

THEATER REVIEW | THE ELEVATOR FAMILY

Humorous story should move kids

Saturday, February 5, 2011 02:51 AM

BY MARGARET QUAMME

FOR THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

As the delightful Columbus Children's Theatre show *The Elevator Family* opens, the vacationing Wilsons have found a new hideaway: a room named "Otis" in a San Francisco hotel.

They happily set up housekeeping, hauling in trunks and tables so they can sleep and play endless games of "pick up sticks," and order room service. They're also charmed to discover how many guests and hotel workers are eager to join them in their traveling room, and they make friends with a wealthy guest and her little dog, a lonely traveling salesman, a waitress who aspires to be an actress, and a bellboy and the flower seller upon whom he has a crush.

Douglas Evans' adaptation of his children's book retains its quirky humor and warm heart. William Goldsmith's direction allows the episodic story to develop at an unhurried pace.

The Wilsons - played by Chip Barr, Karla Andrews, Emma Lou Andrews and Daniel Szolosi - are pleased with themselves and their world without being mawkish.

Blair Brightwell, as bellhop Gavin, makes a wryly humorous foil to the exuberant Wilsons, while Luther W. Center Jr., as the salesman, blossoms under their attentions. Andy Jones, as busy socialite Mrs. Goldengate, delivers tongue-twisting lines with understated panache, while Allison Leonard is delightful as an aspiring actress.

Carla Chaffin's slick set is dominated by a metal frame that mimics the elevator.

At Thursday's opening-night performance, even the youngest viewers reacted gleefully to the eccentric characters.

Beneath its blissfully buoyant surface, *The Elevator Family* has something important to say about the effect of one family on the world and vice versa. But that theme never overwhelms the gentle humor.

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