

Review – Blood Brothers at Leith Festival

✘ *Blood Brothers*, Willy Russell's play about class divide, was first performed in 1982 at Fazakarley Comprehensive in Liverpool. It has since been transformed into a massively successful musical, boasting stars as diverse as Barbara Dickson and Melanie Chisholm.

This year the [Moving Lights Theatre Company](#) took the show back to its roots and relocated it to Leith as part of the Leith Festival. We went along to see how they did.

The show took place in The Yard's new performing space, which is upstairs above the main bar. The auditorium is long and rectangular so you can only fit about 7 chairs across the room; which means that when watching a show where the actors use the floor a lot, a degree of neck craning goes on. However, the actors made up for this by filling the room with personality and using the whole space for their performance, including the aisle and the back wall.

We don't want to give anything away for those who don't know the story, but we can say that *Blood Brothers* wouldn't work if the actors playing Mrs Johnstone and her twin sons couldn't strike the right balance between tragedy and comedy. Fortunately Jacqueline Hannan, David West and Andrew Findlater were spot on, making the audience laugh and even cry (there were some definite sniffles in the back of the room by the end!).

Vanda de Luca was brassy and empathetic as Linda, whilst Kat Folan's descent into madness as Mrs Lyons was by turns funny and sad. Meanwhile Kirsty Boyle was theatrical as the cynical narrator who oversees events with a glass of red wine and a sense of impending doom. Kirsty, who has performed many times

with the [Edinburgh People's Theatre](#) told us,

"I've never done anything like this before. I'm used to comedy so it's been challenging but fun, and the cast have got on so well."

This came across in the performance, and cast and audience alike seemed to enjoy the little touches that brought the play from Liverpool to Leith (including mentions of buckfast and the upper crust Pilrig Park area!).

The staging let the actors down a bit – there is no need to sit the audience in darkness for the complete duration of '[Mad World](#)', and it seemed unnecessary to have blackouts between every scene given there are no scenery changes. But overall this was an interesting take on the play, and Moving Lights are a company to watch as they continue to develop and grow.