

Dorset Echo

UNDER THE GREENWOOD TREE

The Digby Hall, Sherborne

THOMAS Hardy's delightful tale of village life and loves is given dramatic form by the Dorset Corset Theatre Company in a warm and affectionate portrayal of Hardy's rustic characters and homespun humour.

The five professional actors take on a number of roles as well as accompanying the action on a variety of musical instruments in the story of the alluring Fancy Day, a village schoolteacher whose arrival turns the menfolk to jelly.

The action gets under way at Christmas as the Mellstock Choir sing carols and swig cider in equal measure under the threat of being evicted from the church by the new vicar who is in favour of replacing them with a new-fangled harmonium.

With rivalry breaking out between three men for Fancy's favours, the young but working class Dick Dewy is the clear favourite but has a number of hurdles to jump before he can claim his prize.

Isabelle King is well cast as the pretty schoolteacher with Ryan Saunders in good form as her beau in this faithful dramatisation by Helen Davis of the much-loved novel.

Songs and dances, laughter, bonhomie and a happy ending – yes, this really is Hardy at his youthful best and the end result is a feel-good evening with a strong Dorset accent.

There are further performances tonight and tomorrow night (Friday 23rd and Saturday 24th) at the Royal Manor Theatre, Portland of a production that should not be missed.

MARION COX