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(The opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympic Games had taken place the previous evening.  
This text was accompanied by 6 photographs.)

## They lit up the theatre

### ALAN HAYES reviews *Fame Jr* at Winston Churchill Theatre

**T**HOSE clever youngsters from *Fame!* Danny Boyle might have had the budget and the bodies for his Olympic extravaganza in east London, but way out west, Ruislip Operatic Society's Stage Works Summer School gave him a run for his money with a production of *Fame Jr* to lift the spirits.

There were two performances on Saturday at the partly refurbished Winston Churchill Hall, now renamed Theatre. It is to be hoped that the Ruislip venue will be worthy of young performers like this talented bunch.

Unlike Mr Boyle - and Messrs Bean, Branagh and Bond - the ROS Summer School gets just a week to turn a read-through into a run-through into a romp through.

Yes, a week. Amazing!

In the early 1980s, before any of the ROS cast was born, New York's High School for the Performing Arts sprang to life with its pink legwarmers in both a film and TV series.

Remember Debbie Allen and the famous line - 'Fame costs, and here's where you start paying... in sweat'? Well, *Fame Jr* is loosely based on all that, but with new songs, and themes depicting the complicated offstage lives of the young hopefuls, none of which will have parents in a tizzy (crushes, dreams, hard work and, yes, parents).

And fear: fear of failure and letting the dream slip away? None of that. Tell the ROS children they have a week to prepare - "Whatever, bring it on."

In fact, so great is the enthusiasm that several principal parts have to be double cast to ensure everyone gets a fair crack of the whip and that all the talent gets its moment in the spotlight.

Written just last year for a young cast, *Fame Jr* uses the device of an audition prologue for the famous school to showcase some of the ensemble, and the 'tinies' get to shine before their older colleagues get to grips with the meatier roles. At Winston Churchill Theatre, Anna Goraya and Jessica Larkman - two of the tiniest of all - brought the house down with their unbearably cute little number.

'Remember my name' is one phrase from the eponymous theme song, but at the other end of the age range it would be wrong to single out too many: you will catch some of them on the West End stage in a few years' time, anyway, I feel sure. However, maybe just one or two do deserve a mention.

Vicky Fischbacher was punchy as school principal Miss Sherman, Katie Riches fizzed as feisty Latina, Carmen Diaz, and Callum Poltock and Glen Scott shone in the shared role of headstrong hooper Tyrone Jackson.

And if there was a showstopper, it was Hanny Alcock as Mabel, whose big moment - in *Mabel's Prayer* - needs wit, timing and humour. Three boxes ticked, Hanny.

Success in track, field, pool, road and range will come this week and next for Team GB, I have no doubt. For Team ROS, it is gold already. This was a great team effort, getting together something this good in such a short time.

Congratulations to director and choreographer Ann Hertler-Smith, drama coach Helen Bailey and musical director Roy Mathers.