

Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2015 REVIEW Katie and the Mona Lisa Musical ****



Planet Theatre Productions`charming adaptation of James Mayhew`s award-winning eponymous illustrated younger readers`book is a sixty minute musical menagerie of Renaissance stealth Art appreciation and Panto audience banter. Adapted and directed by Adrian Brown with jingly catchy songs from Robert Hainault, there is an abundance of giggles and charm to satisfy old and young alike.

The neo-classical marbled stage is set. Enter a singing London Routemaster bus – destination? The National Gallery, Trafalgar Square. Katie`s first question to her Gran is, `Did Nelson climb to the top of the column because he was afraid of the lions?` A test Katie will face herself on her later Venician adventure. Meanwhile, along in the gallery, the enigmatic Gioconda smiles as Katie trills a ditty unawares that she is being followed with Renaissance retinal rigour!

Now, there`s potential for some `she`s behind you!` routines here and maybe that will come as the cast become more confident to wind the kids up. The lonely Mona Lisa steps out of her frame (on loan from The Louvre for artistic licence, thankyou) to take Katie on a tour of classical pictures. Thus begins Katie`s mission – a galloping guide through the galleries. But, can she help Mona recapture her enigmatic smile as well?

On their quest they encounter a smooth-talking charmer in St. George who takes time out from killing a seriously kitsch dragon to woo the, frankly, flattered Mona.

Perhaps the mid-show scene where Mona wants to dance with the Three Graces puppets (cleverly conceived and certainly going for the laughs) needs to engage the kids more whilst the Venetian, San Marco flying lion, *Leo, maybe needs to engage in some extra initial pant scaring? His singing gondolier tableau is a utter delight that shifts scene so quickly the delight is only momentary. A minor grumble – a small thorn in the paw, if you will! Treasure it.

There is a seaside, matinee Panto innocence to this show that climaxes with a slapstick denouement and closes with a let's all make up and be friendly homily with inevitable ensemble harmonies. Thoroughly recommended and a perfect excuse to dip in to the superb Dorling Kindersley Annotated Art where Mona, amongst others, gets the full on beauty treatment.

*Wonder if Katie's Gran remembers Leo the Lion on the television?

PS Some of the post-show kids said *****

Pleasance Courtyard Box Office: 0131 556 6550 Previews Wed 5 – Fri 7 August 2015

Tickets: £9.00 – £12.50, Previews £6.00 (no perfs Mon 17 and Mon 24 Aug)

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Venue 33

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