THE RAILWAY CHILDREN 1999

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

Children as part of the team

THIS week I had my first outing to Teddington Theatre Club's palatial new premises at the Hampton Hill Playhouse to see an adaptation by Dave Simpson of the well-known children's classic ***The Railway Children*** by E Nesbit.

Sophie Mackrell, Ben Jones, Michelle Hood, Lorna Agnus

The children in question were played by Ben Jones, Sophie MacKrell and Lorna Angus (who was particularly good as Bobby). However I did feel that all of them were too old for their roles, particularly when contrasted with the Perks children who were excellently played by children who appeared to be playing their own ages.

Michelle Hood played the mother sympathetically without being too sweet - difficult, given the saccharine text with which she was working.

John Roth, a stalwart of TTC was well cast as Mr Perks and gave a strong performance in this pivotal role, in which he acts as the narrator.

Other parts were played by Jim Tickle, the kindly Old Gentleman; Lestocq Bowerman, Mr James; William Angus, Dr Forrest and Peter Steadman who managed to sustain his Russian accent.

My main criticism would be director Sally Graves's positioning of her actors. Far too often the cast ended up in straight lines. This may, of course, have been due to the limitations of the auditorium in which the extremely wide proscenium arch is too close to the audience, giving a certain flatness to the scenery - a problem to be addressed in the future. A play such as this, with a variety of age groups, is an excellent way of initiating young people into the theatre, whereby they can learn from older actors and also mix with adults as part of a team. **George Hillier**

TEDDINGTON THEATRE CLUB

A popular favourite

Sophie MacKrell, Lorna Angus, Ben Jones, Michell Hood in* The Railway Children *at Hampton Hill Playhouse from March 20th to March 27th.

TEDDINGTON Theatre Club's second production leading up to the Premier Production in June to celebrate the opening of the new Hampton Hill Playhouse is to to be the stage version of Edith Nesbit's *The Railway Children*.

Based on a book which has never been out of print since its first edition in 1906 and a 1970 film which still brings a tear to the eye nearly thirty years later, *The Railway Children* can truly be described as a popular favourite for all ages.

A cottage, a railway station, a tunnel, the sound of passing trains, evoking these are just some of the challenges facing TTC's production team. Three London children's lives are thrown into turmoil when Father goes away - 'for the government' - and the family has to move to the countryside.

Around their Yorkshire village they make new friends, prevent a railway accident, befriend an escaped Russian, look after an injured boy and all with little knowledge of what is really happening to their absent father.

The fine new theatre in Hampton Hill has generated a great deal of interest with the result that many of the cast will be making their TTC debuts in this production, including, of course, ten local children and teenagers.

For details see listings.

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