

Review: Kidnapped, as you've never seen it before

****** A warm, joyful reimagining of the Robert Louis Stevenson classic comes to the Lyceum this April**

My father's eyes lit up when I told him I was going to see *Kidnapped*, based on a much-loved classic of his childhood from Robert Louis Stevenson, a stalwart in Scottish school libraries. The story was so influential it inspired many a street name in Edinburgh and there's even a statue of the two main characters in Corstorphine.

This highly entertaining new production from the [National Theatre of Scotland](#) is a far cry from the original boys' adventure novel, mind you. At times it's more of a camp, colourful cabaret of a show, jazzing up the tale with enough live music and humour to keep even the most reluctant theatre-goer enthralled.

The drama may be dafter but it still packs in all the swashbuckling action, the warmth and friendship that makes the original tale endure through the ages, along with the very human questions of justice, identity and belonging that gave such richness to the story.

Kidnapped follows the adventures of a young lad called Davie Balfour who, after his father dies, leaves his dull but safe home in the Borders to walk to Edinburgh in search of a newly discovered rich uncle and cast some light on his own backstory. He ends up in all sorts of trouble, caught-up in a perilous journey across the high seas, meeting dangers and strangers along the way. Penned in Victorian times, the story

was set in 18th century Scotland and lightly weaves in historic characters and events from the aftermath of the Jacobite uprising, most notably the assassination of Colin "The Fox" Campbell.

The play, co-written by Isobel McArthur and Michael John McCarthy, follows the highly successful formula of their hit show "Pride and Prejudice (sort of)". While holding on to the emotional essence and the heart-stopping action of the Stevenson classic, it adds a healthy dose of 21st century irreverence, a troop of hapless pirates more keen to pull out their musical instruments than their muskets, and a heartwarming romance between the two heroes, Davie Balfour and Alan Breck Stewart, convincingly portrayed by Malcolm Cumming and Ryan J MacKay.

The pace of the plot zips along merrily, each scene seamlessly intertwined with musical bursts from the talented ensemble. The singing, and the story itself, is led by Robert Louis Stevenson's wife Frances, a compelling character played with great stage presence by Kim Ismay. Mrs Stevenson sets the scene at the beginning then pops up regularly to take us through the turmoil. Her narration adds a fresh dimension to an old yarn, teaching us something of the lesser-known role of the author's wife in the creation of his work. She can also fair belt out a tune!

The frantic, fun and fighting scenes are interspersed with some moving and poetic moments. The opening scene of Act Two is a particularly gorgeous piece of stagecraft, acting as a reflective pause before the fast-paced action all kicks off again. Lighting, sound and set are all imaginatively used throughout to keep things moving on.

This is a superb, multi-layered production of an old adventure classic, full of heart and fun. As humour-packed as it is action-packed, it will keep you captivated and leave you with a smile on your face.

Kidnapped runs from April 11-22 at the [Royal Lyceum Theatre](#) Edinburgh



Kidnapped at the Royal Lyceum in April