

Children's Hour

The Tintookies. Peter Scriven. Phillip Theatre. Sydney.

The Servant of Two Masters. Carlo Goldoni. Australian Theatre for Young People. On tour Sydney suburbs.

THE marionette world of the Tintookies is wonderfully crowded and colorful. Characters like the Mayor and the Astrologer, the Three Wise Monkeys and the Magician, come from a long tradition of comic theatre, and the knock-about satire of such scenes as the meeting of the town council and the learned discussion of the wise monkeys will delight the adult members of the audience.

The children are more absorbed in the doings of Possum, Koala and Wombat, characters whom I find somewhat cloying. However, the interweaving of the more sentimentally conceived local animals with characters of traditional farce does make for richness and color. But the plot seems to me over-complicated and the action a little slow. Fewer set pieces, imaginative though they are, and swifter narrative would make the programme a better length.

Alastair Duncan's production of his own adaptation of Goldoni's play is excellently done. The cast of ten is thoroughly professional, Robert Lloyd's setting is attractive and efficient and the music is delightful. The playing time of 1½ hours including the interval seemed to me just right for a children's play.

The production is fortunate in having Al Thomas as Truffaldino, the irrepressible servant of two masters. On the day I saw it Mr Thomas made his clown's business over-fussy, but this may have been due to an unresponsive audience. Children need practice and encouragement as playgoers if they are to respond enthusiastically to theatre.

Goldoni, like Shakespeare and Molière, took traditional character types of the *commedia dell'arte* and made them more realistic. He has not the poetry of Shakespeare nor the wit of Molière, but he has liveliness and humor.

In his adaptation, Alastair Duncan has retreated a little from Goldoni's realism by introducing a boy imp and a girl imp whom he calls Spirits of the Pantomime. While confusing to students of drama, this is unlikely to worry the children, for the imps are delightfully played by Jon Ewing and Yvonne Matthew.

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