



TR Announcements

Unified Auditions will be held Saturday February 26, 2011 beginning at 10am. Auditions will be held at the Drake Performance and Event Center on the OSU Campus.

Registration fees for all auditioners are \$20 which includes a 2011 Theatre Roundtable Individual Membership.

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Review of Columbus Children's Theatre's "The Elevator Family"



User Rating: ○○○○○ / 0

Poor ○○○○○ Best

Thursday, 10 February 2011 12:02 | [Written by Dennis Thompson](#)

Review of **The Elevator Family** by Dennis Thompson

When Columbus Children's Theatre announces their season, a scan of the listings will normally result in many familiar names. We may not know the shape the adaptations will take, but we know the titles and the stories of the fairy tales and other children's works to be presented.

But occasionally a name will pop up that is not familiar, a story we may not have heard before. I would think by this time all who regularly attend CCT would not hesitate because of that. In fact, it may be the opportunity for a delightful surprise.

That is the case here.

CCT is offering "The Elevator Family" by Douglas Evans based on his book of the same name. It is about the Wilson family and their unusual way of taking vacations. They like to stay in places no one would consider a vacation – a close listen will tell you some of their other trips.

But here they have checked into a fancy San Francisco hotel. Not to stay in a room, but to take up residence in the elevator. They adapt furnishings, add flowers, overuse the line that their vacation has its ups and downs, think the L button stands for lunch and call the room "Otis."

It's a fun premise, but mainly the play is about the family's affect on those they encounter.

At first it might seem like "The Clampett's Go On Vacation" but it really isn't. They may seem like a simple family, but not simple as in stupid, simple as in basic down to earth tastes and values. They're not in the elevator because they don't know any better. It's a conscious choice because they know it's more exciting, they'll meet more people.

Obviously there is much suspension of disbelief here. We accept that the hotel staff is charmed by them rather than throwing them out. As is, the bellhop becomes their first friend and the night security man makes sure they're alright. They befriend a lonely salesman and are equally at home with a high society woman.

They serve as companions, matchmakers and sounding boards. Gradually everyone they encounter begins to have a little more spring to their step. And when things threaten to take a dark turn and we think they just might be too Pollyanna to deal with it, surprises are in store.

Chip Barr and Karla Andrews are the parents, Walter and Winona Wilson, with Emma Lou Andrews and Daniel Szoloski as their children, Whitney and Winslow. Together they are friendly and outgoing, seemingly only dealing with life on the surface. But there is a perception about them, a subtle knack for knowing what the person they are with needs, a bit of advice, encouragement, or just to be listened to.

The eccentric cast they encounter adds to the fun. Blair Brightwell is the lovelorn bellhop Gavin who helps them out and is repaid by their help with his crush on the shy flowergirl, Cathy (Emily Soppe). Jonathan Kemp is the kindly night security man, Joe. Allison Leonard is Natacha, a waitress who enjoys practicing her accents on them.

As for the guests, Luther W. Center, Jr. is Mr. Brown, the isolated salesman who becomes so grateful for the company he effusively opens up to the Wilsons. Andy Jones is Mrs. Goldengate with the proper aristocratic air, but not so much that she can't feel at home with this family. Olivia Sweeney is appropriately annoying in a brief appearance as Lizzy Chronicle. Mike Szoloski and Megan Mackenzie Stier are both comically inept and slightly mysterious as the strangers.

Carla Chaffin's set design indicates an open walled elevator in the center of a lobby, where most of the action is. There is an upper floor with doors to give the sense of a hotel.

Director William Goldsmith again takes a smallish cast and gives the feel that it is larger. There are times of players coming and going in all directions giving the indication of bustling activity. When the activity quiets, he highlights the individual moments to give us a sense of each character and the influence the Wilson's gradually bring.

In an age where we are taught to be suspicious, this may be a nod to a simpler time. But it's a nice reminder that if we took to the time to get to know the people swirling around us, we'd likely find a lot of good.

Columbus Children's Theatre's "The Elevator Family" continues Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30 pm, Saturdays at 1, 3 and 5 pm, and Sundays at 1 and 3 pm through February 20th at 512 North Park Street. Tickets are \$9 on Thursdays, 10 - \$18 all other performances. Thursday February 10th is sold out. For tickets call 224-6672 or 469-0939 or online through TicketMaster.com

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