

The Pokey Hat ★★★★★

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With an unashamedly sentimental nostalgia for the good old days of childhood, and the performers acting as a barber-shop trio to hymn the majesty of a good ice cream, The Pokey Hat is part sophisticated site-specific performance - the company is touring it around Scotland in a converted ice-cream van - and part cheeky children's theatre. Climaxing in the sharing of cones with the audience, and highlighting how ice-cream has played a part in the history of Scotland, Mr Pokey is fun, engaging and witty.

Martin O'Connor's wonderful ear for dialect, more usually employed in his mixture of adult-themed comedy and tragedy, is perfectly pitched to entertain the young audience. With each of the characters leading scenes from their lives, in which ice cream led to social bonding, romance or plain fun, The Pokey Hat has the quality of a sketch show.

Along the way, the story takes in outrageous puns, a potted history of the Italian-Scots, an operatic seduction and the three actors jumping vivaciously between roles.

Although it would be easy for the cast and crew to rely on the promise of free ice cream, they draw the attention of the audience from the start. Sometimes getting the children involved - one becomes the inspector who promises the van a special award - they are confident singers and mimics, even becoming live action puppets and essaying a vaudeville-style dance sequence.

O'Connor's script fizzes with energy and, while the stories could come from any childhood, their wit and shape are determinedly Scottish.