

Kids' fest explodes with delight

Portofino Ballade

Saturday at 1:30 p.m and 3:30 p.m. (in German); Sunday at noon and 2 p.m.

AH, NOW THIS IS A CHARMER FOR kids from seven on up. No explosions, no fireworks, just a quiet, gentle story told by Swiss writer/performer Peter Rinderknecht. But the telling of it is mesmerizing and kept my little guest leaning forward, eyes wide, not wishing to miss a moment. When Rinderknecht, in a red velvet coat ("Here. Feel it. It's real velvet."), starts playing his big concert bass, his performance is interrupted by a tiny cuckoo that pops out of the instrument and cuckoos the time.

The musician confesses he's always imagined a little man living inside who, on the hour, dresses up like a cuckoo and does what cuckoos do. And when Rinderknecht peeks inside the bass, that's exactly what he finds: a little old man sitting at a table with a tiny, tiny coffee cup before him. There's a wee harmonium with a miniscule candelabra on top. But the biggest surprise is that the old man is not alone. And here the story begins. A man and his son are at odds, barely speaking to each other. What to do, asks a worried Rinderknecht? And so begins the little man's fantasy of breaking free, taking his son to Italy, swimming in the sea, drinking cappuccino in a Portofino sidewalk cafe. Rinderknecht plays a fine concert bass and as he plucks, he's tugging on your heart-strings, too. Decidedly European, definitely a "must see" for imaginative children.

Vancouver International Children's Fest

At Vanier Park until May 24

Tickets: 604-280-4444

Reviewed by Jo Ledingham

Portofino Ballade (8 years and up)

Peter Rinderknecht's charming and poignant musical puppet theatre show may be a little long and slow-moving for some children.

The story centres on the strained relationship between a father and his son and how they find common ground.

Rinderknecht is an engaging performer as well as a talented musician. His use of a standup bass as both a musical instrument and a set is inspired.

Runs: Today at 9:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m., tomorrow at 12:30 and 7 p.m. and Saturday at 2:30 and 7 p.m. Tickets for all shows available through Ticketmaster or call the box office at 294-7482.

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Portofino Ballade



60 minutes
Ages 8 & up

SWITZERLAND

Theater En Gros et
En Detail Switzerland
Puppetry / Theatre

"A miraculous and poetical play for children. You won't believe your eyes when you discover a whole apartment with a spacious bathroom and fully functioning coffee machine and refrigerator inside the double bass...it's simply magical."

Landbote Winterthur

Presented in English, French, Spanish, and German It's all in

the timing! Mr. Cuckoo pops out of the clock on the hour, every hour, year in and year out. That's his job. His son hangs out in the back room, bored to death. He certainly doesn't want to take over his father's mundane job. He wants to make his own way in the world. Peter Rinderknecht invites us into the land of "what if?" What if a double bass could open like pop-up book? What if cuckoos were men? Our producer saw this show at the Edinburgh Festival and was so enchanted, she has been trying to bring it to Canada for two years. One of Europe's most gifted performers tells a poignant story of family and freedom and what they really mean. Don't miss this festival highlight!

Themes related to Curriculum:

Music - expressions, harmony, melody, form, rhythm, performance.

Health - relating to others, self-understanding. *Science* - devices that

move, natural & human-constructed materials *Art* - composition,

craftsmanship, appreciation. *Language Arts* - explore thoughts, ideas,

feelings, & experiences; attentive listening & viewing. *Drama* - speech,

improvisation/acting, technical theatre. *French* -

experience/communication, language. *German* -

experience/communication, language. *Spanish* - experience/communication, language.

