

PROGRAMME

1993





All at John Player & Sons take immense pride in the company's association with Tops for more than a quarter of a century.

During this time the competition has become part of the life style in many parts of the country and one of the most popular annual events in Ireland. It has made a very significant contribution to community life and to the cultivation of theatrical knowledge and skills. Indeed, the role of Tops in this respect is not always fully appreciated or recognised, perhaps because the event does not readily slot into the general concept of "the Arts". Yet an estimated 300,000 people have been exposed to or involved in all facets of stage work through the event.

The success of the John Player Tops in involving large numbers of people, young and old, from all walks of life has been a major contribution to the desirable goal of a more general community involvement in artistic endeavours. This community involvement is a key strength of Tops and the event brings benefits to both individuals and to the wider community.

The basic concept of the John Player Tops is PARTICIPATION and through the event people are encouraged and helped to develop their abilities in music, singing, acting, choreography, writing, design, organisation, etc. Their capacity for inventiveness is fostered in various ways, and production and technical skills are challenged in bringing ideas to life with the help of colleagues. A sense of colour and shape in the everyday environment is reflected in the design and making of costumes and sets. This level of participation brings fulfillment through the expression of the creative dimensions of individual personality, and through the satisfaction of sharing in a joint venture which will bring pleasure and enjoyment to those who come to see the results. And because of the competitive element in Tops the attention of audiences is focused in a particular way on the many ingredients which go into the making of a show. This in turn develops audience awareness and knowledge of theatrical skills.

Tops could not have realised its full potential as a force for good in the community without funding and John Player & Sons have provided the ongoing financial and management impetus needed to harness it. The success and achievement of the diverse groups, including committees, which participate in Tops is an example of what can be attained by the coming together of various interests with a common objective.



Sunday 6th June 1993
Gaiety Theatre, Dublin

Adjudicators: **Joe Duffy**
 Noel Kelehan
 Maxi
 Michael Scott
 Jacinta Whyte

Host Presenters:
 Fionnuala Sweeney and Marty Whelan

Special Guests:
 Honor Heffernan with Anthony Byrne
 and Kenneth Edge

Tonight's final is the 25th in the history of the event and is the eighteenth to be televised live by RTE. This is the 29th year of the John Player Tops, which was a locally based competition until the introduction of a national final in 1969.

The Gaiety has been the venue for all but one of the National Finals and there is no doubt that the ambience and

the tradition of this great theatre has added greatly to the success and lustre of the occasion over the years.

From the outset all the staff, both front-of-house and backstage, have given a special welcome to the Tops groups and indeed to all associated with the competition. Thus it is with pleasure and sincerity that we record our deep appreciation of the unfailing help and concern of the Gaiety personnel over the years.

George McFall (Stage Manager) has been associated with the Gaiety final since the outset and his expertise has undoubtedly contributed greatly to the standards achieved by the shows each year. Technical Manager, Martin Keleghan, is no stranger to Tops, having assisted many Tops groups in local rounds in Dublin over the years, and we are delighted that his help and expertise is available to tonight's finalists. It is not practicable to mention all of the Gaiety staff but we would like the management and all associated with this great theatre to know that they play a significant role in the success of Tops Final Night.

Television presentation produced and directed by
Bil Keating.



Discussing the John Player Tops Final arrangements are Gerry Grogan, Chairman & Managing Director, John Player & Sons, Peter Daly Finance Director and Liam Hyland Operations Director with the Tops Trophies in the foreground.

Twenty-Nine Years On

Don't the years fly! This is our 29th year sponsoring Tops and in a changing world it's comforting to see that in some respects there is a constancy.

On our site at South Circular Road, Dublin we, along with our predecessors and associates Wills & Clarkes have been manufacturing since 1923. There are few businesses that have had such constancy, maintaining employment, striving for excellence and serving our trade and consumer markets effectively. In Cork where Clarkes originated in 1830 we maintain a distribution depot at Lavitt's Quay appropriately called Clarke House.

We bring the same constancy to our sponsorship of John Player Tops which must be the longest running Popular Arts sponsorship by an individual company in Ireland.

Its success is undoubted and through the participative nature of the event a huge number of people are encouraged and helped to develop their abilities in music, singing, acting, choreography, writing and design. Add to that the organisational skills to mount

these shows. The result is a degree of enjoyment for those who see these performances that is hard to beat and a sense of achievement for all who are involved in the shows.

Our congratulations to all who participated this year in Tops and our thanks to the thousands who supported the casts in so many ways.

We greatly appreciate the work of the National Council of John Player Tops, the Centre Committees, the recognition that the Provincial & National Press give to participants, as does local radio.

Throughout the many stages of Tops we are very ably served by some outstanding adjudicators whose sensitive and fair judgement is one reason that Tops has continued to flourish.

RTE tonight face the challenge of capturing for the camera and screening the final between two outstanding teams. We know that the audience here in the Gaiety and those at home are in for a treat.

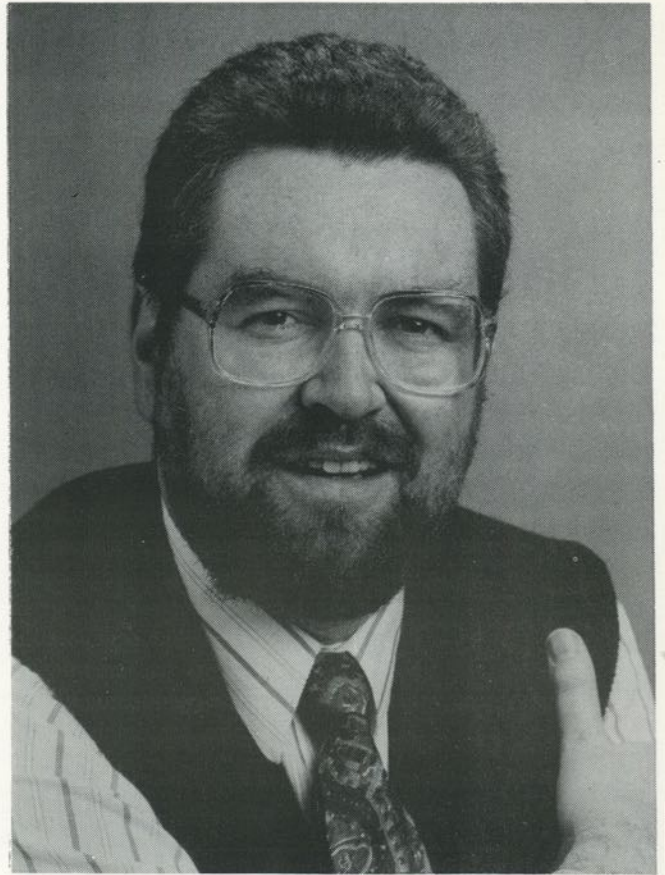
John Player & Sons, Dublin.

JOE DUFFY

While it would be true to say that Joe Duffy is one of the new breed of broadcasters rapidly making a name for themselves on the national airwaves he is also quite a unique talent with his zany, sometimes irreverent, but always thoughtful and incisive style of interviewing.

In a very short time, Joe has established himself as an integral part of Ireland's most popular radio institution, the Gay Byrne Show. He has also carved out a significant niche in the RTE schedules during the summer months, with his own daily programme. In addition, Joe finds time to write a weekly column for a national newspaper, as well as fitting in numerous personal appearances all around the country.

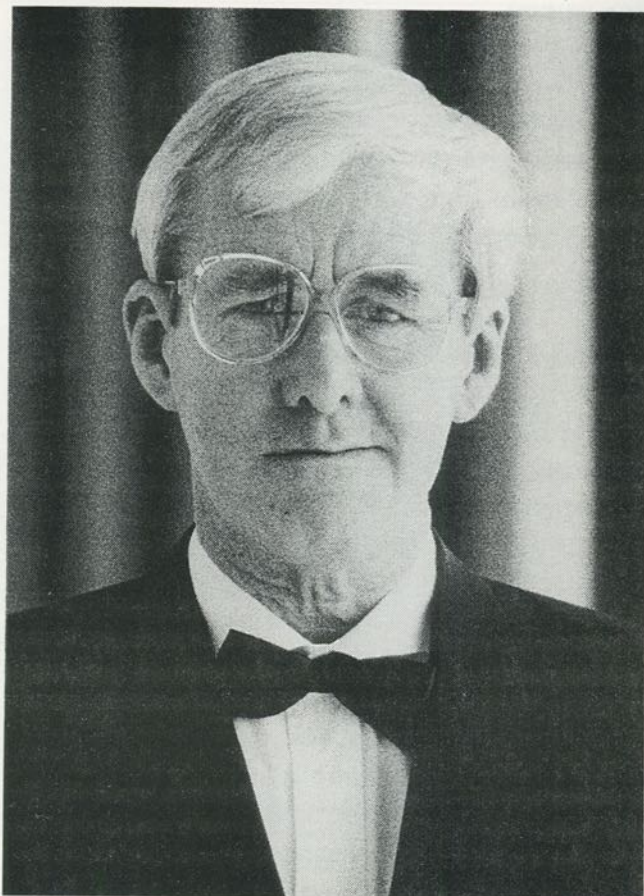
Joe has been involved in presenting variety type shows on radio from various factories and communities around the country and thus has first hand knowledge of the amount of talent which exists throughout Ireland, as well as an understanding of the ethic which motivates Tops groups.



NOEL KELEHAN

Noel Kelehan, one of Ireland's most distinguished musicians, is a conductor/arranger with RTE and is also a highly acclaimed jazz pianist. He has an enviable fluency with all musical styles, and acts as Musical Director for many television variety series.

Noel studied music in his native Dublin and in New York and has been involved in stage, radio and television as a performer, arranger and conductor for many years. He is no stranger to Eurovision, having conducted at the Contests in Ireland in 1981, 1988, 1993 and composed the opening theme music for the events in 1971 and 1981. As a composer, he has been commissioned to write for string quartet, jazz groups and symphony orchestra, and his works include a Suite for Chamber Orchestra (featuring guitarist Louis Stewart) and Three Pieces for Percussion Ensemble and Symphony Orchestra, premiered by the National Symphony Orchestra at the Dublin Festival of Twentieth Century Music.



Twenty-Nine Years On

Over the years we have grown into a well-established and successful organization. It's comforting to see that some things have remained the same.

Our roots in the Emerald Isle, Dublin, are strong. Our associates, Wills & Davies, have been with us since 1923. There are few other agencies in the country maintaining the same level of expertise and service.

In 1993 we celebrated our 70th birthday. It's a milestone we will never forget. We remain a member of the Irish Music Commission and continue to support the Irish Music Commission's work.

We are proud to be a member of the Irish Music Commission and to be part of the Irish Music Commission's work.



Some things. The result was a period of adjustment for those who saw their performance. That is hard to do and a sense of accomplishment as they are involved in the show.

Our congratulations to all who participated this year in Tops and our thanks to the individuals who supported the club in so many ways.

We greatly appreciate the work of the National Council of John Player Tops, the County Committees, the recognition that the Provincial & National Presbytery is participating. We look forward to next year.

Throughout the early stages of Tops we are very much interested in the understanding of the club's history and the judgment of the region that Tops has continued to flourish.

RTE might have the advantage of capturing the fun and excitement of the club, but we are very much interested in the club's history and the judgment of the region that Tops has continued to flourish.

John Player & Sons, Dublin

MAXI

Maxi has a wealth of experience in the entertainment business. At the tender age of eight, she joined THE YOUNG DUBLIN SINGERS and was chosen by Eamonn Andrews a few years later to be part of Maxi Dick and Twink. All the girls records charted and their series on television topped the TAM ratings. Maxi toured Canada and the States with an American band and was even asked to entertain in the Maximum Security Prisons by the then Government of the USA! She worked as a session singer in Motown studios Detroit and in Abbey Road in London and represented her country twice in Eurovision and represented HOLLAND in the world song contest in Tokyo. As a member of Sheeba she sang on NAME THAT TUNE for Thames Television. Her self penned songs have reached Eurosong many times, and as an actor she has appeared in Dublin's Abbey and Cork's Opera House. She hosted RAPID ROULETTE on RTE Television becoming Ireland's first game show hostess, and has broadcast for the BBC and Radio Luxembourg as well as hosting the Breakfast Show for 2FM from Hawaii, and presented Maxi in Lebanon, Maxi in Jersey and Maxi in Madrid. She hosts Late Date on Saturday, Sunday and Monday on RTE Radio One and writes for the RTE Guide. She is at present appearing on Wednesday nights in Mosney in her own show.



MICHAEL SCOTT

Michael Scott has been Theatre Director Project Arts Centre, Programme Director for Dublin Theatre Festival, and Director of the Tivoli Theatre in Dublin.

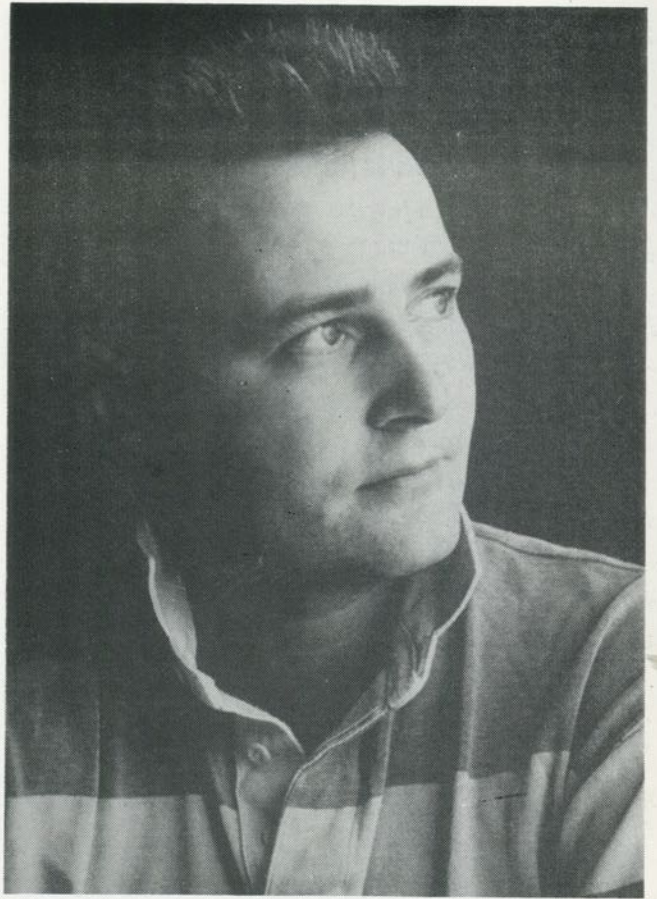
He received his theatre training in Europe under an Arts Council Apprentice Theatre Producers Bursary.

Theatre productions at Project include BENT, THE ANTIGONE, TRAFFORD TANZI, THE NORMAL HEART. FRAGMENTS OF ISABELLA. TORCHLIGHT AND LASER BEAMS (Dublin Theatre Festival) PRIVATE DICK (Druid), ELLA (Iceland) and Thomas Kilroy's new version of GHOSTS at the Abbey.

Musicals include THE SOUND OF MUSIC, CAROUSEL, THE WIZARD OF OZ, THE RAVEN BECKONS, FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. He restaged GRISELEDIS (Massenet) for the inaugural Tour of WEXFORD FESTIVAL TOURING OPERA. His most recent theatre production has been THE WOMAN IN BLACK at the Olympia Theatre.

He has also written and directed and several of his productions including THOSE THREE DAYS - Pro Cathedral Dublin and Divis Cathedral Belfast, a new version of THE AGAMEMNON for Red Kettle, with Actress Gabrielle Reidy FRAGMENTS OF ISABELLA for stage and film. He collaborated with author Christopher Nolan on TORCHLIGHT AND LASER BEAMS for Dublin and Edinburgh Theatre Festivals. For Siamsa Tire he wrote SONGS OF LEAVING. With actor Niall Toibin he developed a new translation of Brendan Behan's THE HOSTAGE (An Giall).

In 1992 he wrote and directed two major community projects - THE COLUMBAN PAGEANT which took place all over Derry City and SONGS BY THE RIVER with the people of Trim for their newly established Folk Theatre for which he also wrote new music.



JACINTA WHYTE.

Jacinta Whyte was born and educated in Dublin; she was a pupil of Billie Barry's Stage School from her earliest years. As a child Jacinta played in pantomimes in The Gaiety and The Olympia and eventually played the title role in "Annie" - she later went on to play this role in the London production. She subsequently played leading roles both here and in England in such shows as Grease, West Side Story, The Scatterin', Slice of Saturday Night. On television she has appeared on The Late Late Show, Sunday Night Live from the Gaiety, Summer Specials, The Brendan Grace Show and she also had her own series. Earlier this year, Jacinta played Mary in "Mary Make Believe" in the Gate Theatre. Last week, she returned to Dublin again to guest at the RTE Proms.

Jacinta played in the London production of "Les Miserables" for some time and is currently rehearsing the part of Eponine for the production which will play in Dublin and Edinburgh until February 1994.



PLAYERS ANONYMOUS TRAMORE

IN ASSOCIATION WITH

Celtworld

Tramore

“Once Upon A Dream”

1. Fantasy Street
2. Crimeline
3. Making The Perfect Man
4. Nunsence
5. A Lovers Dream
6. Skid Row
7. American Dream
8. Political Dreamer
9. Musical Fantasia
10. A Shopping Affair
11. Racing with the Clock
12. Dream On.....

DEvised & PRODUCED BY: Brian Flynn
CHOREOGRAPHY/MUSICAL STAGING:
Geraldine & Liam Molumby.
MUSICAL DIRECTOR/CHORUS MASTER:
Robert Bible.

COSTUMES BY: Avril Musgrave

SET DESIGN: Ben Hennessy.

LIGHTING DESIGN: Aidan McGrath.

DREAM TEAM: Senieva McGill, Lorraine Tubritt, Lynn Cummins, Anne Hourigan, Joanne Barrett, Rosie O'Driscoll, Valerie Furlong, Dervela Cheevers, Noelle Kervick, Majella Maher, Karen White, Michelle Glendon, Eileen Stafford, Ruth Kinsella, Susan Murphy, Janet Kennedy, Theresa Healy, Caoimhe Cantwell, Karen O'Brien, Caroline O'Connor, Crona Cummins, Amanda O'Sullivan, Emma Kinsella, Aoife O'Brien, Grace O'Brien, Nicola Butler, Denise Roche, Enda Jackman, Paul Kavanagh, Derek O'Keeffe, Michael Dunphy, Bill Stafford, Mick Power, Keith Dunphy, Kieran Doyle, Maurice Kelly, Adrian Cullinane, John Cardiff, Jim O'Sullivan, Joe McGrath, Liam Butler, Cliff Whelan, David O'Sullivan, David Flynn, Ian Doyle.

ORCHESTRA: Robert Bible (Keyboards), Martin McCarthy (Guitar), Tony Comerford (Percussion), Damien Foley (Trombone), Alan Duggan (Trombone), Jimmy O'Brien-Moran (Saxophone), Sean Robinson (Trumpet), Brendan Doyle (Saxophone)

PIT SINGERS/OFFSTAGE VOCALISTS: Antoinette Crehan, Angela O'Leary, Paula Brackenbury, Nuala Rush, Jacqueline Kennedy, Claire Evans, Tina Gleeson, June Walsh, Michelle Kervick, Damian Comerford, Jimmy Whelan, Christy Brophy, Martin O'Callaghan, Jamie Beamish, Tom Ryan.

STAGE DIRECTOR: Noel Kane.

STAGE MANAGER: Richard Dowling.

COMEDY SCRIPTS WRITTEN BY:
Sean O'Kelly, Hilary Redding, Peter Kehoe.

COMEDY PERFORMED BY:

Jane Fraher, Mary Rose Martin, Nicky Cummins, Blaise Hannigan, Raymond Collins, Sean O'Kelly, Pat McEvoy
Music Rights to Parody *Summer in Dublin* by kind permission of Liam Reilly (Composer), Bardis-River Music (Publishers).

STAGE CREW: Tommy Bohan, Brendan O'Rourke, Liam Maher, Tony Whelan, Johnny McCarthy, Dick Butler, Jim O'Meara, Mark Bailey, Elaine Whelan, Eleanor Curtin, Niamh Martin, Tom Whelan, Carmel Murphy, Jane Sinnott.

SPOTLIGHT OPERATORS:

John Merriman, Richard Sheedy

FLYMAN: Adrian Fitzgerald

PRODUCTION ELECTRICIAN: Jimmy O'Dea

SET CONSTRUCTION: Noel Kane, Tommy Bohan, Eamon Morrissey, Liam Maher

SOUND LIAISON:

Tony Kennedy, Jackie O'Keeffe, Karl Casey

MAKE-UP: Eleanor McCarthy, Catherine Furlong

WARDROBE MISTRESS: Elaine Tighe

DRESSERS: Belinda Casey, Ann Kelly, Norma Boyle, Ann Bohan, Lorraine O'Keeffe, Mary O'Brien, Kathleen Merriman, Nora White, Theresa Kinsella, Breda Butler, Sinead Sage, Deirdre Coghlan, Fiona McGrath

COSTUME CONSTRUCTION: Avril Musgrave, Bernie Kane, Paula Brackenbury, Elaine Tighe, Mary Rose Martin, Valerie Whelan, Maria Ryan

PLAYER ANONYMOUS MASCOT: Sal Molumby

Acknowledgements

Waterford Crystal, St. Otteran's Hospital De La Salle Brothers, Dando & Joan Kelly, Stage Fright Theatre Co., Bell Lines, Peter Doyle (Local Co-ordinator), R. McDonald & Sons Ltd.

We wish to convey our sincere thanks to all who have helped in any way in the creation of this show.

DUNNES STORES MUSICAL & DRAMA SOCIETY

PRESENT

"CHECK IT OUT"

1. SING, SING, SING
2. "SISTER ACT"
3. SIN SCEAL EILE
4. "SYNCHRONISED SHOPPING"
5. FANTASY ST.
6. A "SHORT" STORY
7. LEGEND
8. LADIES IN WAITING
9. "THIS JOINT IS JUMPIN"

CAST: Tara Nolan, Tracy O'Brien, Susan Murphy, Patricia Byrne, Linda Towell, Karen Kelly, Patricia Cooling, Maria Hill, Cathy MacNeill, Fiona Cooke, Olga Tapley, Irene Dowd, Elaine Fitzgerald, Fionnuala O'Doherty, Denise Donohoe, Elaine Scully, June Carr, Linda Keely, Oonagh Barrett, Serena Corrigan, Laura Govan, Denise Carter, Carmel McKenna, Anna Doody, Fiona Sullivan, Aisling Connor, Laura Hilliard, Cathy Prendeville, Michele Donnelly, Anne Myler, Sharon Gibbons, Emer Feighan, Siobhan Byrne, Anne McGraine, Karen Wallace, Marian Murphy, Catriona O'Connor, John White, Eddie Flynn, Brian Dunphy, Jim White, Willie Grimes, Damien Flynn, Brian Dunphy, Jim White, Chris Keogh, Joe Burke, John Wolverson, Brian Keogh, Jimmy Giles, Terry Reddy, Paul Furey, Derek Maloney, Mick Hughes, Samantha Nevin, Pat Holland, Anne Myers.

GROUP LEADER: Jimmy Ryan
ASSISTED BY: Tony Griffin
PRODUCER: Derek O'Donoghue
MUSICAL DIRECTOR: David Hayes
CHOREOGRAPHER: Margaret Joyce
ASST. TO THE CHOREOGRAPHER: Geraldine Ebbs
COMEDY WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY: Martin Higgins
COMEDY TEAM: Mick Hughes, Paul Furey, Emer Feighan, Sharon Gibbons, Fiona Sullivan, Anne Myers.
SET DESIGN: John O'Donoghue
SET CONSTRUCTION: Gerry O'Brien, Mark Donoghue, Stephen Dunne, Tom Sheehy
LIGHTING DESIGN: Gerry Taylor
COSTUMES BY: Pat Perry, Helen Dorman, Mary Doyle, Marie Byrne, Maria Keogh, Linda O'Neill, Clown Around
STAGE MANAGER: Ken Giles

ARTWORK: John O'Donoghue

LIGHTING CREW: Tony Saunders, Thomas Lynch, Simon Costello, Tony Sheridan.

DEPUTY STAGE MANAGERS: Maureen McMahon, Mark Donoghue

STAGE CREW: Niall McCall, Aileen McCall, Tom Maloney, Aisling Maloney, Rafe Ardiffe, Tom Sheehy, Gerry O'Brien, Terry Fitzpatrick, Eileen Gaul, Pat McGuinness, George Elliot, Stephen Dunne, Paul Kelly, John McGeown, Ken Delaney, Garret Hogan, Rita Hogan, Sharon Douglas, Enda Doyle.

P.R.O. : Pat Travers

DRESSERS: Niamh O'Donoghue, Ingrid Murray, Emer Olfhert, Rosie O'Donoghue, Linda O'Neill.

PROPS: Sylvia O'Neill, Jean O'Carroll, Susan Coyle

SOUND: Ger Burke, Noel Fitzpatrick

SOUND CO-ORDINATOR: Vincent Osborne

ELECTRICIANS: Dave Fletcher, Michael Byrne

PIT SINGERS: Brian Grant, Bernard Doyle, Niall Mulvey, Alison Jackson, Colette Brennan, Fiona Coyle, Therese Sharkey, Michelle Hayes, Janette English, Elaine Farrelly, Maureen Grant, Shay Gibson.

COMMITTEE: Chairperson Margaret Heffernan, Jimmy Ryan, Tony Griffin, Tom Shields, Brian Daly, Fionnuala Maher, Jane Sammon, Mary Southwell, Tara Nolan

Special Thanks to the Board of Directors of Dunnes Stores for their support and the use of facilities, to all our staff throughout the country, R.M.E., Sydney Cooper Ltd., Allied Foods, and the supporters of the fund raising draw.

Players Anonymous Tramore



The cast of the Players Anonymous Tramore Show "Once Upon A Dream" with producer Brian Flynn, Choreographer Geraldine Molumby and Musical Director Robert Bible included.

This is the first national final appearance for Players Anonymous, Tramore. However, they carry a proud tradition as standard-bearers for Waterford, where the John Player Tops had its origins 29 years ago.

Tramore made their Tops debut in 1986 with a show devised and produced by Jim O'Sullivan, who features in this year's show in the "Phantom of the Opera" section of the "Musical Fantasia" scene. In addition his 10 year old daughter, Amanda, and 12 year old son, David, are in the show. Amanda is the little girl who is highlighted in the opening "Fantasy Street" item, and David is one of the male dancers.

Other founder members of the group involved this year include Theresa Healy, and Noel Keane. Theresa choreographed the initial show in 1986 and dances with the "Dream Team" dancers this year. Noel is stage director and has been associated with many Waterford Tops productions, including the Waterford Crystal show which won the national final in 1971. Tramore reached the national quarter finals last year but their dreams really have come true with the success of their show "Once Upon a Dream" in achieving

a national final place on this occasion. The show is produced and devised by 22 year old Brian Flynn, who is gaining a growing reputation in the Waterford area for his innovative and imaginative productions. In addition he is an accomplished musician and actor. Musical director is the talented Robert Bible, and choreography is in the hands of husband and wife team Geraldine and Liam Molumby.

The Tramore group have had to surmount many obstacles in their progress in Tops and much of the motivation has come from Group Leader Avril Musgrave, and Elaine Tighe, Wardrobe Mistress, and enthusiast supreme! Fund raising activities included a table quiz, a golf day, a pitch and putt competition, a night at the dogs, discos, and the inevitable raffles. In addition help in cash and in kind has been received from many generous sponsors and friends.

Tramore is the first ever community group to reach the Tops national final and their success is the result of considerable initiative and zeal both on and off stage. Indeed the group epitomises the spirit and objectives of the John Player Tops.

Dunnes Stores Musical & Drama Society



The Dunnes Stores Musical and Drama society was formed in 1992, and took as its first project participation in this year's John Player Tops. The group draws its membership largely from the company's Dublin branches and head office personnel, and it has been the catalyst for the coming together of people in Dunnes who otherwise would have been strangers. Indeed the group's progress through the Tops this year, has impacted on the company personnel throughout the country, especially in the South East and in Cork, due to national stage appearances in Wexford and in Cork city.

The previously untapped talent in the company which has now come to the fore has been skillfully guided by producer Derek O'Donoghue, choreographer Margaret Joyce, and musical director David Hayes to a place in tonight's national final.

The principal objective of the Society was individual participation and development and this has been achieved beyond all expectations and the group's progress so far in the event has been a big bonus. Having said that, the success and achievement ethic

is very strong in the company and indeed it is upon this that the phenomenal growth and development of Dunnes Stores has been built. That is not to ignore the company's marketing thrust of "Dunnes Stores Better Value Beats Them All"

Those who witness tonight's show will undoubtedly experience very good value in entertainment terms, but the group will certainly be hoping that the heavy discounting which has become a feature of the firm's sales strategy will not be applied to their marks at the end of the evening!!

There is a tendency to dismiss the achievements of a group from a large organisation such as Dunnes on the basis that they have the strength and resources of the concern behind them. Undoubtedly the firm has been supportive and encouraging but the cast have to take a lot of initiative themselves to get the project up and running. At the end of the day, the impact and effectiveness of the show depends on the ability and determination of the entire team to make it work, and on the ingenuity and imagination of those who devise it.

Tonight's Final

This is the 25th John Player Tops National final and only the second Dublin versus Waterford one in the history of Tops. The previous one was in 1980 when Irish Distillers Limited, Dublin, won out against Waterford Banks and Finance. The last Waterford appearance in a national final was in 1987, when Cork Teachers and Students overcame Waterford Crystal Limited.

The return of the Waterford centre to the zenith of Tops this year has created widespread interest and pleasure, as Waterford was the starting point for the John Player Tops and groups from there dominated the event for many years. There is equal pleasure at the achievement of Dunnes Stores in gaining a final place in their first year in Tops, and the group is carrying the hopes of the capital, which has really come to prominence in tops over the past five years. The tally of national final wins now stands at Dublin 8, Waterford 5. On the other hand Waterford groups have featured in 10 finals, including tonight's, whereas Dublin has been represented in 11, most of these being in recent years. Indeed this is the sixth consecutive final to feature a Dublin group.

Both of tonight's finalists are appearing in their first final but, having said that, there is considerable final, and Tops, experience behind the two shows, thus a memorable night is assured.

The John Player Tops took place in ten centres this year, a slight increase on last year. An encouraging and striking feature of the competition was the strength of community groups, and the increasing number of new, and young, producers appearing on the scene. These are encouraging trends for the future of Tops.

The level of excellence which the two finalists have achieved is the result of a tremendous amount of planning and of hard work. It is true to say that shows which have not got this far on this occasion have put in an almost equal amount of work and planning. Success in the Tops does not come without effort, but there is also that indefinable something extra which can make the difference between shows. Nobody can measure or capture that "something extra" it just happens on the night and as the result of the mix of the show. If there were a sure formula and if success could be bought there never would be a failure in the professional theatre. This is what makes Tops so exciting, and, perhaps, so heartbreaking at times. One has a good show, a great deal of work and effort has gone into it. Indeed one may have spent more time and resources on the show than others but on the night the other show just has that indefinable edge, which captures the hearts and the minds of audiences. That is showbusiness!

The Vernon Hayden Award

Inaugurated in 1991 to acknowledge the achievement of the community group, other than a national finalist, which progresses furthest in the current competition the Vernon

Hayden Award has been won on this occasion by Moate Community, which qualified through the Athlone Tops centre.

The award is intended to acknowledge the tremendous contribution which community groups make to Tops and to stage entertainment throughout the country. Indeed community groups are playing an increasingly significant role in Tops, and their achievements are noteworthy because they do not have the support of the formal organisational structures which commercial groups can rely upon.

The Moate group has made remarkable progress in the Tops and it is interesting that they are near neighbours of Clara, who won this award last year and in 1991. It speaks volumes for the Tops tradition and talent in that part of the country that this particular area can consistently come up with shows of the highest quality. In fact emerging from the Athlone Tops centre is now one of the most competitive challenges in Tops.

The Moate Community group's production "Theatrewise" was devised and directed by John White, who has established a glowing reputation in the Midlands for he has many highly successful musical productions to his credit but it is only relatively recently that he has begun to devote his full energies to Tops. His co-producer is John Julian, who, to a large extent, is the motivating and driving force behind the Moate involvement in the competition. Choreographer is Ann Marie Bentick, and Paul Whelan is Musical Director.

The performance of the Moate group in this year's semi finals in Cork certainly had audiences agog and regarding them as real contenders for a national final place. As it turned out they were pipped by tonight's finalists, but they have certainly indicated that they are very serious bidders for ultimate national honours. The show has received generous help and encouragement from Dawn Milk, and it is good to see firms like this supporting local groups in their community. In turn Dawn Milk must be gratified with the progress of their proteges.

The late Vernon Hayden was one of the first tops adjudicators and he adjudicated at all levels of the event for many years. Vernon spent all his life in showbusiness and came from a family steeped in the tradition of variety and pantomime. He worked in the Gaiety Theatre, Dublin for more than fifty years, appearing in the pantos and revues each year. He was manager to the Jimmy O'Dea company for a prolonged period and toured Ireland with that company.

Vernon loved the Tops and had unending praise and admiration for the groups and for what they achieved. He was extremely generous in his help and encouragement and he firmly believed that there are no small roles in a show, every individual has an important contribution to make.

Vernon loved the Gaiety and knew the theatre intimately. When the first Tops was scheduled for the theatre he was immensely proud of the fact and spared no effort to ensure that the groups received every help and assistance, and they did. He would certainly be impressed with the standards achieved in Tops today, but he would not be surprised. He always said that Tops groups attempted and achieved heights which the professionals would not dare to undertake at that time.

RESULTS 1993

AREA WINNERS

<i>Athlone</i>	Clara Community Group*
<i>Carlow</i>	Braun Entertainment Group
<i>Cork</i>	Cork Variety Tops
<i>Dublin</i>	Dunnes Stores Musical and Drama Society
<i>Galway</i>	Claddagh Tops*
<i>Longford</i>	Longford Factories Offices and Shops
<i>New Ross</i>	New Ross Variety*
<i>Thurles</i>	Ballycumber Youth Tops Group
<i>Waterford</i>	Players Anonymous, Tramore*
<i>Wexford</i>	Our Lady's Island Variety Group

RUNNERS-UP

Moate Community Group*
Croneyhorn Variety Group
Inniscarra Dramatic Society
Woodville Variety Group*
Kilcoona Variety Group
Mohill Variety Group
Graiguenamanagh Tops Group
Ballybrown Macra Group
Bausch and Lomb Ireland* (Sunglass Operation)
Kilmore Village Variety Group

NATIONAL ADJUDICATOR: Des Nealon

* Denotes National Quarter Finalists

NATIONAL SEMI-FINALISTS

(Cork Opera House)

DUNNES STORES MUSICAL AND DRAMA SOCIETY, DUBLIN

MOATE COMMUNITY, CO WESTMEATH

PLAYERS ANONYMOUS, TRAMORE, CO WATERFORD

WOODVILLE VARIETY GROUP, DUBLIN

Quarter Final Adjudicators:

Jimmy McClatchie, Ronnie O'Shaughnessy, Michael Twomey

Semi-Final Adjudicators:

Barry Cassin, Christopher Fitzsimon

