are the performances. The actors fire off two hours' worth of dialogue in one, with every word crystal clear. That deserves three cheers all on its own."

Mooney On Theatre

Three Men in a Boat (Pea Green Theatre Group) 2014 Toronto Fringe Review

By Mike Anderson

A late-Victorian week on the Thames isn't my idea of a good time, but luckily I've got Pea Green Theatre Group's *Three Men in a Boat* to keep me company, and what a ride it becomes. Easily one of the finest pieces you'll see in this year's Toronto Fringe Festival, it surprised and delighted its opening-night audience (a sell-out crowd, I might add), blending clever movement, innovative text and language, and a deep knack for physical comedy into one of the best things I've seen on stage in a good long while.

The company (Victor Pokinko, Scott Garland and Matt Pilipiak) instantly ingratiate themselves with a sustained burst of energy: the room practically hums from the moment they step on stage. The

physicality of this piece is remarkable—I'm surprised director Sue Miner doesn't credit a choreographer—and clearly demands a lot of these actors. The sweat all over the stage at the end is a testament to how hard they work, but the payoff is tremendous.

Adapter Mark Brownell (working from Jerome K. Jerome's novel of the same title) hasn't made life easy for the company, either: his jokes are fantastic, but upper-class twits tend to become exhausting as they linger, and in most shows, having three of them on stage together turns rather annoying rather quickly—but not here. Brownell moves the plot at such a rapid clip (and director Miner is so utterly game to meet this pace) that, while the show may occasionally pass in a blur, this blur is such fun that all sins are forgiven. Several scenes which ought to drag—in particular a bit in a labyrinth—simply don't. The energy is consistent, and that's no small task.

Designer Nina Okens also deserves a mention: her shoes alone are a considerable gift to this production, and then there's the boater hats, the underclothes, the ascots...

But it's the cast who deserve the most applause—and goodness knows they received it. They're working damned hard out there, and they're equal to this piece's unique challenges. Three distinct characters within the same archetype, no problem. A constant thrum of movement and momentum sustained for an hour, piece of cake. With perfect comic timing and a zest for the silly, I can't find a single fault with any of them.

This show will sell out. Buy your tickets early. You have been warned. Spectacular.

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Few troupes are as veteran as Pea Green Theatre Group who arrive at the Fringe with their ninth production. An adaptation of Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 British travel journey, *Three Men in a Boat* follows fearless explorers Jay, George, and Harris as they coast along the river Thames. Sue Miner directs Victor Pokinko, Scott Garland, and Matt Pilipiak in this charming nautical adventure.

In the Greenroom Preview

<http://inthegreenroom.ca/2014/06/29/three-men-in-a-boat-pea-green-theatre-group/>

Torontoist - *** (Five Stars)**

Three Men in a Boat

Three Men in a Boat assures its audience at the outset that they will not be improved, instructed, or elevated by the performance to come—which is great, as that would get in the way of the hilarity. The humour is impeccably timed and the occasional burst of song perfectly polished throughout the play, which follows the drama-queen adventures of the titular upper-middle-class English gentlemen. The comedic influence of Monty Python and P.G. Wodehouse are evident in this adaptation of a classic comedic travelogue.

Mark Kay

ArtsVox

Three Men in a Boat

This frivolous (and the term is meant in the best way possible) farce from Pea Green Theatre is a brilliant addition to the cannon of British wit humour, a sub-genre perfected by the likes of Monty Python and Hugh Laurie. Based on Jerome K. Jerome's classic 1889 travelogue and adapted by Mark Brownell, Three Men in a Boat recounts the less-than-remarkable adventures of three listless uppercrust gentlemen whilst on a fortnight-long boating jaunt up the Thames. The trio of foppish friends are energetically played by Matt Pilipiak, Scott Garland, and Victor Pokinko, all of whom have impeccable comedic chops. Director Sue Miner keeps things tight and the pace perfectly brisk, contrasting the comically mundane details of the story with theatrical vim and vigour. Jolly good stuff.

Recent Reviews from the Ottawa Fringe:

<http://capitalcriticscircle.com/three-men-boat/>

Three Men in a Boat

Reviewed by Maja Stefanovska

Three Men in a Boat is a charming romp on the river Thames. The play, based on Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 British travelogue, is about three bored, incompetent friends. With too much money and not enough interests, they fall back on discussing the many ailments the young men fancy they suffer. They conclude that they suffer from "overwork," and so decide to take a holiday punting on the river Thames with hilariously disastrous consequences. Pea Green Theatre Group's stage adaptation is just as hilarious and witty as the novel. Scott Garland, Matt Pilipiak, and Victor Pokinko use everything from facial expressions, to body language and pacing, to give life to these absurd, entitled characters.

The performers are full of energy and director Sue Miner has choreographed the chaos to make the most out of the characters' buffoonish actions. Three Men in a Boat was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. It's clever and well-executed. The only shame is that it couldn't last longer!

<http://www.onstageottawa.com/threemeninaboatreview/>

REVIEW: Three Men in a Boat @ Ottawa Fringe 2015

June 20, 2015 by Valerie Cardinal

In this adaptation of Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 travelogue, three men (and a dog) embark on a boating journey down the Thames River. Of course, hijinks ensue.

Three Men in a Boat is absurdly delightful, through and through. Jerome is witty and humorous in his writing, and it's adapted to the stage with a lot of charming. Really, everything here positively exudes charm.

All the performers have so much energy, which is perfectly wrangled and choreographed by Sue Miner's direction. In terms of performances, Three Men in a Boat is a triumph of both physical comedy and wordy wit. It's an enjoyable show from top to bottom, one that left me smiling long after I left the theatre.

Matt Pilipiak plays our main storyteller, Jay, who obviously relishes regaling us with their tale of woe. Victor Pokinko as Jay's friend George uses his tall stature very effectively – just the slightest facial expression had me giggling. Scott Garland is a great foil to Jay as Harris, and equally as delightful at impersonating the people they meet on their journey.

Three Men in Boat took me on a journey, and my only regret is that it wasn't longer. The ending seemed slightly abrupt, and I was having so much fun that I didn't want it to end. Like the program states, bad camping stories are a universal experience, and an ageless tale; it's surprisingly easy to relate to Jerome's story even over a hundred years later.

<http://www.herdmag.ca/three-men-in-a-boat/>

"Three Men in a Boat" is a 'Bon' Voyage

POSTED ON JUNE 20, 2015 BY BRIE MCFARLANE

The second that Matt Pilipiak blew into his tuning whistle to begin the utterly British "Eton Boating Song" at the Ottawa Fringe Festival Preview Night, I was sold on this show. A stage adaptation of Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 travelogue Three Men in a Boat, the gentlemen at Pea Green Theatre Group bring you a lively comedy about three British dandies who decide one day to take a journey up the river Thames. Capitalizing on the fact that there really isn't anything more amusing than watching stuck-up Brits in uncomfortable and awkward situations, you should definitely catch Three Men in a Boat 'schooner' rather than later.

The plot is pretty straight forward: three British gents find themselves suffering from extreme ennui and as a result develop an overwhelming desire to embark on a nautical adventure. Shoving off with high expectations of what their journey will entail, it soon becomes clear that this trip will not be smooth sailing, literally or figuratively. However, the three friends and their faithful Scottish terrier, Montmorency, overcome the countless obstacles they encounter, and still find time to sing about the "jolly boating weather".

In all honesty, this show is just plain 'hullarious'. The cast of three is a strong one, in particular their physicality and vocal work. Let's start with the accents: each actor carries off the necessary Received Pronunciation in order to allude to the "public school English" these boys would have grown up learning, which is also crucial in understanding the high social status of Jay, Harris, and George (which of course is a key element to the humour of the piece). Not only that, but we are also treated to some excellent lower class accents as other characters make bit-appearances on their journey. Finally, these guys can harmonize, and I appreciate the fact that the musical numbers all feel polished and perfected.

The physicality in this show is also notable as these guys are always present and embodied in their personas on stage at all times. I thoroughly enjoyed watching the characters when they reacting in the scenes as their faces communicate a multitude of expressions and feelings. The blocking conveys a sense of play and the stage is only minimally adorned so that the actors create each scene predominantly using their bodies. Naturally, everything is made even funnier by the fact that the actors are wearing such flam'bouyant ensembles.

This show isn't looking to push any sort of boundaries or ask any deep questions. Three Men in a Boat is a light-hearted comedy that is sure to split a side or two. It runs like a well-oiled machine and features some genuinely funny performances. Another show where you should 'loch' down your tickets early (as it consistently sold out its run in Toronto last year), it's 'shore' to be a 'whale' of a time.

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CBC Ottawa Radio interview...

<http://www.cbc.ca/player/Radio/Local+Shows/Ontario/Ottawa+Morning/ID/2670190456/>

Globus Theatre Review – Kawartha Now

<http://www.kawarthanow.com/kawarthanowguide/2015/07/02/three-men-in-a-boat/>

From the Winnipeg Fringe

<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/special/fringe/reviews/three-men-in-a-boat-311593361.html>

Winnipeg Free Press – 5 *** Stars**

Howzat! Three Victorian men, a.k.a. Toronto-based actors Matt Pilipiak, Scott Garland, Victor Pokinko set sail in a rowboat down the Thames in this blazing stage adaptation by troupe co-founder Mark Brownell (with Sue Miner) of Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 British comic novel. With the 60-minute show equal parts slapstick comedy and travelogue, the trio, superbly directed by Miner, set the bar high. They do battle with a pineapple tin, pluck at a "banjolele," swill whisky and warble the "Jolly Victorian Boating Song" in tightly knit, three-part harmonies. Sartorial period costumes, including spats and caps designed by Nina Okens add further foppish charm. The plot is admittedly thin; but "Bah, rubbish" to that. Seeing

these three crackerjack actors' rich, detailed characterization matched only by their flawless physical comedy skills, including razor-sharp comic timing makes this boat float. — Holly Harris

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/three-men-in-a-boat-1.3130624>

CBC Winnipeg – 5 *** Stars**

Three Victorian gentlemen embark on a rowing trip down the Thames. Needless to say, all does not go well.

Why should you care? On opening night, each performer wrung so much comedy from every line and gesture that audience members turned to each other in amazement, laughing at each other laughing. These toffs could have you in the palms of their hands talking about a tin of pineapple. Wait a minute... they did that!

Actors Matt Pilipiak, Scott Garland and Victor Pokinko combine impeccable physical comedy, brilliantly detailed character work and the sweet sounds of three-part harmony.

Jerome K. Jerome's 1889 farce pillories the British Empire's class system. As one character croons, "I like work. I can sit and look at it for hours." The buffoonery is pure delight and the 60 minutes flew by. I dare you to not enjoy this show! Good silly fun, flawlessly executed.