

Wales Final Festival History page – 2009

Dates	Venue	Adjudicator
5-6 June 2009	Torch Theatre, Milford Haven	Chris Jaeger GoDA

Finalists	Play	Playwright	Company	Director
Gwent	Love Is...	Frankie Baskerville	Blackwood Little Theatre	Neil Maidman
Pembrokeshire	But Yesterday	Jimmie Chinn	New 'Tabs' Players	Sue Williams
Pembrokeshire	The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish	David Tristram	Tenby Players	Helen Wright
Gwent	Next to Godliness	Vic Mills	Blackwood Little Theatre	Neil Maidman
Glamorgan	Ghost City	Gary Owen	The Unknown Theatre Company	Lon David
Glamorgan	A Doctor by 'Persuasion'	Molière, adaptation by Graham J. Evans	The Players' Theatre	Gareth Gibbs

Awards	Play	Recipient
Maynard Cup	But Yesterday	New 'Tabs' Players
Elf Oil	But Yesterday	Lloyd Grayshon, New 'Tabs' Players
Bernleigh	Next To Godliness	Blackwood Little Theatre
Crawshay Cup	Happy Families	Margaret Kynaston
Bob McTurk Bursary		Catherine Morgan, Newport Playgoers Society

Notes on the festival	
Date added	16/10/2015
By whom	Leon Searle

Notes**WALES FINAL 2009 by Gary Thomas, first published in DAWN**

This year's Wales Final was hosted by the Pembrokeshire Drama Association at the recently refurbished Torch Theatre in Milford Haven. The local team of organisers made up of Leigh Smailes (Festival Director), Sarah d'Ivry (Festival Administrator) and Derek Webb (Marketing/Programme) who had already been active for months doing the preparatory work for the festival; securing funding liaising with the venue and festival hotel etc, stepped up a gear as the Final weekend approached.

The festival got off to a great start with Blackwood Little Theatre's production of *Love is...* written by group member Frankie Baskerville. Director Neil Maidman and the group have enjoyed a great deal of success on the festival scene in recent years and this production was up to the standard regular festival-goers have come to expect of the group, telling the poignant tale of an elderly old-style comedian escaping his bleak existence by returning to perform on the stand up circuit. Well received by the audience this was a particular success for actor Graham J Evans around whom this production revolved and who would appear in another production later in the festival. A busy and stressful weekend for Graham!

Next to perform was New 'Tabs' Players from Pembrokeshire with *But Yesterday* by Jimmie Chinn. An impressive set and imaginatively designed lighting really set the atmosphere for this play. Having sat in on the tech runs earlier in the day I thought that the use of accompanying music at various points in the play which we are more used to experiencing on television would distract an audience but was proved wrong as it worked splendidly, adding to the atmosphere and punctuating the play smoothly.

The last production on the Friday evening was Tenby Players' production of David Tristram's *The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish*. Tenby Players entertained us with this romp into the imaginations of bored married couple Henry and Alice who escape their hum drum life by means of their daydream alter egos. Strong performances from both actors in this two-hander ensured an upbeat end to the first evening of the festival.

On Saturday night it was Blackwood Little Theatre once again who opened the evening's entertainment with their production of *Next to Godliness* by another member of the group Vic Mills. This is the prequel to Vic's play *Fancying Sheep* – another strong Wales Finalist back in 2007. A striking set; imaginatively designed and, just as, importantly, fits in the back of a van. You can always rely on BLT's Peter Musto to produce an ideal festival set. Functional, striking and portable. Typical of BLT's multitasking, this production's players included the play's author Vic Mills, Shelley Bethan Morgan who had also acted in BLT's *Love is...* on Friday and the afore mentioned Mr Musto revisiting his role as The Man with a taste for Glengettie Tea and Faggot sandwiches.

Next to perform was The Unknown Theatre Company from Cardiff with Gary Owen's challenging script *Ghost City*. Unknown's young but disciplined cast convincingly brought the gritty city life of Cardiff to Milford Haven with

particularly strong performances from Andrew Machin, Melissa Moore and Lorun Roberts. An impressive debut at the Wales Final from The Unknown Theatre Company. I'm sure they will be returning in future years.

The Players' Theatre presented a new version of Moliere's *A Doctor by Persuasion* adapted by Graham J Evans for the final production of the festival. The energy was high from curtain up and sustained right to the end in this rhyming romp from the Wales Final regulars. Players brought the festival's performances to a raucous finish with this bawdy comedy which kept the laughs coming thick and fast from start to finish.

The festival was easily one of the highest standard Wales Finals I have seen in my time at DAW and, like Ian Sarginson, I certainly didn't envy Chris Jaeger with his responsibility to identify a winner. And that moment was not far off. Following Chris's adjudications of the evening's performances, the curtain rose on the assembled platform party for the Closing Ceremony.

Before Chris gave his summing up of the festival and announced the winners, thanks were extended to the Pembrokeshire Drama Association for their meticulous organisation of the event and to Milford Haven Port Authority whose generous support had enabled the festival to take place.