

**The Herald- JULY, 2004**

### **Fairy Tale - July 2004**

Louise and Amy are sisters playing in a Neverland of innocent games and endless fun. As big sis, Louise moves away from childish things; it's Amy who suffers. After her inexplicable disappearances the games stop for everyone Louise most of all.

Children vanishing into thin air has become prime-time on a worryingly regular occurrence these days. Its brave, therefore that an otherwise light and fluffy crowd-pleasing Scottish Youth Theatre summer season (complete with glossy programme plastered with politicians' ugly mugs - why?) takes a troublesome theme and its starting point for a journey into self-discovery and healing.

Beginning with members of the cast regaling the tale of Three Billy Goats Gruff, and other bedtime classics to the audience in Jackanory style, we are soon led down a black hole of magical realism. Here, Louise becomes a princess locked up in towers of her own making while a decidedly huffy White Rabbit calls the shots, princes become bingo-hall karaoke kings, three little piglets morph into a trio of playground bullyies and a stepmother turns out to be not so wicked after all.

Co-devised by director Carter Ferguson and a cast of 26, who treat the piece as an impressionistically choreographed mediation, Fairy Tale may top and tail with intimations of cloying self-help schmaltz, but its dark plunderings of the teenage psyche makes from for far from comfy viewing. Even the happy ending isn't guaranteed forever. With not a bad apple among the performers, these are realistically ambiguous signals being sent out from an utterly serious piece of work that goes way beyond the lip service paid to the theatre for young people by our political bogeymen.