

NODA REPORT:

**OTTERSASH PLAYERS – ‘THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE’
DECEMBER 2005**

This is a delightful tale for both children and adults showing how evil is overcome by goodness, and it makes a welcome change from the usual seasonal pantomimes. It is very topical too recently having been made into a film.

Wilf Hashimi's direction was good with interesting groupings and maximum use of the stage. Although the wardrobe set centre stage at the opening looked attractive and mysterious, it was quite some time before the story was able to move on and we could enjoy the magical scenery behind the curtain. Once in Narnia the audience became involved again but their attention had been lost earlier. The stage at the Rhoda McGaw is quite large and the wardrobe alone in front of the main tabs was just not enough to indicate the children's room in an old house.

Paul Bungard made a rather laid back Professor and was a contrast to Julie Jonklaas' irritable Mrs Macready. She came across as pretty daunting and the four children appeared suitably scared. Representing the four evacuees Louise Irvine (Lucy) did well and coped with the fairly hefty number of lines she had to remember, as did Daniel Ditton, (Edmund) but he appeared ill at ease some of the time. Susan and Peter played respectively by Susie Braggins and Max Galbraith were confident in their portrayal. Unfortunately they all had very little to work with at the beginning of the show which made it difficult to establish their individual characters.

Once behind the curtain the super scenery brought everything to life. Congratulations to Alan and Jim on the set design. The lighting too was good, as were the sound effects particularly in Act Two.

The first animal we met was timid Mr. Tumnus and Tim Matthews played the part soundly.

A good pairing in Nick Daborn and Becky Lozeron as the kindly Mr and Mrs Beaver. They were assured in the roles and maintained decent 'country' accents throughout.

I liked Tony Richardson's Maugrim, (what a wonderful howl he had!) and he was scary enough to get a reaction from the children in the audience.

The wicked White Witch of the piece was just chilling enough and Pam Kentish delivered her lines with the authority inherent in her position.

In contrast to the evil characterised by the White Witch, Aslan, the Lion was goodness personified. Martin Gardener's acting was very good and his delivery excellent.

The two leopards, Clare Groome and Anna Bonnett, had mastered feline movements and their leotards and makeup were perfect.

Bob Day's Father Christmas dialogue was a little stilted for such a jolly character.

All other members of the cast added to the overall visual enjoyment of the production and the lighting was particularly good during the fight between good and evil.

The music chosen for both the fight and the crowning was perfect and the scene with Aslan on the block was the best one in the show.

Costumes in general were good, the owl not only looked great but she walked like a bird too. The only negative point that I would make on costumes is that the children were evacuees but didn't arrive on stage with any of the trappings that they would have had, like a gas mask in a box and their names pinned to their coats. Also Peter's hair was too long for the period of the piece.

The programme contains the necessary information and the cover is attractive.

Thank you for inviting me to see the production and for your hospitality on the evening.

E. Gloria Smith

N.O.D.A. Regional Representative.