

## THE RICHINGS PLAYERS

## THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

## PRODUCTION THURSDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> MAY

I had never seen a stage production of the Railway Children before and did wonder how the long established film would transfer to the stage. I have to say I was not disappointed. The narration by Perks was what kept the whole production together and with good effects the audience was kept abreast of the full story line.

### *Set, Lighting and Sound*

The set although minimalistic was a very efficient use of limited space and I did not have any difficulty imagining we were either at the house or the station just by the actors being on either side of the stage. I thought the side set of the bedroom was an excellent idea as this could not have been incorporated on the main stage and to suddenly have a bed appear would, I think, have been near impossible. So congratulations to the person who had that brain wave. All props were taken on and of stage by the actors and they did so in a way as to not to distract and look as though we were seeing scene changes.

The lighting was a little late in some places and the transition from house to station lacked expertise. I do guess however that you had little time to practice, as I know you were only in the hall a few days before production. If you are to pull off this sort of lighting effect for future productions *do try to give the lighting crew a bit more time to get it right* as it does lose continuity of the plot when it seems to be lagging behind the story.

The sound effects of the train coupled with the dry ice were good and spot on time. Well done.

### *Costume*

Just one word sums up your costumes – Perfect. I thought all the costumes were just right and must congratulate the wardrobe, as I do

know how difficult it can be to get hold of clothing that looks right for the period. Well done.

### Acting

Firstly I must congratulate all of the young players as they all did a superb job, especially as I understand for many it was the first speaking part. However the real star of the show was Ellie Curtis who played Roberta. She performed with great confidence and her voice projection was very good as I could hear every word spoken. Unfortunately, this was not the case with all the other young actors, sometimes the dialogue was a little muffled and I am not sure if this was because they were unsure of words or just not speaking loud enough. Peter and Phyllis played by Josh Pearson and Amelia Dunsdon are also worthy of a mention. I thought the three children were very well cast and all produced a very credible performance. The two little girls were just so sweet and at a guess not very old, but they really stole the show with performances that really did them proud. As I said before I thought all the children were brilliant and I do hope they will all go on to become long serving members of your group.

I thought Linda Bainbridge who played mother gave a very good performance. I really thought of her as 'mum'. Her interaction with the children was perfect and she did sometimes help them out without it being too obvious. The four of them did seem like a family and were believable which it not an easy thing to portray on stage.

The whole production was interceded with the narration of Perks but this performance by Phil Mison was sometimes a little disappointing. Although he tried very hard to keep up the accent all the way through it was at the expense of clarity. I did at times have great difficulty in understanding what was being said. Accents can be very hard to do and to keep up throughout which was what he did, but it should not be to the detriment clear dialogue. Also I thought at times the ambling on and off the stage for the narration could have been speeded up a bit as sometimes it was a bit slow. Despite my small criticisms I do think he played the part well and thought his portrayal of the stationmaster was credible and the interaction with all the children very good.

The other smaller parts were well performed and contributed greatly to give an overall excellent production.

### *Front of House and Programme*

We received a warm friendly reception from the front of house. The picture on the front of the programme is lovely; did one of the members of the group draw it? There was a nice little snippet of information on the author and a couple of nice photos. Pity the one of the children was not in costume.

*Jo Bridges*