

The Herald

Mary Brennan



Review: Footprints, Cottier's Theatre, Glasgow

Thursday 26 June 2014

Everything about this bright, pleasing little show harks back to a casual 'what if...?' conversation last September. Ideas for Footprints were sketched out on a Monday, and by the Friday this collaboration between contemporary dancers and traditional musicians was a racing certainty.

Come August, after this initial airing at Cottier's, Footprints will be part of the Made In Scotland showcase on the Edinburgh Fringe.

That kind of gung-ho initiative deserves applause. So too does the show itself, which can't be said to break new ground, but which is nonetheless full of charm and gentle appeal. The music - by Emily Smith, Jamie McClennan and band - is a canny mix of the frisky and wistful, moods that the quartet of female dancers, led by Freya Jeffs under the name of High Heart Dance Company, then echo in their movement.

It's a nicely balanced partnership: dance tends to thrive on live music, but it's more of a challenge when the choreography is tied into the imagery in song lyrics. It all comes together with a swagger and a bounce in numbers like Twa Sisters, or with a floating air of reverie in Jeffs's solo to Waltzing's For Dreamers where Smith's voice soars exquisitely over her own piano accompaniment.

There's fizzing fiddle music, enough to make our own feet itchy for a dance, as well as reminders of how different cultures - the performers hail from the UK, Iceland, Australia and New Zealand - can come together and create their own Footprints. At less than an hour, you're left wanting more, so fingers crossed that the Cottier Dance Project, which Jeffs has curated as part of the West End Festival, has legs to carry it on throughout the coming months.

The Scotsman

Kelly Apter



Review: Footprints - Cottiers Theatre, Glasgow

Saturday 28th June 2014

TRADITIONAL music and dance often cosy up together on stage, creating a natural pairing steeped in Scottish heritage.

High Heart Dance Company has dared to rip this pairing apart and create something far less ubiquitous.

The musical set-up is brilliantly familiar – fiddle, guitar, percussion, accordion and the clear sweet vocals of Emily Smith. What differs is the choreography being played out before them – four dancers using a contemporary dance vocabulary to translate the music and lyrics into movement.

The collaboration works for a number of reasons, not least the obvious enjoyment of the performers. This coming together of musicians and dancers, grounded in a deep respect for each other's artform, produces a combined joyfulness and shared poignancy perfectly attuned to each song's requirements.

Drawn largely from new and existing material by Smith and New Zealand-born fiddle player Jamie McClennan, the music is a clear impetus for what the four dancers have created. Broad smiles and happy legs accompany the upbeat Fun with Colin, while more poetic moves bring Sower's Song to life.

The undisputed highlight, however, is a spellbinding rendition of Richard Thompson's Waltzing's for Dreamers. Smith (a former winner of the Young Traditional Musician of the Year award) sits at the piano, giving bittersweet voice to this achingly beautiful homage to lost love. Meanwhile a tender, graceful duet somehow manages to make the moment even more precious.

Part of the Cottier Dance Project, a new kid on the Glasgow dance block, Footprints is heading to the Edinburgh Fringe, where you would be advised to catch it.

FestMag

Lucy Ribchester



Review: Footprints – Lauriston Halls, Edinburgh Fringe

Wednesday 13th August 2014

A refreshing contemporary update to Scotland's heritage of music and dance

This Celtic-flavoured dance and music fusion show is a collaboration between High Heart Dance company, singer Emily Smith and multi-instrumentalist Jamie McClennan and his band, whose folkish sounds make a beautiful foil for the simple, graceful choreography. It's showing as part of the Made in Scotland programme, and as a tribute to the country's dance and music heritage with a distinctly contemporary feel, it makes a great way to spend an afternoon hour.

A four-strong dance team unfolds neat formations and airborne partnerings with clean swishing style, turning patterned swirls into hints of Triskeles and other ancient designs.

The phrasing is woven smoothly into the music, picking out motifs and making shapes out of tunes. The result—combined with the casual turquoise and aquatic blue costumes—is extremely pretty and lively.

It's nice when the stories of the music give relationships to the dance, as is the case in the tale of "twa sisters", leading to a competitive and playful wrestle. Also great is the idea of pairing Scottish folk music with something other than ceilidh or country dancing: the smoothness of it provides a refreshing modern feel and gets inside those sweet lilting tunes.

It would be disingenuous to say the folk music is the real star—the whole thing works so beautifully—but Jamie McClennan's fiddle playing is sometimes distractingly brilliant. Whether that's a good or bad thing you'll just have to go along and see.