

The Railway Children by E.Nesbit

3rd September 2010: Rotherfield Village Hall

Dave Simpsons adaption of this well loved story, was brought to life tonight by some amazing young actors and actresses from The Rotherfield Junior Players. Directed by Adam Hardy and Lynn Lunn, it was clear to see how much effort and devotion they have put into this wonderful performance.

For those readers who are unaware of The Railway Children, it tells the story of the Waterbury family, who move to “Three Chimneys”, a house near a railway, after the father who works at the Foreign office, is imprisoned as a result of being falsely accused of selling state secrets to the Russians. The three children, Roberta (Bobbie), Peter and Phyllis, find amusement in watching the trains on the nearby railway line and waving to the passengers. They become friendly with Albert Perks, the station porter, and with the Old Gentleman who regularly takes the 9:15 down train. He is eventually able to help prove their father's innocence, and the family is reunited. The family take care of the Russian exile, Mr Szczepansky, who came to England looking for his family (later located) and Jim, the grandson of the Old Gentleman, who suffers a broken leg in a tunnel.

The fantastic set design and costumes, enabled the whole story to come to life on the stage. With the real doors leading to the imaginary railway line, the audience was able to imagine exactly what was happening on the platform.

The 5 main parts were played very confidently, by children who we must remember, are no older than 16.

Owen Miller, who opened the show, played the role of Mr Perks. He held the audiences attention easily as he clearly told the story that revolved around his job, working at the railway.

Rosie Kyne, looked well above her 16 years of age, to play a very convincing role of the mother. Amy Dodd and Harry Chittenden read their lines perfectly in the roles of Phyllis and Peter. Harry in particular connected with audience well, raising a few laughs with his witty one liners.

Star in the making, Jessica Lunn, played the role of Bobbie. She threw herself whole heartedly into the role, playing it with such emotion, enthusiasm and energy it made it impossible to stop watching. There are two memorable parts to the performance that must be mentioned. The scene when the children were flagging down the train was played very powerfully by all of the children. Holly Murphy and Emma Hufflett got into character very well, in their supporting roles, playing Jenny and Alice Perks. All of the children managed to build up the anticipation, putting the audience on the edge of their seats! Later, when Bobby found out the truth about where her father was, you could have heard a pin drop. Played with excellent timing, Jessica Lunn deserved the biggest cheer of the night.

What was very evident about the whole cast was that they worked very well together. The accents were very realistic, with posh, common and some very well delivered Russian and French lines too, delivered particularly well by Sammy Dawkins! All the parts were incredibly well cast.

We all knew the ending that was coming and when it did, the audience showed their appreciation by giving a huge round of applause. Lynn Lunn said on the night “I am so happy with their performance. They have worked so hard”. This I can most definitely agree with and I look forward to seeing more performances from The Rotherfield Junior Players in the future.

Lucy Spratt