

THERE WAS AN OLD



Tim Solomons and Ben Albu.



Michelle Waddleton, Jo Hann and Linda Zeff.



Simon Ramsey plays the Dame.

Familiar characters and plots in a novel setting characterised the recent pantomime staged by the Suburb Dramatic Society.

With an eye to the need for children's half-term entertainment, the Society put on "There was an old woman..." by Terry Rogers, between 15 and 23 February, at the Institute.

He mixed traditional pantomime features and a new story into a fast moving, colourful extravaganza which was lapped up by young and old alike in the audience.

There was the familiar 'gender bending' with the imposing Old Woman in the show, Polly, played by Simon Ramsey, and her son, George, in the handsome prince mould, played by the delectable Fiona Lumsden.

Much of the action is to do with the old woman's attempts to stave off eviction from her shoe, but she is up against the dastardly Duke de Hazarda (a pun appreciated by indiscriminating television viewers).

Hazarda, played by Colin Gregory, hopes that his son Wally will advance his old dad by marrying the King's beautiful daughter, but alas he is out of luck with the discriminating princess, played by Fiona Riem. Still, Martin Clarkson's charismatic performance as the silly but lovable Wally wins the hearts

of the audience, if not that of the Princess.

She has eyes for Polly's son George, and defies the attempts of the fumbling King, Rufus, and his Lord Chamberlain, Fred Griessen and Mortimer Bennitt, to marry her off to various suitors.

The plot takes a new twist when she is captured by Martini, Bianco, and Rosé — Michelle Waddleton, Linda Zeff and Jo Hann, bungling agents of the hideous, wicked Mountain King, played by Richard Kinder, who wants her for his bride.

The climax takes place in the Mountain King's lair, a triumph for the special effects department.

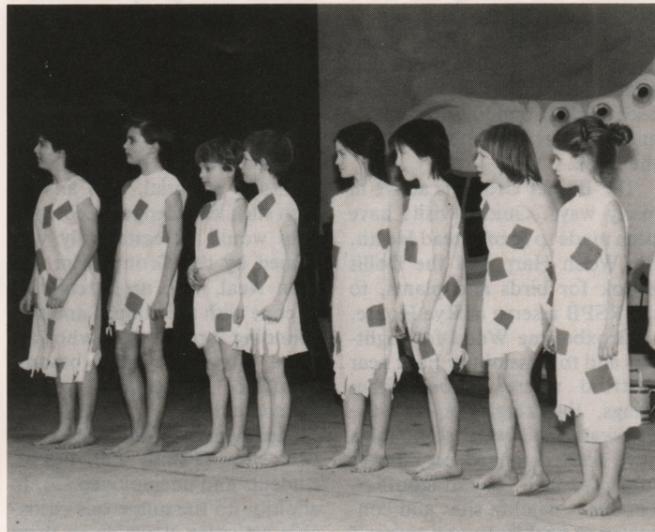
It is a hellish place, not somewhere a young princess would want to spend the rest of her days. This lair is inhabited by Trolls — children dressed in fluorescent costumes — who do an extraordinary dance. The costumes were made by boys of University College School, and at one point the children wearing them do a dance with all the lights out so one only sees the luminous paint. And as if the Trolls were not bad enough, there is a huge dragon, named Rover, who the programme says was "trained" by Mollie Cattle, Anne Bracken and Hugh Eliot. He parades around the stage

eyes aglow, a variation on the pantomime horse, and a daunting prospect for those wanting to save the Princess.

But of course saved she is, and there are happy endings for all who deserve them.

Throughout the show, the audience were kept on the boil by some slick buffoonery from another two "sons" of the Old Woman, Rudyard and Kipling, played by Tim Solomons and Ben Albu.

It was a very memorable performance and the least one could say of it is that it would not have been out of place were it a 'professional' production.



'so many children'.

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