

The Stage ****

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2016/the-polar-bears-go-up-review-at-unicorn-theatre-london/>

The Polar Bears Go Up review at Unicorn Theatre, London – ‘a sense of wonder’

by [Duska Radosavljevic](#) - Apr 21, 2016

If you have a toddler you might find yourself surprised by what captures their interest: dinosaurs, rockets, talking pigs seem to be the new generations’ baffling favourites. Judging by the reception of Fish and Game’s recent work, polar bears are not far off either. In the follow up to their previous hit, The Polar Bears Go Wild, MacAskill and Manson have devised a new exciting adventure for their two feisty heroes. We don’t know their names and they don’t even say a word for the entire show, but they have winning smiles, and somehow, by stealth you find yourself in their thrall even if you happen to be a sleep-deprived adult. The piece, aimed at two to five year-olds, abounds in the kind of humour that, at times, only toddlers seem to understand; it is delightful without being twee, dynamic and engaging without ever being loud, and imaginative without being far-fetched. Quite simply, it combines thoughtful attention to detail with some gentle clowning in order to stimulate and entertain.

Theatrically too, the world of the piece evokes the Arctic without ever feeling too cold. The blue and the white colours of the set only serve to enhance the alluring effect of the one key image which serves to prompt the Bears’ quest – a shining star. Though it does not have ground-breaking ambitions, the show excels in many ways. Its wonderful simplicity keeps even the youngest audience members engaged (in case you need to take the younger sibling along) – all this and it has rockets too.

Verdict

Stealthily enthralling adventure delivered with charm, wit and a sense of wonder



The Herald ****

http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts_ents/stage/14505413.Theatre_review_The_Polar_Bears_Go_Up_Platform_Glasgow/?ref=rss

Theatre review: The Polar Bears Go Up, Platform, Glasgow

Mary Brennan

LAST time we encountered this gung-ho pair of polar bears, they were going wild – wild as in exploring icy wastes, not as in going on the rampage. Our bears – Eilidh MacAskill and Fiona Manson – are much too affable to maul anything beyond a toasted sandwich. They might well have stayed home, having daft tussles over who was in charge of the biscuits, if the Big Golden Balloon hadn’t popped out of a box and into their lives... albeit briefly. Its skywards

escape from an unwary paw meant only one thing: our bears had to get into intrepid mode again, and go UP!

Even if they hadn't pursued the errant star-shaped balloon – eventually building a rocket to get them high enough – the Polar Bears would still prove an entertaining double-act for young audiences (ideally age 2 - 5). There's no spoken text, but the well-paced mix of episodes that establish the relationship between the small, happy-go-lucky one (Manson) and the taller, somewhat bossy-boots Big Bear (MacAskill) are crammed with merry visual gags – think Eric and Ernie in furry costumes, dabbling in one-up-man-ship gambits, or finding mirth in misunderstandings. What this Fish & Game/Unicorn London production – fine-tuned by director Lee Lyford – does brilliantly is channel sophisticated thinking into simple, tot-pleasing antics. Visually, it's a stream of imaginative surprises. Wee doors open in towers of boxes, props emerge, including two teeny white bears who scale the mighty heights – by cable car, plane and rocket (on an emblematic wall chart) – while MacAskill and Manson breezily create the fabric, and vehicles, of a high-spirited journey into space. Never mind Tim Peake – these bears playfully defy gravity on-stage.

EdinburghGuide.com ****

<http://www.edinburghguide.com/reviews/theatre/thepolarbearsgrouponscottishstorytellingcentrereview-16806>

The Polar Bears Go Up, Scottish Storytelling Centre, Review

By Irene Brown - Posted on 02 June 2016

Some twittering birdsong and gentle music welcomes the tiny tots and their parents/carers to this latest adventure from the two benign Polar Bears who went wild with their last show. A series of blue cubes and cuboids sit on a stage striped here and there in pink and orange before the two friendly ursine characters start their day by sniffing and scratching each other before breakfast. When a mysterious box arrives at their door, it creates enormous curiosity involving some mystified knocking on the sides of the box (bringing the spontaneous shout "Silly Polar Bears!" from a wee chap in the audience). Turns out the box contains a shiny star balloon but no sooner have the three made friends than the balloon flies off. So off the Bears go on a quest to get it back.

Their journey to be re-united with their new pal means some inventive thinking of how to get from earth to the sky with no wings. With perfect co-ordination throughout, they move higher and higher from a trampoline to a tree; from a high rise lift to a cable car; from a plane to a rocket all delightfully created with hints of magic and illusion.

This visually entrancing piece of children's theatre, done to some fine piano sounds, is perfectly pitched at its age range as the infectious helpless giggles that it attracts prove. Children love jokes about body noises and there are plenty in this otherwise silent show with beautifully choreographed miming and dancing worthy of Laurel and Hardy along with their own signature white furry bum swaying.

With a lovely inclusive ending *à la Slava*, this charming, playful show holds the deeper message that if something extra special comes in to your life it pays to go out of your way to keep it there.

This is the last leg of the deaf friendly show's 2016 UK tour that started on 6 May at Perth Horsecross.

TheMumble.net ****

<https://mumbletheatre.net/2016/05/21/the-polar-bears-go-up/>

The Polar Bears Go Up

Script:★★★★ Stagecraft:★★★★ Performance:★★★★
Inquisitive bears travel near and far
To reclaim fast ascending golden star

Framed within a proscenium arch of green and blue rectangular boxes which tower over a black floor-cloth laced with orange and pink lines to suggest a map, a journey, an awfully big adventure, a polar bears' picnic of cornflakes on toast watered down with an endless supply of tap water is rudely interrupted by the ringing of a doorbell and the unexpected delivery of a big brown cardboard box which contains ... Is it a bird, is it a plane? No, it's a golden star on which to hang your dreams on.

The Polar Bears Go Up, a co-production between Unicorn Theatre and Fish and Game, and sequel to the latter's highly successful co-production of The Polar Bears Go Wild with Macrobert Arts Centre, tells the story of two playful Tornassuks (the name Greenlanders use to describe polar bears, meaning "the master of helping spirits") who out yawn and out sniff, out reach and out jump, out fly and out trampoline one another in their combined but competitive efforts to reclaim the golden star which has escaped their grip and lodged itself in a cotton wool cloud.

Using the minimum of props and maximum of creativity, the two creators and performers (Fish and Game co-founder Eilidh MacAskill and her ever-smiling collaborator Fiona Manson) are a sort of inverse Vladimir and Estragon in that rather than stay put and talk about going, they are forever on the move and bar a few sniffs and belches never utter a peep. Though their personalities and relationship are very similar to their Waiting For Godot counterparts in that slapstick and petty quarrelling is the order of the day. And Eilidh, being the taller of the two by a good twelve inches plus VAT, is curmudgeonly and direct, though never cruel; whereas teensy-weensy Fiona is warm-hearted and amiable, if a tad mischievous.

Despite the absence of words, the target audience of two to five year olds and their accompanying parents were captivated from beginning to end because the characters were likeable, the performers engaging, the show jam-packed with Laurel and Hardy visual gags, moments of surprise and suspense, and there were ample opportunities for the children (both young and at heart) to join in both physically and vocally. None more so than at the

end when, after the well-deserved curtain call, a second doorbell rang and – without giving too much of the plot away – the audience had a ball!

Reviewer : Peter Callaghan

Londonist ****

<http://londonist.com/2016/04/review-extraterrestrial-fun-for-under-5s-in-the-polar-bears-go-up>

Review: Extraterrestrial Fun For Under 5s In The Polar Bears Go Up

In the Unicorn's latest show for under fives they welcome back the world's friendliest polar bears after their first outing last year, in *The Polar Bears Go Wild*.

The Polar Bears Go Up is intelligent, absorbing and inclusive. A gentle story told entirely through mime this is the perfect antidote to noisy panto.

Creators and performers Eilidh MacAskill and Fiona Manson really know their very young audience. An energetic double act, they introduce themselves and their story very slowly with precise movements, playful visual jokes and bright smiles.

At first we just watch them sniff each other, scratch their backs and then progress to making breakfast. Nothing is rushed, the actors taking their time to enjoy each sequence which allows the kids to do the same, getting used to these strange fluffy creatures complete with face make-up and ski-goggles on their heads.

As every teacher knows, the best way to attain silence among children is be quiet yourself. By choosing not to talk at all, MacAskill and Manson set the tone in the room. It also means that the very youngest aren't left behind as the pair take them on a carefully choreographed journey into space.

A sense of joyful discovery runs throughout this delightful piece, the quirky ideas, set surprises and cheeky grins of the polar bears ensuring that little minds don't wander. In fact when we saw it, one child in the front row was so engaged she kept trying to join them in their space ship.

Unflustered by such distractions, MacAskill and Manson react enthusiastically to the kids' excitement, often getting in a knowing look meant only for the adults.

The polar bears discover the huge world around them with a childish sense of wonder, It's no surprise tickets to join them on their adventures are selling out quickly.

A Younger Theatre ****

<http://www.ayoungertheatre.com/review-the-pola-bears-go-up-unicorn-theatre/>

Review: The Polar Bears Go Up, Unicorn Theatre

If you're under five, this is your show. If you've by far reached your pre-prime, then you can rejoice at how simple life once was with *The Polar Bears Go Up*. Following last year's success *The Polar Bears Go Wild*, Fish and Game bring their cheeky polar bears back to the Unicorn Theatre to take little ones for another soaring adventure. This time a star-balloon has run wild and the polar bears go above and beyond – including using spaceships and trampolines – to get it back.

Eilidh MacAskill and Fiona Manson's performance is fun, entertaining and delightfully carefree as we follow the polar bears reaching for the stars. Being a silent performance there's a lot of cheekiness in character, movement and play with music which sends the little audience members into a fit of laughter. Their timings are excellent and there's an admirable calmness about the pace and confidence of their performance that I certainly would have lost five seconds into showcasing my best polar bear for two school classes. The design is simple and cleverly multi-functional with lots of tricks and delights wowing us on the way. Using very few but effective props we are imaginatively transported from a cable car to the moon and back to the Arctic, all with a charming underscore and lots of comical effects along the way. The costumes are a cute mix of bear and human with the appropriate explorer goggles (all polar bears have these, right?) and it's evident from the very beginning that little ones will absolutely adore them.

The Polar Bears Go Up is a sweet little adventure with an interactive and inventive set, lots of charm and a naughty star-balloon every child wants to get their hands on. As an adult, it's warming seeing their wild responses and cheers along the way, though the show perhaps lacks a deeper theme for us to really get our teeth into. That said, I would have probably given my left arm to be in a room with one of these polar bears when I was four. And I certainly would have fought beyond the stage for that star-balloon. The only shame was the teachers' responses to it – I find it uplifting that children at such a young age can be so engaged in live performance, and that they cheer and laugh and comment throughout when they're involved in an engaging piece like this. But having five teachers hissing at you for enjoying a piece of art surely won't set a great example. It sadly shows that it's not the children who need to open up their eyes to theatre and its importance – it's their grumpy minders who can't keep their eyes off their smartphones.

The Upcoming ****

<http://www.theupcoming.co.uk/2016/04/22/the-polar-bears-go-up-at-the-unicorn-theatre-theatre-review/>

The Polar Bears Go Up at the Unicorn Theatre

The Unicorn Theatre, known for its imaginative stagings for children, is host to Fish and Game's latest creation, *The Polar Bears Go Up*. Fish and Game's productions seem to be resounding favourites for the little ones, as they follow up from their previous show, *The Polar Bears Go Wild*.

In their newest captivating show we follow the two animated, smiley polar bears on their journey up – quite literally! When they are going about their day in the Arctic the two answer the door to find a shiny gold star balloon. As this is probably a rare find in the snowy North Pole, the two bears are very sad when the balloon floats away. Teeming with a sense of adventure they venture upwards to retrieve it.

The piece is concise and engaging enough to keep the whole audience engrossed in the frosty scene – including the sleep deprived adults. Intended for children aged two to five, the production is colourful, animated and silly, without being over the top. MacAskill and Manson manage to be bright and entertaining for the 50 minutes without speaking a word. Instead they effect wonderful use of props like milk bottles, cutlery and box shakers to produce a percussive instrumental, as well as comic and bumbling movements to personify the nameless, friendly polar bears.

The light clowning and other-worldly adventure undoubtedly hold attention, which is no small feat in a small theatre full of excitable toddlers. Fish and Game excel with a brilliant story and lovable characters.

Verdict: ★★★★★