



**WELSH HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS:** (left to right) Martin Vidnovic, Victoria Mallory, Simon Jones, musical director John Bell, Ashley Robinson and Kerry Conte in delightful re-invention of Dylan Thomas's "A Child's Christmas in Wales" at the Irish Rep. Photo: Carol Rosegg.

## *Theater Review*

# *A Child's Christmas in Wales* evokes innocence of holidays past

*A Child's Christmas in Wales*

Written by Dylan Thomas

Adapted and directed by Charlotte Moore

Through January 2, 2011

The Irish Repertory Theatre

132 West 22nd Street

(212-727-2737), [www.irishrep.org](http://www.irishrep.org)



By Scott Harrah

Based on Dylan Thomas's classic prose poem of the same name, the Irish Rep's annual stage adaptation of *A Child's Christmas in Wales* is 70 minutes of both Christmas carols and heartwarming readings from the story of the author's aunts, uncles, and cats from Christmases past in snowy Wales, evoking gentler times. Although most of the Christmas carols, such as "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," are holiday standards in America, audiences are treated to versions of "Deck the Halls" in both English and Welsh.

The cast, consisting of Broadway veteran Simon Jones, Victoria Mallory, Ashley Robinson, and Tony nominee Martin Vidnovic, and newcomers Kerry Conte and Ashley Robinson, all have superb voices, and do a great job depicting the various characters in Thomas's story: a boy who munches on candy cigarettes; a girl talking about a dog that gets sick from eating jelly beans, Turkish delight and marzipan; aunts who add rum to their tea; and dear old Auntie Hannah, who drinks too much parsnip wine, sings about "bleeding hearts and death," and makes the dogs howl.

The show's intimacy is perhaps its greatest asset. Watching the five talented actors and musical director John Bell onstage at the cozy Irish Rep Theatre in Chelsea, with a Christmas tree, lights, and a piano, it's like we are transported back to one of Dylan Thomas's actual family Christmases in Wales decades ago. If director Charlotte Moore's intention was to spread holiday cheer via Thomas' florid prose and make us yearn for the innocence of Christmases in our youth, she succeeds beautifully here. It's a fitting tribute to a great man of letters who, although Welsh, spent a good portion of his adult life here in New York City until his tragic death at the age of 39 in 1953 at St. Vincent's Hospital.

At the show's end, the cast indulges us in a medley of Christmas standards. While on the surface it might seem like harmless filler, it's the perfect way to an end an evening that casts our minds back to all

those Christmases we'll never forget: the drunken relatives, the anticipation and excitement of being a child yearning for gifts, and the goodwill and proverbial "Christmas spirit" that makes this time of year so magical for many.

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