

Cassidy shines in bright Dreamcoat

By Robert Crew Toronto Star

David Cassidy has packed more into his 33 years than most people do in a lifetime. He's been a teenybopper idol, had 18 gold records, done over 300 concerts and has appeared in two hit television series.

His latest venture is *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which opened a 12-day run last night at the O'Keefe Centre, after six months on Broadway. And it's obvious right from the opening scene that Cassidy has learned his profession well. He has a pleasant, if not remarkable voice, more than adequate for the part of Joseph. But, with his flashing smile and good humor, he has undoubted stage presence. He knows how to work an audience.

But Cassidy is just one of the good things about this snappy little show that whips along with the pace of a desert sandstorm. The cast is solid, the singing spirited and powerful, "as good as on our record of the show," said my six-

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year-old son. "And I like the dancing — it's kinda special."

"Joseph" is the little musical that grew. It was written for an end-of-term school concert by Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, the same pair who later collaborated on *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and *Evita*. It was first performed in March, 1968 and was just 15 minutes long. It is now more than five times that length — just less than 90 minutes.

It recreates, in song and dance, the song of the Biblical Joseph, he of the multicolored coat and talent for interpreting dreams. Sold into slavery by his 11 jealous brothers, Joseph wins fame and fortune in the land of the pyramids.

It's an entertaining pastiche of musical songs, full of catchy tunes and slyly humorous lyrics. There's a delightful country & western takeoff, a French song a la Mau-

rice Chevalier and an Elvis spoof which usually proves to be the show-stopper (the hip-wiggling Hal Davis, clad in skin-tight white satin pants, doesn't disappoint us this time around).

Davis is just one of the neat little cameos; Leslie Feagan draws Potiphar with broad comic strokes and Evelyn S. Ante is a lithe and sexy Mrs. P. But the core of the show are Cassidy's Joseph and the Narrator, played by a pint-sized bundle of energy named Robin Boudreau. She may be small in stature but her voice is huge. On stage for virtually the whole show, she almost single-voicedly gives the performance its zest and vigor.

Add some dramatic sets and costumes and some fine staging, particularly in the Egyptian scenes and you have the ingredients of a fun evening.

One query: Why, when this is basically a children's show, do the Monday through Thursday performances start as late as 8 p.m.? Younger children were certainly beginning to droop by the end of last night's show.

They certainly enjoyed themselves, however. The days of Elvis (and of teen-idol David Cassidy) may be long gone and mean nothing to them but the show still seems as fresh and innocently light-hearted as ever.