Theatre Review: Bottom's Dream

★★★★

Posted by Across the Arts on October 14

Anna Burnside reviews 'a dreamy way to spend a lunchtime'.

Nick Bottom, weaver and wannabe actor, bounds through the audience onto the stage. He has an important audition for the part of Ercles - which he's unsure how to pronounce - and he gives a truly woeful account of himself.

Of course, writer/performer Martin O'Connor is playing with us here. This is a scene from A Midsummer Night's Dream, separated out from the main production and reformatted into Scots.

In the original, Bottom and the other working-class characters speak in prose. O'Connor not only restores his voice to iambic pentameter but uses it to make some sharp points about under-representation in the arts.

This comes to a head when casting agent Titania Peaseblossom pays a state visit to his drama class and has him performing his Now That's What I Call Shakespeare showcase piece in increasingly humiliating ways.

O'Connor does a good deal in his 60-minute time slot. There are clever - but not arcane - Shakespearean references throughout. Debbie Hannan's tight direction makes the most of the comedy. The scene in which he pleads for every single part in the play, including the lion, is masterful.

It's cleverly put together, with snatches of harpsichord and lute music to segue the different scenes. It touches on O'Connor's favoured themes of identity and representation with a light hand. It keeps the humour of the original while adding in self-deprecating Scottish humour and class war.

What a dreamy way to spend a lunchtime.