

Theatre REVIEW – The Broons: Maggie's Wedding *****



The Broons

As we wait for Scotland's favourite family to take the stage, it seems an incongruous setting. Perth's sleek twenty-first century concert hall is filled by traditional Scottish songs made famous by the likes of Andy Stewart. And therein lies the challenge for *The Broons – Maggie's Wedding*. How to make a family who live in a timeless yet nostalgic present work for a contemporary theatre audience? The leap from comic strip to three dimensions has presented problems for Popeye, Batman, and Superman. How will everyman Paw Broon and his family cope?

The production opens with a reassuring tone, as the Bairn introduces scenes with the kind of rhyming couplets that traditionally preface *The Sunday Post's* comic strips, and a character's head pops out of a huge cartoon "0" that forms part of the family's name. Playwright Rob Drummond and director Andrew Panton have consumed *Broons* material from all of the family's nine decades, and the characters ring true to their two-dimensional counterparts. The plot of *Maggie's Wedding* even draws on aspects of a 1970s *Broons* storyline, as Maw Broon goes to increasingly bizarre lengths to hold her family together, just the way they've always been.

As the story wends its way to its conclusion, journeying from Number 10 Glebe Street to the But'n'Ben, familiar tropes of the generation gap and misunderstandings are present and correct. At the same time, the freedom to stretch the story over an evening of theatre allows for a deeper connection with the characters than over a few panels on a Sunday morning. In one of a number of well-judged and lightly wielded pieces of self-referential humour, Tyler Collins' Hen wails, 'I'm not a

two-dimensional character, I'm a real person!'

Sure enough, the talented all-singing, dancing, and playing cast fill out their characters, being who we expect while adding an additional layer of depth. Joyce Falconer, in particular, totally inhabits the character of Maw at the emotional heart of the show.

The Broons' familiarity, and Maw's desire for the family to stay the way it's always been, suggests a very conservative arc. Yet, judicious nods to the contemporary tell a slightly different story. The Broons have had to adapt just a little on their way to the stage, and it's to their benefit. One of Drummond's best jokes of the night comes straight from the connected world of the twenty-first century, and internet dating.

The look suits them well.

The Broons – Maggie's Wedding | Touring 1-29 Oct, then at The Kings Theatre Edinburgh, 1-5 Nov [Tickets here.](#)