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SERVING AMATEUR THEATRE SINCE 1899

CHELTENHAM OPERATIC AND DRAMATIC SOCIETY

'The Railway Children'
Director: JILL MICO

The Playhouse Jan 09
Musical Director: DAVE WHITTLE

The story of the railway children has been a long journey of development itself. It started out in serial form in 1905, and arrived as a musical at the Sevenoaks Playhouse Christmas 2005 (the nearest theatre to the original setting of E. Nesbit's story). Its latest stop at the Cheltenham Playhouse was well worth a visit. It was carried smoothly along by a very talented line up of principals, an extremely strong company and a slick, quiet stage crew. The set was a simple projection on the back cloth suggesting the area of action, with the stage being dress accordingly i.e. furnishings for indoor scenes, fences etc for the station and beyond. Generally, the props were in keeping. I especially liked the simple wooden toys. Unfortunately, attention to detail wasn't always carried through. For example the paper patterned table cloth in the Christmas opening would have been crisp white linen in a household of that standing. And, if you are going to use a modern artificial tree, you should at least try to disguise the plastic stand by putting it in a pot. The costumes, on the other hand, were excellent. Each depicting correctly the character's station in life, and right for the period. Director, JILL MICO, approached the piece with sensitivity and humour. Whilst maintaining the pace, she created some lovely gentle moments and then lifted us with enthusiasm and joy. However, I was bewildered as to why the cast spoke in northern accents, when the story had been localised to taking place in Gloucestershire! There were some excellent performances amongst the principals. PAUL BRADLEY made a superb Perks and KATE ASTON was secure in her portrayal of Mother. PIPPA THOMAS was a confident Bobby, but I would have liked to have seen a little more warmth from her. SAM COOPER was outstanding as Peter (what a delightful voice), and MEGAN WILLIAMS complimented her siblings well. The company numbers were a joy, and the harmonies superb. Well done to all involved.

*Kindest regards,
Malcolm*

National Operatic and Dramatic Association

Patron: The Lord Lloyd-Webber

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