

for Buddhist shrines. Where Basho seeks out the grave of a poet, his Scots counterparts visit Raasay in the company of the poet, Meg Bateman, to pay homage to Sorley MacLean. There were other literary echoes. Boswell and Johnson's path round the Western Isles

led to a tree at Dunstaffnage where the poet wrote "the trees are moving/but it's just the wind". At each of their 53 stops they brewed a different tea, a ritual that was not only a homage to the Japanese origins of their odyssey but the material for a series of tea

*Alec Finlay and Ken Cockburn's year-long project to create a word atlas of Scotland ends with a festival of tea and poetry at the Hidden Gardens at the Tramway in Glasgow on Sunday. [www.theroadnorth.co.uk/](http://www.theroadnorth.co.uk/)*

## Imaginate

### MISS OPHELIA, TRAVERSE

★★★★★

### MR BENN, BRUNTON THEATRE

★★★★

### FIRST LIGHT, NORTH EDINBURGH ARTS CENTRE

★★★

### MARY BRENNAN

AT first, Miss Ophelia is an adorably cute, funny, whimsical show full of appealing touches to captivate the 6-plus age group. The table-top arrays of miniature buildings, tiny props and teensy figures have young fingers itching to play with them, so it's kind-hearted of the Dutch company, Het Filaal, to

hand out free shadow puppet kits at the end. By then, thanks to the gentle, genial performances of Ramses Graus and Mirthe Klieverik, we've been drawn into the bitter-sweet life of stage-struck Ophelia. We've watched her age into lonely, homeless unemployment and find unexpected fame and happiness, thanks to the unwanted shadows who become players in her travelling puppet-theatre. Then the shadow of Death arrives, and takes Ophelia into the light. It's a hugely moving and poetic treatment of a potentially grim conclusion.

It's 40 years since the cartoon adventures of Mr Benn were first televised. This lovingly staged adaptation by Tall Stories (England) delights a whole new generation of youngsters aged 4-plus when the bowler-hatted business-

suited Paul Curley steps out of his ordinary life and, courtesy of a magical changing room, into some extraordinary adventures. The songs are jolly, as are the cast. A reminder of how a little escapist fantasy can enliven the way we see the world, and ourselves.

Matt Addicott's Starcatchers production, First Light, offers tinies a bit of a treat for eyes and ears alike. Inside a white tent, Dawn brings in the day – complete with soundscape – before leaving the agile Man in the Moon to dance us through the starry night. They finally meet in a fleeting duet that, like the details of the design and the music, creates a simple story for tots to follow and enjoy. There's a kind of pleasing serenity about First Light that makes the little tent feel special.

*Sponsored by Bank of Scotland*