

Building a Nation Review

Bella Caledonia

Mike Small

20th March 2018

Martin O Connor's *Building a Nation* explores word-loss, dialect, class, cultural self-loathing and swiftly changing identities norms and aspirations. To a packed audience at the Tramway, here acting as a neighbourhood theatre, a show at the end of a long tour is received with rapture and recognition.

The show has a definite bight and an edge to it, but it also has a wry smile at its own nostalgic self, mocking the repeated notion that "*I remember when aw this was fields*" and the mantra of things were better before.

The interplay between Scots and Gaelic and English is rapid and jumps between soulful humour and jarring observation that makes you clench your teeth in recognition.

Is this poetry? Is this theatre? Who cares? This is fine storytelling.

Much of the derision that is heaped on Bella for publishing in Scots and Gaelic is caught in this show. It's lines are drilled out by O'Connor with just enough venom and just enough of a grin:

"Speak fucking right. We live in Scotland. It's English. If yer gonnae live in this country, at least learn the language."