

FELIXSTOWE MUSICAL THEATRE – THE RAILWAY CHILDREN

Spa Pavilion Theatre December 2010.

Directed by Michael Crane. Musical Director – Natashe Free, Choreographer Amanda Bend.

This relatively new musical by Woolford and Jones (first performed in 2005 is ideally suited to this time of the year with its opening “Christmas is Here!” It is also the 40th anniversary of the release of the well known film version.

FMT’s production was well paced and polished with some excellent individual performances as well as a strong chorus. David Crane as Perks opened the show confidently and provided continuity with his well sung narration throughout. Jacki Williamson gave a strong and authentic performance as the mother. We could really feel her emotion as she sung about waiting for her husband in “Till the Day” Her French was good too! Young Bobby (Harriet Bacon) Phyllis (Ellena Bacon) and Peter (Nathan Howland) showed great talent giving excellent performances with good characterisations. Phyllis and Peter brought out the humour in their roles and Bobby’s solo numbers were beautiful and poignant. Jim Wearne as the old gentleman surprised us with a very strong singing voice. Alex Shulver as Dr Forrest, Chris Branch as Sczepansky and Mark Falco as Jim, all gave good performances. Costumes were authentic and good attention to seasonal detail. There were scene change challenges, train on stage, avalanche etc., were overcome by the production team. There could however have been more creative lighting to enhance the effects. Our suspension of disbelief, the prerequisites for good theatre was so strong that when the children were waving from their ‘hill’ I saw members of the audience looking back towards the back of the auditorium for the train! There was good uses of suitcases to become train seats and strobe lighting to create a locomotive from the people’s reactions. Personally I find the use of painted backdrops unimaginative and would have preferred to see more creative scene setting

There was good choreography with lots of imaginative use of movement in the chorus numbers, the chorus were strong and diction clear. I didn’t find myself humming the tunes on the way home but this was due to the music itself not the tuneful performances accompanied by a talented orchestra. Overall this was an excellent production, well done FMT

Reported by Sarah D.Caddick on behalf of Pamela White.