

**LIFE STYLE**  
TV — ARTS — ENTERTAINMENT

**THEATRE**

**By KEN HEALEY**

## Style the youngsters love

**'FLYING SAUCERY'**  
*Mona Brand: Alpha Thea at the Wesley Centre, Saturdays and Sundays at 2p June 12 to July 4. Directed Betty Bohmer.*

**ALPHA** appears to have revived, and to make the reasonable promise of two shows a year. On the evidence of the current offering, Alpha is, I might say, beta than ever

Unfortunately for my pun, the humour of Mona Brand's play is more visual and situational than

verbal. A pair of villains complicate the otherwise amicable landing of a spaceship from a planet of gold. The UFO has come down, together with its pilot

come down, together with its pilot (Malcolm Miller), on the property of a struggling farm family (Michael McCarthy and Adelle Wolf parenting Ben Grieve and Sally Barnett).

Betty Bohmer's production is aimed squarely at the four- to eight-year-old group which will make up the majority of Alpha's audience. Gerd Rehwinkle's set is colourful and bold, while Annette Leon's costumes show flair. I particularly liked three farm animals

who joined in for the occasional chorus. Anne Drummond provided superior piano accompaniment for Rob McDonagh's predictable songs.

It is probably in performance style that this show succeeds most. Its moralising, its search and chase, its funny bad man in the end (Gert Rehwinkle) are all

and Chase, its funny old man in drag (Gert Rehwinkle), are all frankly patronising (matronising?) to the littles, who nonetheless lap it up.

The kiddies' fare on television which so annoys experts tries to do this sort of thing fairly often. I can find no harm in it. On the contrary, done as well as this, it

clearly gives the children a pleasurable experience of live theatre.

Sally Barnett as Julie radiates good spirits, Ben Grieve is the very type of the clean-cut brother, Fay Butcher is every kid's caricature of the eccentric older lady, and Malcolm Miller is a thoroughly benign alien. Should one qualify one's praise by pointing out that the parents and the baddies are hopelessly oversimplified in the process of concocting such a piece of escapism as this? I shall not do so, but unreservedly recommend the show to the parents of infants and even primary school children.