

An extraordinary evening celebrating the life of Scotland's bard

WHITE ROCK – The Tam O'Shanter Dancers of White Rock hosted a Robert Burns celebration that was an evening extraordinaire.

Set in an Eighteenth Century town square, the entertainment opened to haunting Scottish airs played by 12-year-old, Connor Page as he stood under the Mercat Cross. Village children followed skipping, playing games, dancing, and filling the square with activity.

Flower ladies distributed roses and heather posies to the ladies, a fish monger peddled her fish, and a street cleaner swept with her heather broom.

In the background patrons of the Tam O'Shanter Inn quite visibly enjoyed their own brand of entertainment. Ted White, drew the children around him as he tuned up his small pipes sitting on a bench.

The Town Crier, Kyle Mitchell, resplendent in appropriate costume made his dramatic entrance by the Burns Monument to proclaim the news of the day and to announce proceedings.

He drew attention to the history of his profession and to the value of involving the younger generation in every aspect of their culture. He called on 11-year-old MacKenzie Balakrishnan to recite *Up in the Morning Early*.

As the spotlight moved to a beautiful six-foot replica of the Iona Cross, Kyle referred to the ancient and intricate artwork as symbols that communicated the gospel to the illiterate of the time. The Tam O'Shanter Dancers danced the Strathspey and Reel Medley *The Iona Cross*, devised by John W. Mitchell.

Patrick MacLeod's selection of songs included a very rousing rendition of *Scots Wha Hae* delivered from the Tam O'Shanter Inn with much enthusiastic support from within.

The next scene portrayed the Edinburgh society where Burns enjoyed the literary elite and where he met his great love, *Clarinda*.

In period costumes, the Tam O'Shanter Dancers performed the beautiful strathspey, *Clarinda*, a dance representing the couple's many meetings and partings.

This was a small glimpse into the ballrooms of the past accompanied by the beautiful music of the Galloway area. Patrick McLeod followed, singing a new arrangement of *Ae Fond Kiss*, Burns' most beautiful love song to *Clarinda*.

To finish the entertainment the dancers chose an unusual reel called *An Unco Sight*. Kyle delighted in his description of the Alloway Kirk scene that Tam



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O'Shanter witnessed on his way home from a rollicking night at the inn, one dark winter night.

Apparitions and other unearthly creatures pranced in a supernatural frenzy of reels and jigs, – in Burns words, "And wow, Tam saw an unco sight!" meaning a remarkable sight beyond the natural.

The figures of the dance, devised by instructor Maureen Lyon are reminiscent of the mayhem that Tam may have seen that dark, stormy night.

The programme ended as the cast and audience joined in singing *The Star of Rabbie Burns*. As they marched off to the music of *No Awa*, the cast left the audience promising to return next year with a new, memorable Burns celebration.

Arthur's Seat set to celebrate Olympics

EDINBURGH – Next year's Edinburgh International Festival will include a spectacular light show at Arthur's Seat as part of the community celebrations for the 2012 Olympics.

Athletes kitted out in special light and colour changing outfits which react to movement will follow various routes around the Capital landmark on foot, on bicycles and in wheelchairs every night of the three-week festival.

Speed of Light is one of four outdoor projects which aim to take the 2012 celebrations to the streets.

Around £3 million is being spent on the project, as part of the Cultural Olympiad, which also includes large-scale works in the East Midlands, the South East of England and Northern Ireland.

Lighting effects will be installed around Arthur's Seat itself and each of the participants will be fitted with colour-coded lighting equipment to create flowing patterns.

A daily endurance event, 21 x 21, is also part of the Scottish programme and runners from across Scotland can take part in a 21km race every day.

The East Midlands project, Games Time, will use a series of performances, light sculptures and digital projections to look at how players involved in everything from traditional board games to worldwide internet gaming challenge themselves.

The Tree of Light project in the South