

Reviews: Theatre

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The Pokey Hat

Alexandra Park, Glasgow

Mary Brennan

Could it be? Yes it is. Tinny chimes jingling invitingly - it's an old ice-cream van. On the outside, anyway, for clever hands have made it into a wee travelling theatre for Grinagog's new family-friendly show, The Pokey Hat.

Time was that an ice-cream cone - skooshed with runny raspberry sauce - WAS summer for young and old all across Scotland. And it's this flavour, in every sense, that is celebrated in the larky comedy, witty songs and daft antics of a show that incorporates a strand of happy nostalgia, thanks to the memories director Clare McGarry and her team sourced from Glasgow's East End as part of Culture 2014.

Martin O'Connor's script merrily turns the pleasures of a bygone era - going "doon the watter" to Rothesay, or using empty lemonade bottles as spendable currency - into some gleefully inventive set pieces.

A puppet-show mischievously spoofs the Cinderella story in terms of a dropped cone, tenement life is gallusly evoked in contretemps between crabbit old Magrit and wee weans playing football in the back-court but maybe sweetest of all is the ice-cream parlour romance between clumsy Giorgio and smitten Sylvia: a slapstick episode where the "ecce un poco" song hints at the reason cones are called pokey-hats.

And the Scots-Italian connection gets more big licks in another song, a bravura listing of celebs from Paolo Nutini to Daniela Nardini and Nicola Benedetti.

Oliver Searle's music is, like the effervescent cast of Ross Allan, Isabelle Joss and Louise Montgomery, full of fun but - as adults will appreciate - painstaking and sophisticated with it. Truly cone-tastic (with a scoop of the real stuff as a blissful finish).

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