

Review: Shrek The Musical



I had the dubious pleasure of keeping two of my grandchildren over the weekend. When I mentioned I was going to see Shrek The Musical at the Edinburgh Playhouse on Thursday their reaction was all-too predictable. There were sniggers and an assertion that, physically, I bear more than a passing resemblance to the repulsive crude ogre.

The musical is, of course, based on Shrek the Movie which focused on an ogre named Shrek who finds his swamp overrun by fairy tale creatures who have been sent there by the evil Lord Farquaad. Shrek makes a deal with the lord to bring him a queen in exchange for the deed of his swamp. With a talking donkey, Shrek takes Princess Fiona to Lord Farquaad – only for Shrek to fall in love with the princess.

The musical version isn't exactly like the film but follows a similar premise.

The show opens with a young Shrek and his parents emerging out of the "once upon a time" pages of a huge storybook. Shrek has just turned seven, but Mum and Dad don't offer him much encouragement "It's a big bright beautiful world—but not for you," they advise. This sets the tone of the show – very funny in parts and touching in others.

Shrek is played by Steffan Harri whose theatre credits include Les Misérables, Monty Python's Spamalot and Little Shop of Horrors. Despite being an ogre you can't help but like Shrek and support the underdog.

Shrek falls in love with Princess Fiona, played with some style by Laura Main, star of BBC Television's Call the

Midwife. Aberdeen born Main also has considerable theatre experience including Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It and Alice in Wonderland. She gives a fine performance as a princess who finds true love but not in the way she had imagined.

The show has many laugh-out-loud moments and many of these are provided by the excellent Samuel Holmes who plays the diminutive Lord Farquaad. His attempts to marry Princess Fiona almost come to fruition but although he's meant to be something of a baddie, it's difficult to dislike someone who makes the audience laugh merely by looking at them.

The other main character is Donkey, played by Marcus Ayton, who also plays to the audience as you might expect in a show like this. Ayton is another actor with considerable theatre experience and the four main characters all work well together with their love for the show clearly shining through.

The show is predominately aimed at children – it's a revision of a fairy tale after all – and the kids at Thursday evening's performance loved it. Adults enjoyed it too, sometimes for reasons the kids might not understand (Lord Farquaad riding on a horse and saying 'Whoa, sturgeon' invoking deep sounding chuckles on a day the Scottish government announced tax increases for higher earners)

The production team also deserve huge credit for the set, the large dragon making its presence felt being particularly impressive.

Shrek The Musical is a fairy tale with a difference. It is a story about inner beauty and being true to who you really are. In an era where far too much importance is attached to image, it's an uplifting tale and one which is very enjoyable. The closing number of 'I'm a Believer' says it all and had many of the audience up on their feet.

Shrek The Musical is at the Edinburgh Playhouse until 7th

January 2018. Tickets [here.](#)

Edinburgh Reporter rating ****