

**20th June**

**Theatre review: Submarine Time Machine, Forth & Clyde Canal, Glasgow**

**Mary Brennan**

**Five stars**

A CELEBRATION of a reclaimed dear green place is unfolding along the Forth & Clyde Canal, as the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) fills the towpath between Speirs Locks and Firhill Basin with a dozen or so site-specific episodes of story, song and performance. Linking them is the history of the canal itself, a time-travelling journey inspired by the Captain's Log from a 1950's mini submarine that – according to the inventive NTS creative team – became a secret Tardis. That very vessel is now moored near NTS headquarters at Rockvillia, pictured, where its Captain (Alan McHugh, a whimsical cross between Para Handy and Doctor Who) whirls passengers between past and present, courtesy of vivid video footage screened across portholes. His humorous travelogue flags up the treats along the banks, an entertaining mix of facts and fables that track back to the 18th century and fast forward to the future, by way of the 1941 Glasgow Blitz and the 1971 League Cup victory when Partick Thistle beat Celtic 4 - 1.

If writer/director Simon Sharkey has tapped into the character of the canal – his rhyming script conjuring up the gallus myth-making that flourished as did the once-hectic traffic of Glasgow's industrial hey-day – he has also tied this unstintingly ambitious, superbly realised, project into the NTS's local community, recruiting young and old alike. It's their voices telling tall tales about sunken treasure or the wee boy who pulled the plug on the waterway. There are fishy tales with a hook of truth in them, a heart-squeezing allegory of the Hart and the Fox kept apart by social change, and a live choir offering tuneful harmonies as a reminder that communities shouldn't live divided within one city.

A couple of pleasant hours strolls you through most of the locations: details of public performances from Friday to Sunday can be found at [www.nationaltheatrescotland.com](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com).