

NODA Review
GOODNIGHT MR TOM

Viva

Performing Arts Centre, Soham Village College
Directors: Judith Collingswood & Keith Gallois

Based on the 1981 novel by Michelle Magorian, this play is adapted for the stage by veteran children's playwright David Wood a man who has enormous experience in creating effective drama for small people. Here though is something which appeals to all ages - a story of people's resilience, selflessness and capacity for love under the shadow of war. It is sad, very sad in places as we experience the effects of war where friends, neighbours and relatives meet untimely and unexpected ends and it tugs at the heartstrings.

The staging area in the Performing Arts Centre was used to its fullest extent. The play depicts multiple areas, Tom Oakley's cottage, external scenes in the village, the churchyard, a London station, air raid shelter, William's London home and the hospital. Projections on a screen on the back wall cleverly gave an indication of location. Every inch of the acting space was used and used well. All scene changes were done swiftly by the cast who removed and replaced furniture and props almost seamlessly.

In a large cast, with several roles being doubled (or tripled) there were some good strong performances, among which the cameo by **Chloe Grimes** as Mrs Beech was particularly noteworthy. We are so used to seeing children in shows and TV these days it is easy to become rather blasé about their performances. **Oscar Vaughan** took on the role of the nervous and abused William Beech evacuated from his London home to the Dorset countryside. Initially he was in danger of being up-staged by another evacuee, Zack, but he was soon holding his own in what became a very fine performance indeed.

In the role of Zack **Torin Fahy** impressed from start to finish. The character is the son of two actors, and is confidence personified, talks eruditely, recites Shakespeare and tap dances his way through the village. In a confident and extremely competent performance of this lovely character Torin won over the audience immediately.

In on-off but well done performances were **Tabby Kirk** and **Lillie Coghlin** as twins Ginnie and Carrie. They were well supported by **Daniel Allgood** as their brother George. This trio were all believable friends and neighbours.

Another performance which was a huge hit with the audience came from Sammy the Collie dog handled so well by **Sienna Warder** that one almost forgot Sammy wasn't real.

In the title role and giving a memorable and a genuinely heartwarming performance **Vaughan Moll** proved a brilliant Mr Tom. An excellent performance by a talented actor.

Technically too this was an excellent production. Directors **Judith Collingswood** and **Keith Gallois** provided a production which was a winner all round. Sound, lighting, costumes, hair, props and puppetry were all as impressive as the performances.

Viva's 'Goodnight Mr Tom' was totally engrossing, heartwarming, touching and tender. The audience reaction was thoroughly deserved by cast and crew and I am sure they also appreciated the little Kleenex tissue provided with the programme.

Congratulations to the cast and everyone involved with Goodnight Mr Tom. This was a super production.

Julie Petrucci
Regional Representative NODA East (District Four South)