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**Spanking The Monkey: The Etymology of Onanistic Euphemisms**

**★★★★**

***Royal Society of Edinburgh (Venue 431), until 28 August***

“I’m 65 this past June, which of course is a milestone age in most western cultures,” says Mike Blaha, who, as a producer, has brought the Fringe some of its most creative laughs over the last 17 years. “It did influence my decision to do the show. I wanted to perform comedy for years and just never had the balls to do it, and I realised I wasn’t getting any younger.”

And so Professor Richard Fondler (“Dick” to his friends and favoured students) comes upon us in the elegant surroundings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Dick is a visiting Emeritus Professor of Etymological Studies and his current lecture is on masturbation. To be specific, the euphemistic words and phrases we use to describe it. So, get a grip, and give yourself some pleasure by sitting in on Professor Fondler’s class. This is a unique Fringe experience. It is a genuinely fascinating and academic information-packed discourse on wanking. You really should take notes. I did. It is also a beautifully controlled piece of character acting. But, be aware, it will tickle your laughing parts like … well, like something Fondler will explain to you.

The engagingly earnest professor covers the Sunday Roast Hypothesis, the Old Testament, James Joyce, rap, and a whole Big Boy’s International Phrasebook of what we, in Glasgow, refer to as “choking the gaffer” and our enjoyment never droops. I can see a great, euphemism-packed future for the Prof, although he does cover, in the opening section of the show, the sad fact that we women just do not get the euphemistic variation that men do on the subject of rocking the little man in the boat. The show is a great big pile of wank. And I mean that in an admiring way. **Kate Copstick**