

Music  
Scottish Opera: Anamchara  
Theatre Royal Glasgow  
★★★★

If the purpose of *Anamchara – Songs of Friendship* was to embrace the universal spirit of Glasgow's "Friendly Games", it did so in the most charming of ways.

In a series of performances over the weekend, a cast of singers, dancers and traditional instrumentalists from 16 countries, together with around 100 children from Scottish Opera's Connect and Community Choruses, and the young Connect Orchestra, brought honest and innocent story-telling sparkle to this hour-long sequence of affectionate tales, specially written by Alexander McCall Smith and set to an uninterrupted wash of atmospheric music by composer Pippa Murphy.

The texts, imbued with a knowing innocence so typical of McCall Smith's winning style, more poetic than narrative, evoke worldly wisdom in the simplest but telling terms. The words weren't always audible in Friday's premiere, but this was a production by Lissa Lorenzo and Martin O'Connor that communicated as meaningfully through gesture and atmosphere.

Robbie Sinnot's set design, a multi-level construction incorporating locational video projections, perfectly facilitated the sheer busy-ness of the cast, throwing their spotlight variably on Bhanu Sharma's haunting sarod playing, and the fluid central dance sequence of Adrienne O'Leary and James Southward.

Murphy's music – mellifluous and hypnotic, if sometimes wearily static – served its intended purpose, mainly as underscore weaving a vital sense of continuity through the songs, and was perfectly pitched at the orchestra of young players. Chris Gray's unwavering musical direction lifted this whole delightful show above the ordinary.

KEN WALTON  
*Seen on 26.07.14*