

British Theatre Guide

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The Charlie Question

Jonathan Hendry

je ne sais quoi theatre

theSpace on the Mile

14–19 August 2017



January 2015 was a politically intense period. The shocking murder of staff at the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* was followed by a rally of national unity in Paris attended by millions of people including some forty world leaders.

The events threw up a lot of questions. Jonathan Hendry's fascinating documentary drama *The Charlie Question* explores many of these questions drawing on interviews with people in Paris and the UK, extracts from things written by a victim along with some fictional conversations.

What is meant by free speech and should there be limits? Several times we hear it suggested that the line should be drawn against anything causing harm though at one point a speaker says that that should mean actual physical harm rather than emotional harm or harm to an idea.

Various positions are expressed about the controversial depictions of the prophet Muhammad. We are briefly shown the cartoons; after all if we are going to talk about them it would seem useful to see what we are talking about.

A woman with an American accent condemns the killing but admits she cannot support the cartoons saying they make it more difficult to discuss Islam.

The show acknowledges the remarkable impact of the rally and its slogan of "Je suis Charlie", but it also includes critics who point out the hypocrisy of dictators such as the Saudi's marching alongside French President Hollande while they lock away and torture bloggers for having made quite trivial criticisms of their regime.

They trace the implications of the debate for issues like the "no platform policies" on campus and the dire cruelty of Katie Hopkins's reference to refugees as cockroaches.

This is an exciting, thoughtful, confident show that is well performed by a fine group of actors. It never lost my attention for a minute.

Reviewer: [Keith Mckenna](#)