

Peter and Tink hold the children spellbound

OUR twin four-year-old grandchildren sat without fidgeting, transfixed by all that was going on, for every minute of the two-and-a-half hours of Faringdon Community Theatre's matinee performance of their home-grown pantomime, *Peter Panto*. And that says it all...

As far as I could tell, every other child (and there were lots of them) was equally absorbed, and seldom bored. The pace hardly flagged, there was plenty of movement, the costumes were colourful, and — the directors be blessed — song and dance routines were lively but short.

The adults appreciated this pantomime, too — partly because of the familiarity of the characters and the storyline, but, it has to be said, because of the high standard of both acting, production and stage management which continues to be maintained through most of the group's stage endeavours.

A great deal can be forgiven in panto. As long as everyone is having fun, they can get away with murder. But no apologies are needed for Faringdon. They just did a first rate job, with traditional entertainment that send nobody rushing for the city theatres and their celebrity casts.

I don't think I will manage to think ever again of Tinkerbell as a fragile, light-as-air gossamer-winged fairy. Kate Peer's outrageous Dawn French-style portrayal was delightfully funny — a perfect foil to Helen Barter's traditional, strutting Peter Pan. And a warm welcome to newcomer Chris Dudley, whose Captain Hook frightened me, but oddly enough did not have anywhere near to impact on our little ones as the rather amiable looking (I thought) crocodile Jo Webster. Jo is the other half to Peter Webster, the man who wrote this panto (with apologies to J.M. Barrie, royalties going to the Great Ormond Street Hospital).

Clare Green was as pretty as a picture in the perfectly cast part of Wendy, while Christopher Boobyer as her little brother Michael stole a few hearts from the other side of the gender fence. Come to that, all the youngsters did exceptionally well — Russell Davies as Michael Darling, and Shachar Ben-David, James Barter, Simon Anderson, Paul Summerfield, Matthew Wisbey and Ben Stone as the ringleaders of the Lost Boys, plus all the other children who enchanted us as time warp dancers, mermaids, animals, flowers, toys, pirates and more lost boys.

Dave Healey and Adrian Wells were well supported as pirates Starkey and Smee by the other front line pirates, Debbie Lock, Roger Leitch, Walther Schoonenberg and — contributing his own party-piece as a pirate who never quite seemed to get the hang of a quick-draw sword — Mike Durham.

Mr and Mrs Darling provided the book-ends at front and back of the performance in the guise of Simon Wisbey and Lucy Walden, with Naomi Bullock taking time off from chorus responsibilities to become Nana, the Darlings' babysitting dog.

Full marks, too, to the orchestra — and indeed to everyone involved, particularly directors Carole Tappenden and Pauline Durham. *J.S.* (See also letter, page 13)



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