The Pokey Hat, Alexandra Park, Glasgow

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**★★★★**

* **Allan Radcliffe**

Outdoor theatre can be a hugely risky business in Scotland, but come rain or shine, the acclaimed children’s company Grinagog are on to a winner with their new site-specific show.

Not only have Clare McGarry, the artistic director, and Martin O’Connor, the writer, hit on the charming idea of setting a play in and around an old-fashioned ice cream van, the piece culminates in the cast handing out free Crolla’s ice cream. What’s not to love?

*The Pokey Hat* (the title refers to the Scottish term for a cone) runs to a mere 35 minutes but O’Connor’s witty, irreverent script manages to take in everything from the traditional seaside holiday to the joys of young love, with an inspired musical homage to famous Scots-Italians thrown in for good measure. The cast of three — Ross Allan, Isabelle Joss and Louise Montgomery — switch between roles, turning their talents to warm, unmannered comedy one minute, puppetry the next, barbershop-type crooning the next.

The nostalgia for childhoods past that informs *The Pokey Hat* is admittedly more likely to strike a chord with parents of young children than the kids themselves but no matter. The gags, verbal and visual (and there’s no shortage), hit more often than not, and the performers take plenty of opportunities to interact with their young audience. It’s a real treat — and that’s before we even get to the free ice cream.