

Lochaber No More...Braemar
"A history in story and song"

For years I've casually thrown a glance at a large etching print of Bonny Prince Charlie in a crofter's house smoking his pipe, a very casual Charlie on the run. It sits against the wall of my lounge room with a few other old wall hangings but used to hang on my father in law's house in Glen Ines NSW. Celtic Country!

Bonny Prince Charlie as most will know was the anointed head of the Jacobite rebellion that attempted to return a Stuart king to the thrones of England and Scotland. My mind goes to the pattern of tartan, how they were buried for years not allowed to be worn. Only in the dark mists of Scotland hidden, could one see and hear the story of that time.

As the drums are sounding and a fiddle plays the narrator describes in steps what actually happened. If you've a liking for male tenor voices singing in the darkness of a theatre with only flashes of colour that draw the killed silhouettes of those voices against the backdrop, then you'll love "***Lochaber No More.***"

My experience is The National Celtic Festival Portarlinton and from start to finish I'm locked into my seat in the semi darkness of the theatre and so smoothly the narrator Alyson Fearon who wrote the narrative and the band Braemar illuminate my history lesson in song, music and verse.

I can hear the breath of others in the audience and tut-tuting of what's gone before, like a volcano bubbling beneath the surface.

They've been waiting for this moment.

The room is a sea of Celts willing the performers on as the story expands and explodes like the clashing of the two, Scots and English swords in the cold morning of Culloden's demise.

There's a deep breath after each song and the voices soar. Eddy Lewis & Marc de Rijk work seamlessly, likewise their guitar accompaniments. Marc's harp-like picking sits plaintively against the silence to fade as the narrator tells more of the story - how London and the throne were only moments away! Eddie Lewis' voice fills the room reverberating his Scots trill and drawl only to seduce the listener with his soft note!

The sound of Bodhrans (Irish drum) boom against the walls and ceilings willing the dead to reappear as the smoothness of the songs and music come to a close.

Oh! the ache of the fiddle and pipes as they draw the last breath from chanter and silenced bow, drums and guitars - like the Jacobite rebellion.

I look at my watch and realise as I stand with the rest of the crowd that I've been sitting for nearly one hour and a quarter. But the enthusiasm of we, the audience, delivers the final note, a standing ovation for such a brilliant show.

We collectively let our breath out to cheer and clap this wonderful piece of theatre from the band Braemar with Alyson Fearon as narrator and Colin McLeod on fiddle and Geoff Jones on pipes.

I went back for more!

Vince Brophy