



ICONIC: The famous Manhattan skyline.

Young Aviemore star's bite of the Big Apple

A YOUNG Aviemore performer has had his first taste of the Big Apple and hopes one day to have another bite at performing in New York.

Thirteen-year-old Ruairidh McDonald made his debut in the city that never sleeps as part of the annual Tartan Week celebrating all things Scottish.

The Kingussie High School pupil was appearing in an abridged 40-minute version of Fiona Kennedy's show *The Kist* which he has starred in for the past two summers in Glasgow.

Ruairidh was joined by parents George and Kay and brother Finlay, (11), for their first visit to New York and it was a week they will never forget which included meeting Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond and visiting some of the city's most famous landmarks.

The youngster told the "Strathy": "It was a really great experience and I got to meet and see some great people and places. New York is huge but it had a really good atmosphere."

Ruairidh appeared in a special production of Fiona's show of song, poem and verse on Scottish immigrants at the Brick Presbyterian Church on Park Avenue on the Sunday attended by an 80-strong audience including Scottish politicians Tavish Scott and Brian Wilson.

Ruairidh and his family also took part in the Tartan Parade down the city's 6th Avenue which was led by Scots Hollywood star Kevin McKidd

and included Shetland vikings, Scottie dogs and pipe bands.

Afterwards, the youngster and other *Kist* cast members gave a performance at a reception at Scotland House sponsored by the Scottish American Foundation.

And there was a new look for Ruairidh for his meet and greets in New York.

He is more used to wearing the traditional kilt in *The Kist* but he and Fiona were kitted out in bespoke Harris Tweed outfits created by Scottish designers, Joyce Young By Storm and Gibbs Menswear in Inverurie.

Mum Kay said: "New York was something else but was very tiring; I don't know how folk manage to go there for just the three days."

The family stayed in a hotel which overlooked the city's famous Central Park. "I never saw any obese people in New York; they all seemed to be very fit and jogging, cycling and rollerskating in Central Park!" said Kay.

Ruairidh was introduced to the First Minister on the first night of the Scottish celebrations at a bash being hosted by Napier University in Edinburgh which was also attended by noted photographer David Eustace who photographed the youngster with Fiona in their dashing new outfits.

Designer Barry Gibb said: "It was a real treat and delight to make a Harris Tweed suit for young Ruairidh to wear in New York."



BROADWAY: Ruairidh and Fiona among the sky scrapers.

Performer sets his sights on working on Broadway

THREE singers - including Ruairidh - and two actors staged part of *The Kist* with the Aviemore performer signing three songs on his own: *Rantin Rovin Robin*; *Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doune* and *Fly Lady Fly*.

During their trip, the McDonald family visited the Empire State Building, the Statue of Liberty, took a boat trip round Ellis Island, dined at the Hard Rock Cafe and took in Times Square.

Ruairidh said: "It would be a dream come true to return one day to New York and perform on Broadway."

He just missed out recently on his first big West End role in London. Ruairidh made it down to the last six to play the star role of Charlie out of 200 youngsters who auditioned last Autumn for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

The youngster even got to meet twice with Academy Award-

winning film and stage director Sam Mendes who is bringing Roald Dahl's classic to the stage. The blockbuster production opens at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane next month.

Kay said: "Ruairidh just takes it all in his stride. He was naturally disappointed to just miss out on *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* but his ambition is to become a star of the stage in one of the big musicals and his visit to New York

The Kist takes the audience on a journey from home in Scotland around the world to Italy, Jamaica, North America, India, Africa and Govan! It's a box full of surprises in every way: musically, it features songs from the ancient Gaelic tribal rhythms of the islands to Paulo Nutini's 'New Shoes' and other contemporary songs.

has certainly whet his appetite." For fans back home, the good news is that Ruairidh will be appearing in a shorter touring production of *The Kist* including Boat of Garten Community Hall (June 14), as well as Strathpeffer, Fraserburgh and Cruden Bay among North dates.



FAMOUS LADY: Ruairidh and his family visited The Statue of Liberty.

LOOKING SHARP: Fiona Kennedy and Ruairidh McDonald in Harris Tweed outfits.





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