

Reviews

The Bockety World of Henry and Bucket

Draíocht, Blanchardstown, Dublin

“Do you know what ‘bockety’ means?” Henry asks, as the audience waits in the foyer. “It’s something that’s a bit broken, and a bit wobbly, but still works.”

Henry and Bucket (John Currivan and Paul Curley) are companions consigned to life’s scrapheap. The backdrop is a mountain of plastic bottles, tins and cans and the foreground is littered with an assortment of objects: ladders, irons, boots, cables, a steel bucket, a plastic canister, a fridge-freezer, something resembling a patio heater, and a disembodied car bonnet. In front of the car is an odd-shaped lump covered with a sheet of plastic, which stretches into life as first the efficient and chirpy Bucket, and then the shambling, shower-shrinking Henry emerge and start their day.

This Barnstorm production is perfectly pitched. From the first bleep of Bucket’s alarm, the audience (it is for children aged four and up) is in his raggedy pocket. Designer Carol Betera has made ingenious use of the discarded materials that define her world, from a makeshift mirror to a pet mouse caged in dishwasher entrails. A radio aerial operates as a radio, a toothbrush and a metal detector, with which they make a meal of foraging, cooking and eating breakfast. The play is written and directed by Sarah Argent, and the script is spare but pristine. The

relationship is told as much by gesture and expression and by the pair’s perfect sound effects and timing, as by words.

The interplay of music and action is glorious, especially in the pair’s rhythmic rain dance; they try to trap the drops as a piano plinks and plonks. Jack Cawley’s tunes soar in the car, with Bucket driving and Henry navigating- “Up!”- until they leave gravity behind and the stars rocket past. And when the two break their rules, trade accusations and pack up their troubles, the soundtrack to Henry’s sulk, sitting in the car with the doors locked, is a delight.

Henry and Bucket’s day lasts about 40 minutes: in that short time we see many objects and a friendship that are broken and wobbly but still work, and that are infused with truth, humour and humanity. If your life turns to rubbish, you know who your friends are.

Touring until April 26th. See barnstorm.ie.

Joyce Hickey