

LEISURE

inside...

5
OF THE BEST

Our pick of the best events in your area
Page 31



film

of the week Page 29



Everyone gets to shine



ALAN HAYES reviews Music Man Junior, performed by talented children from Ruislip Operatic Society's StageWorks group

THERE might not have been a full 76 trombones leading the big parade, but it felt like it, as the children of StageWorks gave voice to this year's production, Music Man Junior.

The one-week 'page-to-stage' show gives as many members of the cast as possible the chance to shine, in a complex arrangement of dual roles across the two shows and two acts on the final Saturday.

So 'Fred Bloggs' in act one of the matinee will not be Fred Bloggs in act two – and expect a totally different Fred at 5pm!

Confused? Don't be, it is part of the joy of StageWorks as a summer project where everyone gets to shine.

Music Man Junior is the children's version of the Meredith Wilson 1950s Broadway hit about a conman who comes to town and hatches a plot to part the mums and dads with their money on a pretext (the arrival of the town's first pool table and the delinquency this threatens).

If they sign up for his marching band,



■ YOUNG STARS: (Clockwise from top left) The cast in full voice; Thomas Cooney as the train conductor; Elliott Parsons as Marcellus Washburn and Ollie McLaughlin as Harold Hill; The 76 Trombones
Contributed

and shell out for uniforms and instruments, he will keep their children on the straight and narrow.

Of course, by then he will be long gone with their hard-earned cash.

'Junior' versions of well known shows (last year it was Fame) are up against the clock to deliver, both in the way StageWorks rehearses and presents them within seven days, and also in the truncated performance time, a little over an hour in this case.

So the cast did a great job enunciating the dialogue and pretty difficult ditties that get the plot across quickly, so we could enjoy the drama unfolding and the sub-plots.

OK, perhaps what you lose is a little bit of spontaneity and relaxedness you might have got with a show that has had more than a week to 'brew', but as a discipline for young performers it ticks the boxes and provides a cracking start to the school holidays.

Musical numbers succeed because you see the clever stagecraft and how the youngsters work the stage, not because they are pitch perfect and polished, although talent tends to come out, and performers across the age range really shine.

There are some old favourite numbers here – Ya Got Trouble, Til There Was You and the aforementioned 76 Trombones, but the stand out number was the sweet duet, Goodnight My Someone.

It would be unfair to single out any one performer and, as mentioned, it is all change later on anyway, so as an ensemble, the cast of Music Man Junior was rightly, roundly cheered at the final curtain.



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