

Performance

BUTTERFLY, TRAMWAY, GLASGOW

MARY BRENNAN

★★★★★

THE buffet's laid out and waiting for the guests – that's us, by the way. A pay bar sits at the other end of the hall while, overhead, countless glitter balls wink enticingly. Heather is tweaking plates of sausage rolls. Her sister Gail's children – livewire Lauren, 11, Blair and Ellen (eight-year-old twins) – are already bouncing about among the balloons on the dance floor. Gail's parents, Robert and Patricia, are mingling, chatting. It's somehow so familiar: we've probably all been there – the wedding, christening, anniversary “do” that brings different generations together to celebrate.

So what is it that Gail and the others are marking with this party, and why are we invited to join in? Director Richard Gregory would say we're here to observe a real family whose memories, actions and relationships are not so much an exposé of their personal lives but more a reminder that ordinary things can become extraordinary if you take time to think about them.

The personal connections and closeness are moving in ways that no professional actor could match. Because, regardless of the on-screen videos of parties past, the cleverly appropriate music tracks, the occasional choreographed moments – all tools of the theatrical trade – none of what you get is “an act”. For sure, it's a risk, but from the moment Ellen chirpily talks us into her home, this piece has genuine heart, humour, honesty and love. Take a hankie and someone to hug.