

Dancing at Lughnasa

A play by Brian Friel
11th-13th November 2004
at Faringdon Junior School
Director: Carolyn Taylor

FDS Awarded The Ron Kench Shield for Drama - Again!!



FARINGDON Dramatic Society's production of Brian Friel's play 'Dancing at Lughnasa' received the winning award from NODA, the National Operatic Dramatic Association as the best production of the year in the South East Region where 320 drama groups were entered for this award.

This is the second time the drama society have won this prodigious award. Last time it was for 'The Crucible' which was performed in 2001. Both plays were directed by Carolyn Taylor, who said last time: 'To receive a national award is a considerable feather in the cap of small dramatic society and is a credit to FDS's commitment to putting on productions of a high level of professionalism and excellence.'

Other awards this year - [More ...](#)

'Hats off' to Faringdon Dramatic Society

There are some aspects of theatre that only the brave or talented amateur dramatic societies should attempt; Faringdon Dramatic Society's production of 'Dancing at Lughnasa' by Brian Friel had most of them – soliloquies, accents, freezes and acting to an invisible person. So 'hats off' to Faringdon Dramatic Society for their wonderful portrayal of events affecting a Donegal family in 1936.

Carolyn Taylor directed a well paced production, with a fine cast, who on Friday displayed only occasional weaknesses, which did not distract from a fine ensemble performance. From the opening of the play to the closing part of the tale, we were treated to theatre worthy of a far grander location than the simple facilities of the Faringdon Junior School. The powerful opening of this performance ensured that the audience was gripped from the very beginning. As the curtains opened on a simple, yet effective set, John Taylor as Michael commanded the stage as he began his narration of events that summer while the remaining cast held a wonderful, lengthy freeze – no easy task for Director or actors to achieve.

Inevitably some of the cast deserve mention over others, not least John Taylor, who rose to the huge challenge of playing both himself as an older man narrating the events in the family home of that summer in 1936, and also as a 7-year old self. He displayed tremendous presence on the stage and was a firm anchor for his fellow cast members. Sarah Vernon gave a powerful performance as his aunt Maggie, with an Irish accent that could pour Guinness; she was alive for every second that she was on stage, and she never stopped acting, her interaction with the invisible 7-year old Michael was wonderfully convincing. Sandra Keen, as Rose, too gave a spirited performance, capturing both Rose's simple, far-away nature, and her inner strength.

This was an engrossing performance that was well acted throughout. The set and lighting were simple yet effective, and the costumes and properties an excellent fit for the period and circumstances. This was the first time I have seen the Faringdon Dramatic Society; I don't think it will be my last.

Ian Lacey