

ArtsEtc...

Whimsical Wales

Dylan Thomas play 'Under Milk Wood' at Electric Theatre Company

By Joan Mead- Matsui

| Abington Journal Correspondent

The first play Electric Theatre Company director David Zarko directed in college was "Under Milk Wood." He enjoyed the experience so much he wanted to bring the beauty and the culture of Dylan Thomas' poetry to northeastern Pennsylvania.

"The initiative for doing this play came about a year ago when Mulberry Poets had a Welsh poet at the Cultural Center. I went to hear him and thoroughly enjoyed it. Also, 'Under Milk Wood' was my first play I directed in college years ago and I've always wanted to do it. And especially with this company."

From Sept. 29 through Oct. 31, Electric Theatre Company, a resident Equity theatre company in its 19th season of production, will present "Under Milk Wood" by Dylan Thomas, following 60 eccentric characters as they dream, love and rhapsodize through one day in spring. "Under Milk Wood" is Dylan Thomas' only play and it was originally written for radio, but has more often been produced on stage.

"The script in itself is a day in the life of a small Welsh village. Similar to "Our Town," which is one of my favorite plays, in "Under Milk Wood" you've got the exotic Welsh, the beautiful language, the poetry of the writing and also many of the characters in the village are a bit odd and quite interesting. There's a lot of humor. It's a very fun story and the language is absolutely beautiful poetic language, so it's a lot of fun for an actor to play these characters, which are a little odd and also to speak these beautiful words," said actor James Langan.

Welsh actress Gwenfair Vaughan is no stranger to the works of Dylan Thomas. "I am very familiar with Dylan Thomas' work, I regularly perform his work for the International Literary Prize named in his honor. It's a great experience to do this famous Welsh work with an American cast, seeing things through their eyes, which is completely fresh," said Vaughan

"Usually when 'Under Milk Wood' is done, it's not done with as few as six actors, and David Zarko has been very attentive and trusting of us that we can pull this off. When I auditioned for this play, I think he was surprised to find a Welsh girl walking in the door," said Vaughan. "I think there is an international message here that all com-

"When I auditioned for this play, I think he was surprised to find a Welsh girl walking in the door."

Cast member Gwenfair Vaughan



The cast of 'Under Milk Wood' by Dylan Thomas, from left, includes Sam Adams, Gwenfair Vaughan, and David Walters. Absent from photo are Mary Ethel Schmidt, James M. Langan and Samantha Phillips.

munities have their eccentric characters and because they're all concentrated in one place, they seem to be more prominent. The reverend is quite quintessentially Welsh, because he has this wonderful speech where he talks about the mountains of Wales, the waterfalls and the rivers and he reminds everybody of the beauty of Wales. The language is so beautiful describing the beauty of a small country."

In addition to Langan and Vaughan, the cast includes company members Mary Ethel Schmidt, Samuel Adams, David Walters and Melissa Smith.

Designers are regional scenic designer Matt McCormick, Florida lighting designer Michael Bell, and New York-based costumer, Rachael Miller, a Scranton native. Stage managers are area natives Suzanne Lucas

and Coley Dobosh.

Electric Theatre Company received matching funds from the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority to support this production. Zarko said, "It's been really exciting to put this together and it has been great working with our partners."

In addition to the play, a performance of Welsh Choral Music, a concert with The Lyric Consort, will be held Oct. 16 and again Oct. 22 at 7 p.m., before the performance of "Under Milk Wood."

Also, "The Poetry of Dylan Thomas," a reading with Mulberry Poets and Writers Association, will be held Oct. 10 at 3 p.m.

From Oct. 1 to 31, "Hyde Park," an