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Dispatches from The Fringe - Way Back Home almost gets there

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Way Back Home

Louise White

Way Back Home

Rating: ★★★★★

Louise White's ambitious, multi-disciplinary *Way Back Home*, features some incredible visuals, an original composition and a charming, central story surrounding two show stealing performances. Less a case of too much of a good thing, it's more a case of too much of too many good things. Employing dance, song, projections, music, theatre and artwork, the whole shines at moments but ultimately suffers a lack of balance.

Way Back Home touches upon many themes, but its theme of loss dominates. Loss of innocence, of parents, of home, of childhood, of future and past, of place and time. All this is loosely held together around the fairytale story of Cuán White, a little boy trying to find his way home. Along the way he meets the mad woman who screams, the lady by the lighthouse who gives him red boots and a man alone at night who promises to help him. Superbly supported by a series of picture

book paintings projected onto a screen by artist Clare Henderson, this is the most satisfying and cohesive section of the work.

Interspersed throughout this are voice recordings and projections, singing, improvisations and dance. As a result *Way Back Home* often becomes too busy and the links between its central story and its other, disparate ingredients doesn't always gel. A series of improvisations, where all four actors, trapped within signature gestures, improvised on a theme provided by one of the children, seemed restrained and lacking invention. Text projections accompanying the voice recordings of young children and the dance sequences of Justine Cooper attempted, successfully at times, to open up spaces that drew the audience in deeper. Alma Kelliher's subtly textured composition, at times haunting at others tender, also added layers of richness. But sound was problematic and Iseult Sheehy's singing often struggled against the dominance of the music. The quietly spoken dialogue of the young performers was also lost on occasion too. Throughout, performances were solid, but veterans Simon Boyle, Justine Cooper, Kate Nic Chonaonaigh and Iseult Sheehy played second fiddle on the night to the young Cuán and Oscar White.

In its multi-disciplinary approach, *Way Back Home's* juxtapositions don't always work as well as they could have. At times playful, it's never quite playful enough and felt strangely stiff at times. In its final scene, in opening itself up to seeming to be about everything, it risks appearing to be about nothing. But the final image suggests a tongue in cheek wink at the audience that perhaps they should not to take it all too seriously.

Charming, haunting and ambitious, if *Way Back Home* doesn't quite get there, it is brave in its ambition, takes some serious risks and makes some interesting and delightful stops along the way.

Way Back Home runs at The [Project Arts Centre](#) until September 14th. Doors open at 7.00 p.m.

Tickets are 14.00 euro.



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