

## *AETF English-Final*

I spent a very pleasant day in Harrogate on 4<sup>th</sup> June. I had time to explore the town during the morning before spending the afternoon and evening at the beautiful old victorian theatre, watching the English Final of the All England Theatre Festival.

The first play was "It Runs in the Family" by David Foxton, performed by the Dewsbury Arts Group who had won the Northern Area Semi-Final. Set in the early 1900s the period costumes and set were very good and a great attention to detail had been paid to props. The adjudicator, Scott Marshall, described it as a farce similar in style to "The Italian Straw Hat" but said there needed to be more movement around the stage. I thought that the characterisations were quite well realised but that there could have been more energy from the actors.

The second play of the afternoon was Woking College Theatre Company performing "Pool (No Water)" by Mark Ravenhill. The programme described the play as "an ensemble piece that explores the changing relationships between a group of artists". I loved this production. There was so much energy from the actors (four girls and three boys) and the groupings and movement were imaginative. Vocally it was excellent both in the choral work and individual lines. The set was very simple – several white chairs which were moved as needed for the different scenes. At the back of the stage there was a television screen used to point the action of the play. There was imaginative use of lighting, music and sound effects. The adjudicator had reservations about the simplicity of the set and the expansion of the roles to seven actors from the original four which resulted in slightly undefined characterisations.

The evening session began with Old Town Theatre Company's production of "Recidivists" by Matthew Clift. This group and playwright are both based in Swindon and won the Western Area Semi-Final. It is set in a prison cell and opens with a powerful speech from one of the two actors. There were clear characterisations from the two actors and some memorable moments in the play particularly the miming by the two actors to "I know him so well"; there was a very good fight scene and I thought the actors worked well together. The costumes and simple bunk beds were appropriate for the setting of the play. The adjudicator mentioned some lighting problems with "spots" and also felt that the strobe lighting was unnecessary and went on for too long as did the dancing at the end of the play. Judging by the reaction from the audience they obviously enjoyed the play, despite some strong language and explicit scenes.

The final play of the evening was "The Last of the Vamps", an unpublished play by John Reason. This was performed by Oadby Drama who won the Central Area Semi-Final. The play opens with an older woman having her hair and make-up done by two maids. She is expecting her daughter to visit after many years and wants to look her best. The maids have other ideas and by the time they finish with her she looks grotesque. The daughter visits, wearing identical clothing to her mother and ends up eating the mother's heart and taking over her role. It was a strange play but there was some good acting. The scenes between the daughter and mother were perhaps not as shocking as they should have been. The set and costumes were colourful but the adjudicator had some reservations about the positioning of some of the furniture. He also felt that the mother's make-up should have been even more grotesque. He liked the performances from the maids and the mother but felt that the daughter needed to be far more "baby-like" before killing her mother.

During the final summing up of the day the adjudicator said that he had to award the first place to the group he felt most captured the spirit of their play, Town Theatre Company's production of "Recidivists". The Dewsbury Arts Group won the award for Stage

Decor and the adjudicator's discretionary award went to Woking College Theatre Company for their enthusiasm and energy.

I thoroughly enjoyed my day in Harrogate and the afternoon and evening spent at the theatre. Everything ran very smoothly and the whole event had obviously been very well organised by Ian Clarke and the AETF Northern Area team.

Sara Watkins  
St Paul's Drama Group

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## *Beach Boys Bring a Smile to the Barn*

The original Beach Boys were an American rock band, formed in 1961 in Hawthorne, California. The group was initially composed of brothers Brian, Dennis and Carl Wilson, their cousin Mike Love, and friend Al Jardine. By the mid 1960s, Brian Wilson's growing creative ambition and songwriting ability would dominate the group's musical direction. The primarily Wilson-composed *Pet Sounds* album and "Good Vibrations" single (both released in 1966) featured a complex, intricate and multi-layered sound that was a far cry from the simple surf rock of The Beach Boys' early years.

The Beach Boys have often been called "America's Band" and the band's unerring ability "made them America's first and best rock band." The group had 36 United States Top 40 hits (the most by an American rock band) and 56 Hot 100 hits, including four number-one singles.

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> December is your opportunity to enjoy a complete evening of Beach Boys best music with Beach Boys SMiLE, the UK's number one tribute band. Comprising the three Sutcliffe brothers, Jean-Pierre, Jean-Michel and Raphael joined by Ben Devon, Jonathan Gooch and Richie Hart we promise you an unforgettable evening with all the best hits of the 60's. Reproducing that perfect pitch of the Beach Boys these boys are looking forward to bringing you "Californian Girls", "Good Vibrations", "I Get Around", "Sloop John B", "Surfin USA" and of course Paul McCartney's all time favourite song "God Only Knows" and many, many, more.

From a recent review "*Beach Boys SMiLE encapsulated the look and sound of the ultimate rock band. You really could not tell the difference. A performance of perfection in a class of its own. Peerless*".

Tickets are on sale now at [www.barntheatreoxtd.co.uk](http://www.barntheatreoxtd.co.uk) or by telephoning 01959 561811, don't leave it too late, this will be a very popular evening.

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## *The Future*

The New Foxtrot Serenaders will be reprising their 'Back to the Future' concert, given earlier this year at the Barn, on Saturday 5th November at the Fairfield Halls, Croydon. Tickets are priced at just £10 and available from the Fairfield Halls website and box office. They return to the Barn in March 2012 with a new concert 'Sammy, Frank and Dean with a little help from Bing'.

We shall also welcome back Good Company following their success with *A Man of No Importance* last year. They will present an exciting musical production in February 2012, *The Drowsy Chaperone*, which is an effervescent spoof of old musicals and won two Tony Awards on Broadway. You can find out more now by e-mailing [goodcompanyboxoffice@gmail.com](mailto:goodcompanyboxoffice@gmail.com)

More details on these and other future shows in November's Barn Theatre News.

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