

ABERGAVENNY EISTEDDFOD 2008

Twenty competitions in this year's junior Eisteddfod attracted over 170 entries, mainly local children from schools in Abergavenny and the surrounding area.

Over 100 individual competitors and more than 50 groups and ensembles entered the preliminary competitions during the week before the Eisteddfod, and three in each category were chosen by the adjudicators to go on to Saturday's finals on stage in King Henry V111 School.

Asked to comment on what was the best feature of the Abergavenny Eisteddfod, one member of the audience said that it was "bringing everyone together, so that children get to know others from different schools."

On Saturday that certainly happened, with children from the age of four upwards enjoying the experience of performing on stage and receiving great encouragement from the adjudicators for their efforts.

As well as local children, there were a number from further afield, from Tredegar, Pontypool and Porth. "Unlike some Eisteddfods, we don't differentiate between local and other competitors" said committee Chair Ceri Thomas. "We want the Abergavenny Eisteddfod to give as many children as possible the opportunity to perform on stage in a friendly, welcoming atmosphere."

There were fewer competitors on stage during the afternoon's session for secondary age children, although the group free dance competition attracted a record nine entries – a lively and colourful end to the day's events.

The performers who reached the stage in the morning and afternoon were praised highly by the adjudicators, who included Dilwyn Byles and Steven Benavente for the musical competitions, Delyth Caffery and Jane Blank for the recitations and Gavin Ashcroft and Shirley Cole for the dance.

Four were selected to perform in the evening on stage at the Borough Theatre: violinist Sam Ellis, pianist Georgina Jones, singer Christian Morse and trio Bethan, Elis and Sam, who played an original arrangement of "On the Sunny Side of the Street." They will also be invited to perform as part of Abergavenny's town twinning celebrations in July.

The evening in the Borough Theatre was notable for the enthusiasm and enjoyment of the audience, as well as the high calibre of the performers. Young flautists Luke Russell and Catherine White were singled out for particular praise by the Adjudicators with their sparkling duet *Maya* by Ian Clarke.

Some members of the audience were invited to the stage to receive their prizes for the literature competitions. Jane Blank earned a laugh as she read out one of the winning entries, a limerick by Tredegar-based "Random Bloke".

*A composer of scurrilous rhyme
Stripped naked one hot summertime
In Tesco's meat aisle;
He said with a smile,
"How's that for a man in his prime?"*

In his closing remarks, evening compere Richard Davies thanked all the participants, particularly patrons and sponsors who included so many local groups and societies. Abergavenny Music, Cymreigyddion, History Society, Newyddion Gwent, Lady Llanover Society and U3A were just some of the sponsoring organisations.

Clive Howells, representing Abergavenny Rotary, paid tribute to the army of volunteers who organise the Eisteddfod every year. He also gave some extremely welcome news as he presented the Champion Solo prize to soprano Anne Wilkins from Bridgend – that the Rotary Club will once again be supporting the Eisteddfod in 2009.