



TRIUMPHANT: Members of Tempo with their winners' award. Front, Irene Hogg and Marc Elvin. Rear, from left, Neill Somerville, Jenny Hogg and Matthew Smith. Pictures: BILL HENRY

Tempo on a high after big win at the Endas

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AMATEUR Edinburgh acting group Tempo walked away with the inaugural Evening News Drama Award at a glittering ceremony last night.

Members of the company were left shocked and delighted after their show *Spend, Spend, Spend*, which was praised for its fantastic cast, strong performances and excellent staging, won the top prize.

TV presenter and actor Les Dennis presented the prize - which has already become known as the Enda - to thrilled members of the company, many of whom have been with it for more than a decade.

And afterwards they admitted it was great to be recognised for their work, and said the awards were a huge boost for amateur companies in Edinburgh. Actors, directors and producers from all 13 of the nominated amateur companies packed into the Library Bar of the Gilded Balloon for the awards ceremony.

These are the first awards produced by the newspaper for 12 years, and were introduced as a way of recognising the work of local companies during the Fringe, where coverage is often dominated by large-scale productions from across the world.

A beaming Dennis praised everyone present for their hard work and dedication.

He said: "This is their Osc-ars, and it is a time to really enjoy. They all deserve congratulations, as they go above and beyond for something they love doing. So many people these days just want to be famous for being famous, but they are willing to put in the hard work to get there, so it's fantastic that they're getting this recognition."

The winning show was a musical production of the story of Viv Nicholson, who famously said she would "spend, spend, spend" when her miner husband won £152,319 on the pools in 1961.

The show garnered rave reviews, but Jennifer Hogg, 26, the production manager for the group, admitted she was shocked that the company had won.

"I've been involved with the group since I was 11, and we actually won a previous Evening News award when I was just a kid," she said. "I still remember that as it gave us all such encouragement, and to win again tonight was a real surprise. We originally put the show on in February, in a larger venue, so we weren't sure how it would work this time.

"This is just fantastic - so good for all the companies, as it gives them something to aim for."

The runner-up prize went to the Edinburgh People's Theatre for its show *The Holy Terror*, described by the judges as a hilarious romp through Scottish history.

Afterwards John Lyon, 76, a retired bank manager who has been performing with the company for 40 years, confessed to being thrilled that the company had been given recognition for its work.

"We have had a fantastic festival, and this just tops it all," he said. "To get an award is a real treat for an amateur company, and I think it's fantastic that there has been this recognition, of all the shows, as it keeps them going and gives them something to really strive for."

As well as the award-winners there were commendations for the Forth Children's Theatre for *The Wiz*, Big Village for *Almost Haunted*, and the Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group for *Tiny Dynamite*.

After the ceremony, Evening News editor John McLellan said: "We are delighted that we have been able to do something like this for local companies.

"It is important to give these people the recognition which they clearly deserve, particularly at a time when the city is saturated with performers from everywhere else in the world."

An expert judging panel of Evening News theatre critic Thom Dibdin, Radio Forth programme controller Luke McCulloch, and National Operatic and Dramatic Association representative Gordon Blackburn had been to see all of the nominated shows.

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