

Musical Mystery Tour

Hilary James & Simon Mayor - Live reviews

The Daily Telegraph

"Splendid musical fun."

Rock 'n' Reel

"Excellent, funny and entertaining. The playing is jaunty and incredibly funny."

Capital Radio's UK for Kids

"How refreshing to listen to lively and original songs written and performed for children by very good musicians. The songs are catchy and very funny. Adults will enjoy listening as much as the children."

The Stage

Multi-instrumentalists Hilary James and Simon Mayor are instantly engaging characters who build an easy rapport with audiences - communicating clearly but never patronising their young charges.

The duo's love of music comes across strongly, and they educate the children in the history and composition of the instruments - such as violin, mandolin, guitar and mandobass.

The songs are deceptively simple, and deeply silly. There is a gleeful innocence about the melodies and rhymes. Fresh Fried Fillets of Fresh Fried Fish in particular catches the imagination.

Throughout the show, James and Mayor encourage the children to ask questions about the music with as much openness as they encourage them to sing and to join in with the actions.

At the end, you could see the little ones brimming over with enthusiasm for music, and a few of the parents rueing the day they gave up learning the violin.

Alison Freebalm

The Scotsman * * * *

I have never seen anyone explain the workings of a mandobass - essentially a cross between a mandolin and a double bass - to children before. Simon Mayor and Hilary James have the remarkable ability to do so, while putting across ideas about sound and rhythm in a way that very young children can understand. And they are entertaining with it.

The pair lead the audience smoothly into sing-a-longs, deftly dispelling any possible shyness or lack of confidence - particularly on the part of accompanying parents - with the help of large, colourfully decorated songsheets, pre-song run-throughs and plenty of jokes.

Animal noises, tuneful tongue-twisters, ludicrous limericks and timely jiggling of various body parts add to the fun as the duo run through their tour of musical styles from around the world, from swaying calypso odes to fruit, to thigh-slapping Russian [style] folk nonsense verse about fat flamingoes and their taste for fillets of fish.

Mayor and James are adept both at handling the interjections of enthusiastic audience members and at spinning out their curiosity. They slip in a few simple question and answer sessions and even allow youngsters to show off their strong-arm abilities by inviting volunteers to lift the mandobass. The only worry for parents is that the children might want a mandobass of their own.

Katrina Dixon