

Edinburgh Festival Fringe

REVIEW – Kind ****

☒ Skildir (Catriona Stirling) has a lot going on in her life, including (but not limited to) an abusive stepfather, an army of creepy puppet sisters, and an enigmatic albino who wants to teach her about birds when she ought to be learning about sewing or household accounts. [Kind](#) is the story of how she learns to deal with all of that with the help of a mysterious birdwatcher called Sùlair (Jackson Caines).

When I read the press release for this show, several thoughts chased through my head. ‘That looks a bit intense for first thing in the morning’ (well, 10.20am, but I *am* a freelancer) was closely followed by ‘it also looks quite interesting’ and then ‘on the other hand, I’ve been burned by student theatre in the past..’

All of this seemed like an interesting enough combination to give it a look, and I’m glad I did. Kind is a watchable blend of puppetry, storytelling and physical theatre, with clever staging and an excellent cast.

Preconception number one, that a tale with themes of loneliness, isolation and child abuse might be a bit much for first show of the day, was wrong. Yes, the subject matter is a little bleak, but there is also a whimsical side to the story by way of puppetry and staging that means it is never overwhelmingly grim. There are also elements of humour and hope that alleviate the darkness of Skildir’s situation, as well as real warmth in some of the relationships – most notably that between Alice the midwife (Connie Harper) and the children she has brought into the world.

Preconception number two, that the show also looked quite interesting, proved correct. There is a lot going on, both in

terms of the story (the things that remain unsaid are as important as the things that are), and the visuals (from the rocks and cliffs portrayed by bent over cast members and jumbled ladders, to the council of birds created from household objects).

Preconception number three (a concern based on painful personal experience), that student theatre can err on the side of patchy or pretentious, was unfounded. The student cast under the direction of Stephen Bailey were great, from the seethingly angry stepfather (Justin Blanchard) to the kindly midwife, and Skildir's journey from frightened girl to furious woman is compelling to watch.

Overall this is a sweet, folky story and definitely worth a look. The only thing I would say is make sure you go to the right Zoo (Southside is the one on Nicholson Street) because if you come in late and sit at the side, you might not get the full effect.

Go if: you're in the mood for a magical Scottish fairytale this Fringe – but hurry, as their run ends on August 17th.

Venue: ZOO Southside (82)

Dates: 2-17th August 2013

Time: 10.20am

Tickets: £9 or £7 conc

Booking: 0131 662 6892 or [Fringe Box Office online](#)

Age: 14+