

DANCING AT LUGHNASA AT THE LUCAN SPA HOTEL

So poetic, so atmospheric, so believable

by **Kate Donoghue**

LUCAN Drama Club performed Brian Friel's 'Dancing at Lughnasa' at the Lucan Spa Hotel for five consecutive nights last week.

It was the group's annual autumn/winter production, and director Marie Henry said they chose 'Dancing at Lughnasa' because it is such an excellent play.

"It's so atmospheric, so poetic and has amazing themes. There's the whole of human life there; its joys, its tensions, its humour, its sadness."

"The opening night had a very good response. We had one comment that it was super and another that it was very professional and that the characters were very, very believable."

'Dancing at Lughnasa' tells story of the five, unmarried Mundy sisters, living together in their small home in the fictional town of Ballybeg, County Donegal in 1936.

The eldest, the stern schoolteacher Kate, was played by Brenda Mitchell. Maggie, played by Colette Walsh, is the joker of the house. Agnes (Eileen Maguire) is more serious and takes care of simple-minded Rose, played by Anita O'Kearney.

The youngest, Christina (Aoife Gately), has a child out of wedlock named Michael. The play is told through the narrative of an adult Michael, played by John Heveran, who reminisces on the August of 1936 when he was seven.

The challenge of switching between the grown-up Michael's narration and the sisters' re-enactments was well met. Heveran's delivery was excellent and the transitions flowed seamlessly.

Jack Mundy (Donal Downes), their brother, has been sent home from the African Missions with malaria and it becomes clear he has "gone native" and abandoned most of his Catholicism.

Michael's father, the charming but flaky Welshman Gerry Evans, was played by Jack Flanagan.

Though there were moments of humour throughout, the deep sadness at the core of the play was still felt because of strong acting from the main characters.

The outbursts of wild dancing in the play had the desired feel of escapism from the repression of life

in rural Ireland in the 1930s.

At the performance on Wednesday night, audience members Michael and Rita O'Keefe remarked that there were no weak links:

"It was excellent. The acting was superb," said Rita. "I saw the film and wondered would it live up to it but it really did," added Michael.

"The intimacy of the venue and what they can do with the set is excellent."

Lucan Drama Club put on two full-length plays a year and qualified for the All-Ireland Finals with their one-act play, 'Subtraction', by Kevin McFillen to be staged in the Mill Theatre in Dundrum last weekend (2nd-4th December).



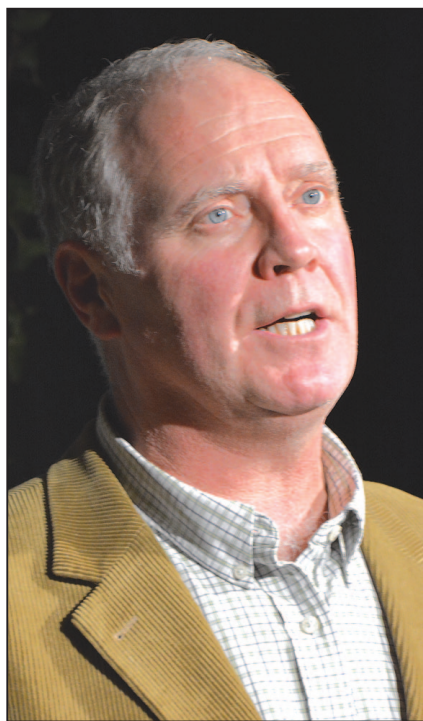
(l-r) Colette Walsh as 'Maggie', Anita O'Kearney as 'Rose', Eileen Maguire as 'Agnes', Aoife Gately as 'Chris' and Brenda Mitchell as 'Kate'.



ABOVE: Donal Downes as 'Fr Jack Mundy'.

RIGHT: Aoife Gately as 'Chris Mundy' and Jack Flanagan as 'Gerry Evans'.

BELOW: John Heveran as Michael/Narrator.



(l-r) Barbara Cummins, Anna Nolan, Mary Mulhall and Rose Fitzgerald. Pics: Garry Bermingham



(l-r) Maria Stewart, Carmel Bellew and Moira Bolger.



(l-r) Breege and Maeve Phillips, Sarah Downes and Siún Kelly.



ABOVE: Laura O'Donoghue from Cork and Roseina Doyle from Maynooth.

LEFT: Yvonne O'Shea whose daughter Aoife Gately plays Chris Mundy in the play.