



A new hero in children's movie

MY NEIGHBOR TOTORO (G)

Directed by: Hayao Miyazaki
Rating: four-and-a-half stars (86 minutes)

EVERY summer, Perth people flock to outdoor cinemas. Now there is something new and different – cinema on the water.

As part of the Perth International Arts Festival, cinema on the water screens at three locations for one night only.

As free family events, all locations will screen the animated Japanese film *My Neighbor Totoro*, which is a delightful film for children of all ages.

Japanese animation is uniquely famous for being different from Hollywood animation in its style.

It will delight children and allow their parents to relax and enjoy it too.

The kids will be totally absorbed, their silence will only be broken by wonderment, laughter and serious, deep thought.

The film is written and directed by Hayao Miyazaki (*Howl's Moving Castle, Crimson Pig*), one of Japan's masters of animation – uniquely so in the way he portrays his characters, both their physicality and their personalities.

Like life, the storyline comes with some sadness, a little bit of scariness and some challenging information.

Hurriedly we are conveyed into an imaginary world in which reality is written between the lines, so clearly everyone can understand, making this such a

child attention-grabber. Two sisters, Satsukw and the younger Mei, move to the countryside in Japan with their father.

Their mother is hospital so the children behave well for their father but this does not stop them from some curiosity and naughtiness.

As the two girls explore the house they find that their new home is inhabited with friendly magical spirits and soot gremlins.

After their father heads off to work, they decide to explore the forest around the house, where they meet up with more mysterious creatures who they try to chase and catch.

While the Totoro at first looks a little scary because of its size, it's really more of a kindly uncle or grandfather.

It appears, when things go wrong, to be something like a guardian angel who has an insight into the lives of those who believe in its imaginary existence.

The storyline suggest the believers must be well-behaved children, a bit like the Father Christmas model.

My Neighbor Totoro screens on the water at Jeff Joseph Reserve, Applecross on February 29, Riverside Gardens, Bayswater on March 1, and Hillary's Boat Harbour, South Beach, on March 2.

Starting after sunset, the crowd will be entertained beforehand by Le Kiosque who takes over an abandoned bandstand which becomes a circus of fun, laughter and music.

Michael Perrot



A scene from the children's movie, *My Neighbor Totoro*.