

Hansel, Gretel and 168 others!

THE two performances of 'Hansel and Gretel' given by pupils of St. Bernard's Preparatory School, Basingstoke was a masterpiece both of entertainment and organisation in that 170 children took part — a colossal undertaking for Sister Mary John the producer.

She is to be congratulated on her stage groupings and the smooth way in which so many children made their entrances and exits on a small stage.

As a curtain-raiser, the floor was taken by very young children of the pre-school group who delighted the audience with their action songs. For their presentation in five scenes of the lovely

old fairy tale of 'Hansel and Gretel' the script of which had been written by Sister Mary John no use at all was made of the music of Engelbert Humperdinck whose operatic setting is well known.

Instead Sister Mary John had turned to the music of Brahms, French folk songs and Tchaikovsky played by Mrs. V. Murphy at

the piano. The story was delightfully told by the children who were colourfully dressed in costumes provided in the main by parents.

The part of Hansel was taken by Bridget Burden and that of Gretel by Kathleen Gorman who made an excellent pair. Sally Anne Deane was the cheerful pedlar, a part she doubled up with Pippa Wyville. Clare O'Boyle with her heavy make-up made a frightening witch.

Handsome prince

Susan Fogg was the stepmother in the Saturday performance and S. Angel on Thursday, Brendan Hickey being cast as Father. Mary Johnson made an attractive Fairy Queen and Graham Reason in his gothic costume a very handsome Prince. Gillian Brimicombe was the witch on Saturday with Susanne Wainwright appearing in the part on Thursday. I was impressed by the way in which the children spoke up in tribute to those responsible for the production.

Excellent support was afforded the main characters by the groups of children appearing as birds, imps, sugar plums and fairies, all exquisitely dressed, and of course the many hunters recruited from the boys.

We were entertained to a spot of tap-dancing by the 'Ladybird' (Julie Purdue) and to the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy by Fiona Murphy. It was all splendidly conceived and performed in a manner that was refreshing. A.A.



A scene from 'Hansel and Gretel' presented by St. Bernard's Preparatory School.

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