

Winter 2019

scene



The magazine of Scottish Community Drama

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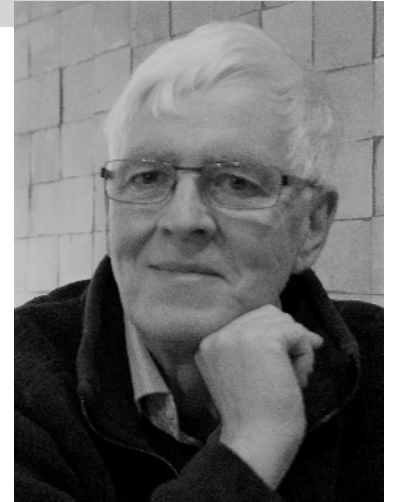
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Cover

The cast of Union Theatre's recent production of Roald Dahl's 'George's Marvellous Medicine'.

photo by **Emily Esson**.

Chairman's musings



Hello

For a while now, it has become increasingly difficult to find volunteers willing to take on some of more responsible roles in SCDA, whether at District, Division or National level. It's not unique to SCDA either. Pretty well everyone I talk to involved in other voluntary organisations is experiencing the same problem.

Explanations generally are that people, and in particular, younger people with children are so busy with work and family matters, they have little time for taking on other responsibilities. SCDA relies on such volunteers giving their time and energy freely and generously in order to function. We need chairmen, secretaries, treasurers, festival organisers and many others. In some cases, the volunteers take on so much, that it seems daunting to others who feel they could not possibly fill that person's shoes.

You may realise that I have in mind the late (and very much missed) Susan Wales Hampson who was a prodigious contributor to the SCDA National Library, Edinburgh District, Eastern Division and the SCDA Scene and Festivals Committees. Before she died, Susan produced a job specification for her replacement, which was so daunting that it could well put people off.

So, what do we do if we are going to manage to keep going? One idea would be to break down some of the larger roles into more manageable chunks. So, you could separate minute taking from organising festivals, and involve two people. Many other jobs can be separated in this way and by doing this, we just might manage to involve more people but each with a less onerous workload. We certainly need to be innovative and think 'out of the box'

Tony Flisch
chair@scda.org.uk

Welcome . . .

To new Individual Members

Poppy Harris	Aberdeen (Northern)
Grace McArthur	Aberdeen (Northern)
Wiktor Wydrzynski	Aberdeen (Northern)
Adrian Ross	Edinburgh (Eastern)
Nancy Dunn	Moray Firth (Highland)
Shelley Hardwood	Aberdeen (Northern)
Vince Spangenberg	Aberdeen (Northern)
Ben Cunningham	Aberdeen (Northern)
Alexander Beaton	Fife (Eastern)
Kelsy Herd	Aberdeen (Northern)
Sophie Ellen Buxton	Aberdeen (Northern)
Aisleen McCiarvey	Aberdeen (Northern)

To new Clubs

Sdramash Youth Theatre	Argyll & Kintyre (Western)
Green Place Theatre Co.	Glasgow (Western)

Thank you . . .

For donations from

Walter Hampson
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Jim Witcomb

Thanks once again to the Executive and National Committee Members for donating their expenses

Offers from Kentucky & the Czech Republic

You know these emails you get from time to time offering you something that seems too good to be true and they turn out to be neither good nor true? I got one last May addressed to the Chair at SCDA offering all sorts of help with our website, communications etc. Despite misgivings, I did reply and guess what? – it was both good and true! I've been in communication with Kara Williams Glen and Mark Simpson of Western Kentucky University ever since to discuss their offer of free, no-strings assistance with communications and branding.

Next summer for a month (May/June) 18 student interns will descend on Stirling where they will divide their time between their course work and our SCDA projects. We will need to provide a few people to work with them on communicating our needs and expectations and, we want to make their experience of Scotland positive and fulfilling. As they will be here at the time of the Youth Final on the 13th June, we plan to invite them all along. Its all very exciting and had it not been for our website (which is how they found us) it would never have happened!

Then, this month we got an email from a group in the Czech Republic based in Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) who also found us via our website and wish to cooperate with us on a Children's Musical Theatre event to be jointly run. Details at present are sparse, but they are hugely enthusiastic about their work and about Scotland which they love. They want someone from SCDA to visit next May at their expense. I can imagine the next National Committee meeting will provide no shortage of volunteers!

The day before I met with the Czech group, I was listening to a podcast in the car about the psychologist Richard Wiseman. He has done a lot of research on why some people seem luckier than most. They apparently share certain characteristics and one of these is a combination of an optimistic outlook and an openness to new ideas and experiences. I suspect that applies to equally to organisations. Lucky SCDA!

Tony Flisch

Is this your magazine ?

If you've just picked up Scene at a drama rehearsal, or from a friend's coffee table, we hope you enjoy it. If you'd like to get your own copy four times a year, it's one of the benefits of becoming an Individual Member of SCDA. Go to our website: scda.org.uk for more information.

On stage with Sir Ian McKellen

I have wielded Glamdring, Gandalf's sword, in front of an audience of Orcadians. There's not many people can make that claim!

You are probably wondering how I came to be one of the lucky few to wield this sword on stage with the man himself, Sir Ian McKellen. He was in Orkney on the final stage of his 80th Birthday tour of small independent theatres across the UK. As part of his show, he asks for a young volunteer from the audience to join him on stage to get to grips with the famous weapon from the Lord of the Rings film franchise. There were many people who put their hands up in the audience that night; I was just faster than the rest.

It felt incredible that out of everyone in the audience, his gaze had lighted on my hand, and he picked me. He was genuinely excited to be joined by a keen young actor, so that he could pass the sword he had held on to the next generation, so to speak. When I was there with him, he asked my name and if I wanted a selfie – well, who wouldn't say yes to that offer?! So, here's me and Gandalf.



visible – but nonetheless he was captivated. His initial interest was for back-stage work, but his first visit to a real theatre taught him the magic of stepping out from the wings onto a stage, and yet another theatrical knight was set on his course.

And what a course it has been, as was demonstrated during his two and a half hours on stage. He treated us to a master-class in acting, from Gandalf the Grey to Widow Twankey, via the entire works of Shakespeare. His boundless energy belied his 80 years; there's many a younger actor who'd struggle to put in half such a strenuous performance. He was never joined by anyone else on that stage, other than me, which meant the entire focus was on him for the entire performance; he had nowhere to hide – except the giant costume/prop trunk, which was the entire set!

It felt to everyone in the audience like they had an old friend around for coffee and chat. Sometimes his honesty was disarming, both in relation to his professional and his private life, but overall it was a spell-binding and innuendo-filled evening, packed with opportunities both to laugh and to think.

You, too, can follow in Sir Ian's footsteps, and visit the Orkney Theatre next April, when the SCDA Scottish Finals take place. I'll tell you all about my night onstage with him when I see you there.

Liam Tait



Throughout the show, he spoke fondly of amateur theatre. He had never actually thought of being anything other than an amateur himself, but professionalism seemed the only way to continue the fun he had had, performing in 7 full-length shows a year while he was at university. His first experience of the professional theatre had been less than encouraging – a rather dodgy production of Peter Pan, where the wires were incredibly

Life of a Costume Designer

I have had a lifelong love of sewing but I developed a true passion when I first started to make costumes. It gives me such joy to design and make for a whole show. For some years now I have been fortunate enough to be asked to make costumes for shows by various amateur dramatic groups in this area.

So, where do I start and what do I do? I start with meeting with the director and producer to find out their plans. Sometimes these can be very specific and others quite vague leaving me to give them my own interpretation. After that I need to get together with the cast to take their measurements. This can take more than a week depending on attendance at rehearsals. At this point It is also necessary to remember that the youngsters I often work with may change size in the months till the show. Skirts and trousers can sometimes be a bit shorter than originally planned.

The script helps to get an idea of the personality of the characters and I also research the time period trying to keep to it with regards to footwear, hair and makeup as well as fabrics. Until last century all clothing was made of natural fibres. Next a great big search of the costumes that I have in store gathered over a period of years. I believe in recycling so try to reuse whenever appropriate.

It is quite a challenge to buy fabrics in Aberdeen having lost most of these shops over the years. There is a great shop called Mandors in Glasgow and I can go down to



buy fabrics or order from them to be delivered. Another source is to visit fabric shops whenever I travel. The jester costume made for the Yeomen of the Guard and the Tinkerbell for Peter Pan are both from "foreign" cloth.

Making the costumes is always fun and I find myself using craft techniques more and more to get the look I am after. I have also gathered a large supply of fabrics which I turn to first but may not always have enough. I try to keep to a budget for costs of around £200-£300.

Another source of supply is the many charity shops in town. Sometimes the lovely ladies who volunteer and run these will keep items for me. For instance, hats, which can be made into Victorian bonnets, will be gathered for me collect at an agreed time. Trawling these shops is an interesting exercise and always rewarding. Once I bought part of a bolt of fabric very cheaply and used it to make many different costumes. At others curtains and sheets which get cut up and given new life as a shirt or skirt or dress.

A last resort is to hire costumes for either Utopia in Forfar or from Scottish Opera. Both have a huge supply of splendid items. Both also invite you to come to their store and view the appropriate costumes for hire. I often go with a tape measure to check sizes. Costs vary with Utopia charging a set rate but Scottish Opera charge a percentage of the value of the costume.

I often go with a tape measure to check sizes. Costs vary with Utopia charging a set rate but Scottish Opera charge a percentage of the value of the costume.

When they are ready the next stage is fitting and altering and then they need the approval of the director. Sometimes part of a costumes is needed for rehearsing as they may involve moves or similar which may be difficult given the style of the costume and alteration or compromise is needed. Some of the performers can be challenging when they do not like the costume and feel it is not appropriate to what they think the role demands. I always listen and sometimes reach a compromise and sometimes persuade them that my perception of the whole picture is needed. Youngsters never see the whole cast as relevant and do not know what my remit may have been.

We are near the end now and the big time before the first performance is the dress rehearsal. The quick changes will have been worked out and now is the chance to see if they can be achieved in time. Also, it is a last chance to spot any small things wrong like uneven hems, hems the wrong height etc.

The last night and day before a show is a time of scurrying to get it all finished and pressed or steamed ready to look fantastic on stage.

First nights happen whether we are all ready or not but it is also the time when excitement is high and I get swept away in the mood at last able to relax and feel content that this is going to be a fabulous show.

Heather Munro

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What is an adjudicator looking for?

It was a simple enough question when a friend, with good directorial form, contacted me to say he had wanted to do a play for ages, was going to do it this year and how did I think adjudicators might react to it. My first question was answered – ‘Do you really like the play?’ There are two other questions – ‘Do you have the cast? Does it suit your group?’

There is a myth amongst the festival fraternity that there is an ‘adjudicators’ play’. Then again I can only speak for myself. And as I celebrate 21 years of adjudicating in this coming season, let me share a very open secret as to what I personally am looking for. (Strangely enough it was a question asked a great deal in my former existence as a schools’ inspector!) Without wishing to be simplistic, the first response as both adjudicator (and inspector) is – ENJOYMENT! Is the audience enjoying the play? Am I enjoying the play? Are those on stage enjoying performing the play?

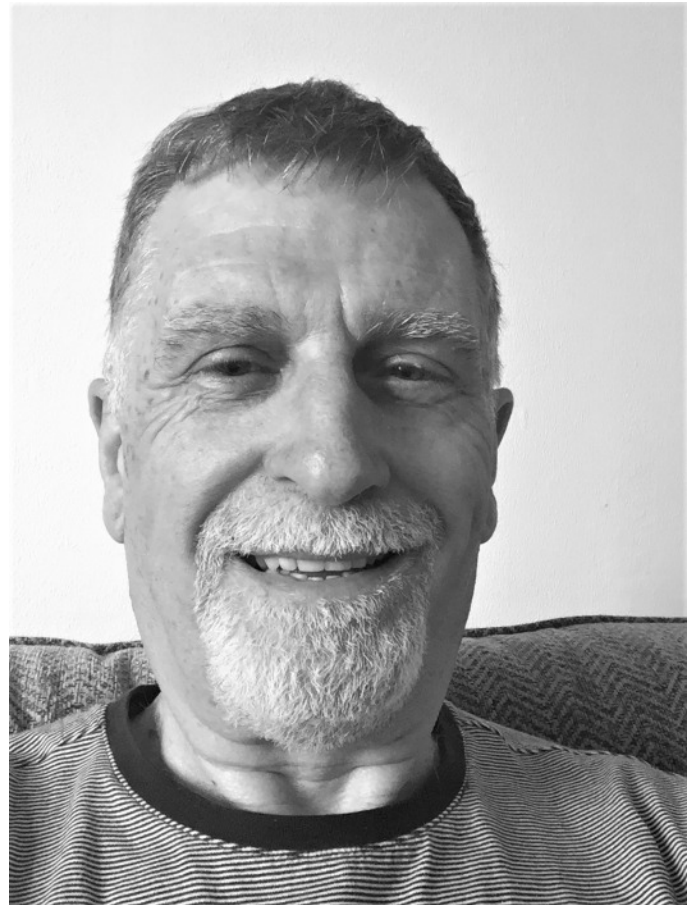
Walker Ewart is a member of GoDA and has been adjudicating SCDA and other festivals for over 20 years

If only it were that simple! How often has someone sidled up to me and said, ‘I’m glad you’re making the decisions and not me’ particularly when it is a finals and the standard at the top is so high. Or, on rarer occasions, ‘I’m glad you’re the one adjudicating this play’ when things are maybe not so good!

I say it often from the stage but there is a mark scheme and in a case of ‘heart v head’ it is imperative that it is used with integrity. And, yes, there have been occasions when a result surprised me when I used it objectively.

So the structure of adjudication and the mark scheme will tell a director and team a great deal.

The background to the play: directors, the internet is often a rich source of what the playwright’s intention was. For those who know me, I usually set the 3 challenges of the play: they can range from multiple scene changes and how to achieve them with minimum disruption to the action, through different types of comedy, to a major part



being carried by one actor and how s/he is supported. Talk to the team - and I mean the whole team including the backstage team –about your perceived challenges and others they might have thought of.

There has been much discussion about changes to the mark scheme to take account of the improvements in lighting and other technology. I feel that the current scheme has it exactly right! Most marks to acting (40), then direction (35), and a substantial amount to technical (15) with achievement (10) allowing the adjudicator to step back and consider the whole, while referring back to how well those challenges have been met.

Actors must be heard; they must be seen; we have to see how their character changes at pivotal times. If you are meeting another character more than once, how do you react differently? How does your reaction tell us as much about your character as your action? Stillness can often be stronger than action. A pause, a look, a slight stiffening of the body, or conversely a relaxation can tell the audience a great deal. And do not patronise the audience by over-reacting: for example, if you are sad keep those hands away from the face, let us feel your sadness as you internalise it.

Directors need to have a clear vision of what they want, and in particular, where there are moments, scenes within the play where characters change or things will never be quite the same again. I always advise directors to have four or five clear pictures in their head of those moments. It can be one or two people; it can be a crowd scene; and more often than not it is a picture which delivers the ‘magic’ every adjudicator hopes for in a finals winner!

Use your mobile phone and take pictures of what you think the picture is; make sure the positioning is right. You can even set up the picture in a particular scene and move backwards from that point to see how the actors get to that position.

And do not forget the vocal work. Do you do a vocal warm up before rehearsing? Enjoy the language and the words. If it is a sad scene, play it as comedy and see what happens, or vice versa. Does it help you discover a nuance you did not realise was there?

Backstage work has improved tremendously over the past ten years, and I applaud all companies, but in particular I have seen and been heartened by the progress made by groups. To see those who take great pride in sound and lighting, in costumes and props, in supporting 'their' team is very gratifying because without a good backstage team a play is nothing. Always check those sound levels, especially if the music is underscoring the dialogue; be as sensitive as you can when changing lighting from one scene to another; practise those cross fades. And to both director and backstage who often create very memorable pictures, hold it for a few seconds longer so that the audience can enjoy it. You have

rehearsed it multiple times; we are seeing it for the first time.

Achievement is linked very closely to those challenges I talked about earlier. Did the performance capture the essence of the play and the writer's intentions? Did it entertain? (which may mean did it make the audience feel uncomfortable!) Again I would say to the director if you are doing a tragedy find some comedy in it as leaven, and much comedy is based on essential tragedy so can that counterbalance be found.

These are the thoughts of one adjudicator. It has been an absolute pleasure over the past twenty years to witness the work of the best amateur drama scene in the world. While adjudicating a few years ago in West Cork, one Friday night there were 26 festivals taking place across the island fielding twenty-six groups. Where else would you find such dedication, such depths of volunteering not only from the teams, but from the festival committees and the drama associations which support them?

As the new season gets under way, long may we all enjoy memorable drama, mostly I hope on stage

Walker Ewart

St. Andrews Drama Club's production of *'The Witches of Prestwick'*, adjudicated by Walker Ewart in this year's Orkney District Festival



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Susan Wales Hampson

You will remember in the last issue of Scene the lovely photograph of Susan and Walter on their wedding day which was such a joyous occasion but sadly Susan died on Sunday 15 September 2019 at the age of 72.

Susan was a strong and integral part of Edinburgh's amateur and community theatre scene for almost 20 years. She took up community theatre in the late 1990s and brought her ideals of shared responsibility to her support for individuals and her doughty organisational skills to its structures and institutions.

After her mother died in 2005 Susan responded to an advert for the Theatre Workshop and found herself cast as "Rose" and part of the costuming team for *David's Gift*. This was a wonderful experience and really kindled her interest in drama, especially the behind the scenes aspects. She attended an AGM at which the SCDA committee was in meltdown and found herself volunteering to be Minute Secretary.

She was involved both in a small part and in the costume team for a Leitheatre play when someone suggested she contact Edinburgh Grads and her relationship with EGTG was cemented. Susan very soon became Secretary and second in command of the costume store. Susan took part in the first one-act festival she organised in a comedy with Grads – *Caught On The Hop*. They came third and won Best Comedy at Division. A great introduction for her.

This is where she started to build what has become her legacy to SCDA. Communication / promotion / cooperation. The Grads monthly newsletter was improved with cartoons and news of other clubs' shows and, as most now went out by email, that grew like Topsy into *Dramanews* sent to an expanded audience.

This then came under the auspices of SCDA Edinburgh. Susan developed a basic website for Grads then a basic one for Edinburgh District, all the



time expanding the range of people reached. Facebook was brought into play here too.

Part way along the route Susan was invited to join The Mercators and it has been with them that she had her acting opportunities including progressing to the Division a few times and the Scottish Final. Her favourite role of Kate the bag lady in *On The Outside* wasn't successful at the festival but remained in her heart.

Susan became interested in the SCDA script library run by Douglas Currie and started developing an online list of contents using information started by Rik Kay. Walter found out what she was doing and created a database. From there the development of the online presence has grown massively.

She became Eastern Division Secretary on a couple of occasions meaning that the first time round she served on the General Council and for a short time on the Executive Committee.

When Susan became District Secretary she started attending all "her" clubs' shows and helped to promote them, and this developed into attempts to attend Divisional shows

too, greatly appreciated by outlying clubs. This became acknowledged by clubs who could see SCDA directly supporting them and has meant a really satisfying relationship with many. The *Dramanews* included appeals for props etc. from the beginning and she believed has resulted in a more cooperative relationship between clubs.

Susan was involved with getting content for *Scene* magazine for a number of years and was instrumental in getting more photos submitted. She was proud of the development of the Eastern Divisional full length festival and donated a runner up trophy last year.

Susan thoroughly enjoyed all her involvement with community drama including the Killin Comedy Festival and was very proud to read messages from drama friends telling her that she had encouraged them over the years.

As already stated Susan married her long term partner Walter Hampson in a wonderful service in June surrounded by many family and SCDA friends. She will be sorely missed by many.

Alison McCallum

FADS eat their way around Orkney



The evening sun was shining as nine FADS delegates, five Young Farmers and two canine tour mascots (Bess & Meg) docked at Stromness on Thursday 16th May, hauling the sets, costumes and props for 'Mrs G' and 'Little Grimley Presents Strictly Sex Factor On Ice'.

Margaret and Leona from Birsay Drama Group were at the ferry terminal to meet us and make sure we all got safely into our accommodation at Colin Muir's Pomona B&B, which was perfectly located in the heart of Kirkwall, around a mile from the theatre we'd be performing in on Saturday and within striking distance of several establishments offering Orkney's finest ale.

Blue skies on Friday gave us perfect sightseeing weather and we all fanned out to explore the island. Between us, we ticked off the Churchill Barriers, the Italian Chapel, Ring of Brodgar, Skara Brae and the beaches around Birsay before meeting up at the Community Hall to unload and get set up. 'Community Hall' doesn't do the place justice – it's a very well-equipped and modern building that even has showers in the dressing rooms! And it was in the Hall foyer that the Famous Birsay Catering Provision began. Linda, Margaret, Issy, Jenny and the team laid on enough home-made cakes, bere bannock and local farmhouse

cheese to sink a cast before the tech checks, then a wonderful buffet, complete with puds, pre-performance. It's a wonder any of us managed to waddle onto the stage.

We had a super turnout from the local community – welcomed to the venue by Paul on his trusty accordion and May clog dancing and playing the flute - and both FADS and SSS YFC put on a great show for the audience of around 100, which included the majority of the SCDA Scottish Final winners from Stromness Drama Club.

On the ferry



Property Bureau had very kindly sponsored a fleet of tour polo shirts, so we were well kitted up for the after-show social and partied away with the Orcadian thespians until midnight.

Next morning, some of party strode off through the drizzle to look at tractors and meet up with a few of the local Young Farmers. The remainder spent the morning rehydrating in various cafes around the seafront, then we met up for a spot of lunch to give us some energy for the afternoon shift.



Bess, Meg & friends

Orkney Theatre is an absolutely fabulous venue that's attached to Kirkwall Grammar School - lucky pupils – and, after two more rounds of cake and buffet from the Birsay DG team, we took to the stage for what were probably our best performances to date, with another 100 or so in the audience, including a few tourists!

Afterwards, we tucked into our fifth meal of the day, then headed into Kirkwall to check that the Orkney ale was as good as it had been on the previous two nights. The 'oldies' then found a quiet hotel bar, while the local YFs took SSS to Kirkwall's premier nightclub. Great fun, the only dip in enthusiasm being when we discovered on our way home that the takeaway was shut, so we couldn't have our sixth meal. Probably just as well.

We bid our farewells and, incredibly, made it onto the 9am Sunday ferry back to the mainland; pretty wiped out, a little sad it's all over for Strictly Sex Factor and Mrs G, but

related from a fabulous trip sharing great drama and good times with our friends from Birsay.

Our thanks to the following companies and organisations for their kind sponsorship and donations, without which this tour would not have been possible:

- Clyde and Central District Association of Young Farmers
- Fintry Amateur Dramatic Society
- Stirling, Strathendrick & Strathkelvin Young Farmers Club
- The Ellen Kerr Awards Scheme
- Property Bureau
- Northlink Ferries

All in all, a truly memorable and successful visit and one we very much hope to repeat next year.

Sarah Walker



The Bishop's Palace, Birsay

How do you get 60 children to

Never work with children or animals, so the theatrical saying goes. Despite this prevailing wisdom, we two friends have chosen to not only work with children, but with very large casts full of them! But why? And how do we manage to survive the experience without losing what is left of our wits?

Both of us had the honour of being introduced to the SCDA during our time at Dingwall Academy by the Highland drama institution that was the late great Sandy Glass. Sandy would direct on average three youth plays each year for the one-act festival, and at least one of those would always open to anyone who wanted to be involved, regardless of experience or ability.

We have always tried to keep that philosophy in mind when organising festival shows in our capacity as teachers, however interest has continued to grow every year, leading to some exceptionally large casts! At a primary school in Aberdeen, Lee has worked with casts of thirteen to eighteen pupils, from the age of seven upwards. At a large secondary school in West Lothian, Amy's first festival entry had forty-two children involved. Last year, she tried to make it more manageable with two entries, and saw a total of eighty young people aged twelve to eighteen involved across two plays, with the larger of the two having a cast of sixty-seven.

There are a lot of challenges involved in directing large casts, and particularly large casts of young people. It is difficult to keep finding plays for large casts, particularly ones that are interesting and pitched at the right age group. Lee copes with this by adapting his own scripts from well-known stories. His group took the decision to find a classic work and put their own spin on it. They have taken on Shakespeare, Robbie Burns and Sophocles, and every year has seen the number of children wanting to participate grow. Many people think them mad for trying to get eight-year-olds to tackle Shakespeare but, once you get past the language, the children absolutely love it. There is something about these classic stories that really captures their imagination, or maybe it is just the opportunity to wield a sword!

Once a script is chosen, there are a few strategies we stick to in order to maintain some semblance of sanity in rehearsals.

We are usually only able to rehearse once a week, and only in term time, allowing for parents' evenings, training afternoons and the school talent show hogging your rehearsal space. With so many inexperienced performers, a longer rehearsal process is essential to get young people performance ready. Starting early allows us to cover basics like projecting your voice, stage directions and facing the audience.

It is essential to use older and more experienced pupils in a leadership capacity, whether it is marshalling a group of people onstage, keeping excited younger actors quiet in the wings, or taking on backstage roles like set crew, prompter or operating lighting and sound. More experienced pupils also model good stage manners and serve as positive role models, as well as agony aunts and uncles on occasion when cast member dramas inevitably occur! This is not just a help to the directors, as those older pupils benefit from the leadership experience, the opportunity to direct and the opportunity to step into crew roles at a big theatre.

Pupils also benefit immensely from having a large "drama family" around them. There is always a support network there for anyone having a wobble with their confidence, or indeed with anything else. We have both been immensely proud to see this spilling over into school life, with drama friends of different ages standing up to bullies or helping schoolmates study for exams.

There are also practical issues with directing large groups, many of which will be well known to other clubs in Scotland, but which are exacerbated with a large cast. Lee has often had to rehearse in classrooms, moving furniture around to create a stage space. Amy's school has a very small stage with tiny wings that cannot hold a whole cast. This year, an adjudicator commented on a set piece mentioned in the script that she had chosen to omit, but it was impossible to fit it onstage at the same time as the cast!

We charge no membership fees, so our only income is from any additional performances we put on, meaning minimal set, props and costume are the rule out of sheer necessity.



enter stage left at the same time?

Rehearsing in the gym



Working in any school, but particularly in those based in deprived areas, means that we have to be highly aware of not excluding any children on financial grounds. We ask youth casts to provide their own costumes, but give a simple theme, like a colour scheme, with the aim of most performers being able to source a costume from their own wardrobe or easily borrow something suitable, supplemented by our small costume cupboards. This has worked well, and also lets young performers have their own little bit of individuality and lets them stand out in a group.

It is important to give each child their featured moment, not just to ensure they are motivated to give their best, but also to satisfy their eager fans. We are so lucky to have supportive parents who love to come and cheer on their little darlings, and large youth casts can give a real boost to ticket sales!

The volume of paperwork is a lot bigger when working with children and clear communication with parents and carers is really important. It is not always easy to get chaperones to come out for a technical rehearsal a few days before the festival and the late nights could be off putting for some, especially on a school night! An understanding organising committee and festival stage crew really help make this easier, adjusting times if needed. You also have to be up to date on all the latest child protection regulations, but they are not as off-putting as you might think and, recently, SCDA has

attempted to streamline this as much as possible.

But why is it worth putting yourself through all this hassle?

One of the best reasons to have large, inclusive casts is the opportunity to include young people who may not get the chance to be a part of smaller, more selective casts. Our casts have included those with learning disabilities, those who identify as LGBTQ+, those with English as a second language, young people in care, young people classed as homeless, young carers, and many, many first time performers who have simply not had this sort of opportunity before.

Small casts can be tempting, especially in a competitive festival context where featuring only your strongest actors is more likely to bring success. (For all that some might see the youth festivals as easy-going and friendly, neither of us has encountered nothing as competitive as a melodramatic teenager!). However, choosing a play with a large youth cast gives the opportunity for

young performers to develop their skills in small parts and build up their confidence. One child, who had never been on a stage before and only came along to rehearsals initially to hang out with her friends, went from having a few lines as soldier in "Macbeth" one year to playing Ismene in "Antigone" the next year.

Ensuring that kids catch the drama bug while they are young is also great for theatre in general. We know how many clubs and districts have struggled with an aging membership, but have seen several examples, not least ourselves, of younger adults joining drama clubs to carry on with a beloved childhood hobby.

Indeed, a festival play a year is no longer proving enough to satisfy our increasingly theatre-mad kids. A number of Amy's pupils have joined local SCDA group Livingston Players for their most recent musicals, while others campaigned for a student-run interhouse drama competition, run along similar lines to the one-act festivals. This year's fourteen-year-old winning director, when asked about her experience, commented that she found it a real challenge to wrangle so many young classmates on stage. Honestly, what nonsense!

Lee Dunn & Amy Hanson

The cast of 'Antigone'



How to make the most of your Technical rehearsal.

I first took part in a One Act Play Festival in 1976 so I suppose I could say that I'd been involved with S.C.D.A. for nigh on forty-five years, but that would be bending the truth somewhat as there have been some rather large gaps between then and now. In those early days I was merely an actor and had no idea what really went on prior to my walking on stage and saying my lines as appropriate! Fast forward a decade or so and I'm back as a director and since then have filled pretty much every role that a festival requires, right up to Stage Director for the 2015 Scottish Final in Orkney. I would like to think that I know a bit more now about how things work than I did then!

Most of the ideas I'm about to share with you are probably pretty obvious but hopefully there might be some small thing that you hadn't thought of that will be of use next time round.

There is a saying that "*Technical Rehearsals always take twice as long as your worst possible estimate*" - you don't have that luxury, you have an hour (or at most, an hour and a half). Therefore, here are some hints as to how you can make the most of it.

The clock starts ticking:-

1) Actors – Help the stage crew put the set up. They should have a diagram but you should still know better where everything goes. Once it's more or less ready, move around, get used to the distance between things, which may be different from that in your rehearsal space. Practice any tricky bits of business and if you still have a bit of spare time, take turns of listening to each other from the auditorium to check you can all be heard clearly.

2) Sound Operator - Go to the sound desk and familiarise yourself with the equipment and make a rough guess at sound levels.

3) Director - Head straight to the lighting desk. Lighting your play to your satisfaction is what will take longest! Now is the time when you have to successfully convey to the lighting technician, the images that you've had in your head for the last few weeks. By the time you have introduced yourself politely and settled down with your script in front of you, with any luck, the bulk of your set will be on stage and you'll be able to see what it looks like under general lighting. Once you are satisfied with that, check any specials you may want, but remember sometimes it's a lot easier to move an actor or a piece of furniture than it is to move a light! This is probably the point where you should have a really good look at the set and do any 'final' tweaks. Now it's time to get those LX cues into the board. If you haven't too many different lighting states this might not take too long. Swapping between cues already plotted is fairly simple. As soon as that's done, run through the cues to make sure that they are in the right order, that you haven't missed any, and that the the timing of the cross fades is what you want. (I once asked for a specific down time and up-time, but the operator misunderstood and plotted every cue the wrong way round. It looked most peculiar, but luckily we had time to sort it before the hour was up!)

If your play is knocking on the door of the fifty-five minute deadline, then obviously you will not have time to run all of it but do try and run the bits where there are cues, as you would in any tech. In particular make sure that you run the beginning and the end, to check that the effect

that is in your head has transferred itself to those doing the work. This is particularly important if the person operating the tabs isn't you!

If you are now happy with lighting and sound levels and you still have a bit of time you can run as much of the play as you can, or you can just have one last look, mark and strike the set, say 'thank you very much' and walk away early – that doesn't half freak out the opposition!

(By the way, if you're using a data projector, you're on your own, and good luck with that!)

Before I finish there are a couple more things for you to think about.



Make sure that you take a good look at your set and as much of the play as possible from the seat that will be occupied by the adjudicator. "That's cheating!" I hear you say – no it isn't it's common sense!

Supposing you have sound that is atmospheric background like birdsong or sea sounds for example, if you run it all the time it becomes intrusive and dare I say, irritating, so establish it at the beginning and then fade it down, bringing it up now and again as appropriate, and then back at the end.

Lastly, if something goes terribly wrong in the middle of your tech, then the stage director can be asked to stop the clock while it's sorted, especially if it's a 'Health and Safety' matter. A few years ago, during my technical rehearsal, one actor was making his entrance from above the stage down a wire ladder – ok, I know, but he was supposed to be arriving by helicopter (cue sound and wind machine) and it seemed like a good idea at the time! Anyway, his jacket caught on the edge of the hole in the ceiling he was coming through and brought down a load of plaster on to the stage below. The clock was stopped while we swept up the considerable mess and decided how we could be



sure it wouldn't happen again in performance. I have no intention of committing to paper how we got round the problem but it's just as well we didn't get through to the next round as 'Health and Safety' would have had a fit if they'd found out! An interesting addendum to this is that Aberdeen Arts Centre now no longer has any lathe and plaster ceiling above it's stage!

Well, there you are. As I said, most of the above is obvious, but hope you've enjoyed being reminded.

Tish Howard

The drive to deliver . . .

the perfect performance



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We've seen so many good posters for shows, so take the credit. Enter them to SCDA's 2019 poster competition.

Send a .jpg or .pdf file to scene@scda.org.uk

Closing date 31st December



Remember your poster must include the SCDA logo or a reference to SCDA membership

Do you know we have an office?

SCDA's National Office in Stirling is ably run by Brenda Williams who has worked for the Association for nearly 10 years.

She works 22 ½ flexible hours a week, usually 8am-3.30pm Tues-Thurs.

Brenda is the only person employed in the office. If you get an answerphone or an "out of office" email, she will get back to you as soon as possible.

So what happens in the office? Basically everything and anything! The office is where all the day to day business of the association takes place: managing accounts, banking, membership, newsletters, Patron Scheme and public enquiries, amongst other things.

Brenda also supports the Executive and National Committee with any ad hoc projects or research that may be necessary, and all Play Writing competitions are administered from the office.

Assistance is available in publicising club productions via the SCDA website, the monthly newsletter and the external listings sites that we use. All you have to do is send full details of the production, including box office

contact and full venue postcode address to the office, and the rest will be done for you... and it's all FREE!

District and Divisional Festivals can also be advertised if full details are provided to Brenda.

SCDA has deals with some publishers to provide discounts on scripts ordered via the script discount scheme. This can save clubs ££££'s on script costs, and raises national funds for SCDA so please consider using the service when you next need to buy scripts.

The National Office can also support clubs, districts and divisions with the Postal Service where one A4 sheet of double sided printing (done at the office) can be enveloped and posted to your mailing lists for 68p each. Prices on request for larger quantities!

No two days are the same! Brenda does everything from office cleaning, to membership renewals and supporting the treasurer.

Contact the office by phone on 01786 440077 or by email to headquarters@scda.org.uk

National Library, Edinburgh

Room 3/6, Summerhall Arts Centre,
Edinburgh EH9 1PL

Hours : Tuesday 2.15 - 6.30pm

Contact details : Library@scda.org.uk

Inverness Library

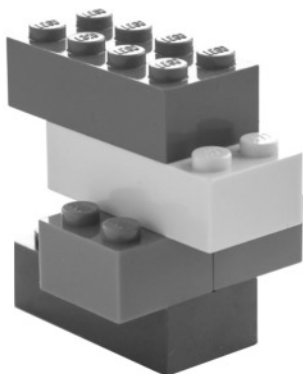
Inverness Public Library, Farraline Park,
Inverness IV1 1NH

Hours : Mon & Fri 9am - 7.30pm

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Let Carole build your theatre skills ...



Carole Williams is SCDA's National Drama Advisor. She offers a wide range of challenging and fun workshops to develop your performance and directing skills.

Workshops are supported by SCDA and can be tailored to your individual needs.

Contact Carole through the National Office or directly at nda@scda.org.uk



Perfect Wedding

The Edinburgh Makars were back at the Royal Scots Club for this year's Edinburgh Fringe Festival for a production of Robin Hawdon's hilarious play "Perfect Wedding":

An appalling situation. A bridegroom wakes on his wedding morning in his own bridal suite, with his bride-to-be about to arrive any moment, and finds a strange girl in bed beside him. What's more an extremely attractive girl whom, in the depths of his post stag-night hangover, he can't remotely remember even having been introduced to. Worse – during the ensuing panic to get the stranger dressed and out of the way, the bride arrives and the girl is trapped in the bathroom. The only way out of the dilemma is to persuade the best man to help. By the time the bride's parents and half the hotel staff get in on the act, the chaos reaches nuclear proportions!

Directed by Dario Dalla Costa, the production saw wonderful performances from an excellent ensemble cast. Alex Fleming played Bill the hapless bridegroom who found it impossible to get out of trouble,



while Lucy Wilson, as Rachel his bride to be, found her control of the situation to be less than perfect.

Robert Wyllie played Tom, the much put-upon best man, and Georgia Smith was Judy – the strange girl in the bed – who was trapped in an impossible situation. Rounding off the cast were Ailie Henderson who, as Julie the chambermaid, heightened all the confusion and Emma Swift – Rachel's mother Daphne – couldn't understand how her perfect wedding was turning into a complete shambles.

A perfect blend of comedy and farce the production, by one of Edinburgh's most long-standing amateur theatrical groups, was enjoyed by all those who attended and even obtained a 5-star review.

Dario Dalla Costa

CLASS ADS

Playwright?; small business?; buying or selling?; All kinds of small ads accepted. Have your ad read throughout SCDA land. Contact scene@scda.org.uk

CORDINER PRESS One-act plays and pantomimes by Isabella C. Rae – comedy, drama, fantasy! For catalogue, see www.cordinerpress.co.uk or contact 36 Mansefield Avenue, Cambuslang, Glasgow G72 8NZ
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Josef Weinberger plays **William Shakespeare's Long Lost First Play** (abridged)

By **Reed Martin** and **Austin Tichener**

Comedy in Two Acts

Cast: 3 Male performing 47
characters

ISBN 9780856763724

Discovered in a Leicester carpark next to an unimportant pile of old bones, this ancient manuscript proves to be the long lost first work of seventeen year old William Shakespeare from Stratford combining all his most familiar speeches and famous characters in a brand new storyline.

An ancient grudge pits the two spirits of Puck and Ariel against each other turning the Bard's canon on its head whilst creating strange bedfellows of Prince Hamlet and master motivator Lady Macbeth, Viola with Richard III and King Lear with the Weird Sisters plus that classic couple Dromio and Juliet.

Utilising the fast moving skills of a street performer, the writers magically weave speeches and plot devices from the thirty nine plays creating an outrageous romp filled with word play, vaudeville variety and lots of twins!

The authors' comprehensive portfolio of comedy masterpieces have been performed worldwide and translated into over a dozen languages. The text is peppered with topical references which performing groups are encouraged to update and the script works best when performed simply yet seriously.

The play's European premiere was on the Edinburgh Festival Fringe in August 2016.

Requires minimal props, scenery and costumes.

The Verdict

by **Barry Reed** adapted for the stage by
Margaret May Hobbs.

Drama in Two Acts

Cast: 11 Male, 5 Female

ISBN 9780856763731

Alcoholic Frank Galvin is a washed up veteran lawyer presented with one last chance for redemption when he is handed an apparently open and shut medical malpractice case that nobody imagines he can win.

However against the unforgiving Boston medical establishment, he courageously refuses an out of court settlement firmly believing it is an act of negligence which condemned a young mother to life in a coma and not simply an unfortunate accident. Sensing a cover up he accepts the case and takes the entire legal system to court.

Based on Barry Reed's novel, The Verdict was filmed by Sidney Lumet starring Paul Newman, James Mason and Charlotte Rampling and this new stage version featured in a 2017 National UK tour with Clive Mantle and Jack Shepherd.

Two interior scenes: Boston Legal District Office and The County of Suffolk Courtroom.

Cressrelles Publishing

We are Stronger Together

by **Matthew Fisher**

Cast: 4 male 3 female

ISBN 978-0-85343-707-9

Unity a home grown terrorist group, has taken the country by storm, killing anyone who doesn't agree with their way of thinking. We follow one member of Unity Letum, as his run-ins

with prisoners, his best friend and his Commander start to make him question his allegiance. Is Unity really the best thing for the country? Or has he committed unforgivable crimes.

This play won the Crawshay Cup, for best original play in Drama Association of Wales One Act Festival.

Samuel French Ltd

The Cat's Mother

by **Erica Murray**

Comedy Drama in Sixteen Scenes

Cast: 3 Female

ISBN 9780573115608

The script is a 'laugh out loud' dark Irish comedy asking the question – how far are you willing to go for your own family and what happens when you have to care for the person who should be caring for you?

Ciara's younger sister Sinead arrives at her door all set for what Ciara thinks will be a weekend of respite from caring for their mother Eileen but unbeknownst to Ciara, her sister has alternative ideas about how the weekend will pan out. Over the hours that follow, the sisters are forced to make a choice that will affect their lives forever.

A number of other characters appear from whom Ciara seeks guidance gaining hilarious insight into her attempts to reach a final decision.

Following a London preview the play premiered at Underbelly, Cowgate as part of the 2018 Edinburgh Fringe.

Primary action set in cramped living room flat with various locations across London.

Supplied with suggested cuts for a one hour version.

Scripts can be obtained through the discount scheme for SCDA Members - please contact Brenda Williams at our National Office for details. Geoffrey Whitworth and Scott Salver scripts can be borrowed from our SCDA National Library at Summerhall Arts Centre.

Recent club shows



Dundee Dramatic Society's production of *'The Ladykillers'*
Photo by Ward McGaughrin

Leittheatre's festival fringe production of *'Tartuffe'*



Linlithgow Players' spring production of *'Ladies Day'*

Buccaneer Theatre Club's summer production of *'Holiday Snap'*



The next issue of Scene will feature club's pantomimes and winter shows.

So please send pictures to scene@scca.org.uk by 7th January.

Well “Hello Dolly”

Paula Gibson chats with Dolly Nicol

For many years Dolly Nicol, widow of SCDA’s past National Administrator Alan, has been a strong supporter of the Association. Paula popped in to see her and find out how she first became involved with the theatre.

First acting experience...

Dolly wrote her first play aged 7. Her mother had told her about Queen Elizabeth 1 and Sir Walter Raleigh. Dolly’s curiosity was piqued. A play was written on the topic and shown to her teacher. Dolly, of course, was the eponymous heroine and it was performed round the entire school. The bug had bitten Dolly.

Why was she called Dolly?

Dolly comes from a long line of country lairds. Her great-great-grandfather was the Laird of Cuminstown, namely Joseph Cumine. The family tradition was that all girls would be called either Jane, Joan or Helen and the boys Joseph, Peter and Alec. When her mother, a Cumine, married her father, a daughter was born and, as tradition dictated, she was christened Jane. Her dear father, when looking at his beautiful daughter said, “what an old-fashioned plain name. She looks just like a wee Dolly”. And that was why it stuck. She was named Dolly thereafter.

How did she and her husband, Alan meet?

As a young woman, Dolly was acting in a play that Alan was adjudicating. She was playing the part of an elderly lady, far older than she was at the time. Alan’s comments were, “this young lady is far too beautiful to be playing this role”. Dolly was enraged! And she decided to make



him pay for that adjudication. And, Dear Readers, she married him!

Favourite parts in plays...

Dolly admitted to having a real passion for playing queens. When she was part of the Gavin Players, she took part in over 60 productions. Top of the list was Joan of Arc, closely followed by Queen Victoria, Mary Stuart and Elizabeth 1. She has very fond memories of playing Jo in Little Women, Mary Warren in The Crucible and Frau Schneider in Cabaret (more of this last later). But her all-time favourite has to be playing Chris in Sunset Song, for the first stage production of that very famous piece of theatre. In the late 60s the crit read as follows, “as Chris, Jane Nicol showed sensitivity, poise and a complete understanding of the character”. She was proud to know that the widow of Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassie Gibbon) was in the audience that night.

Aberdeen College of Education....

At one time, Alan, her husband, was a lecturer at the College. The students staged productions every year, often requiring older actors. Both she and Alan performed in many of those plays and musicals. Alan persuaded her that she would make an excellent Frau Schneider in Cabaret, even though she couldn’t sing. But, nothing daunted, Dolly took lessons and was taught how to ‘speak’ the songs a la Rex Harrison in My Fair Lady.

Alan also ran drama summer schools at the college, with Dolly acting as his wing-woman and administrator. They were hugely popular events and ran for decades.

Drama Festivals

Needless to say, she stole the show and received a huge round of applause.

With Alan as a much sought-after and popular adjudicator (who can forget his flamboyant waistcoats and sparkly rings!), they travelled far and wide from San Francisco to Tokyo and Gibraltar to Russia. At all festivals, Dolly enjoyed the cut and thrust of discussion of the night's adjudications. Conversations would last well into the wee small hours and continue over the breakfast table. She admits to now missing the buzz, but had such a wonderful time at the Northern Divisional Final in Brechin last year where she presented the trophies.

What does SCDA mean to you?

SCDA means everything to Dolly. From attending evening classes in secondary school to performing plays in festivals, drama gave her huge enjoyment and understanding of theatre, allowing her to meet like-minded people and forge life-long friendships. She was thrilled to recently receive the double honour of a lifetime membership of the Northern Division of the Association and become Aberdeen District's first Honorary President.

How do you see SCDA in the future?

At the end of September this year, having seen the Roald Dahl plays at the Arts Centre, performed by SCDA members Union Theatre, a new drama group, she feels things are picking up really well. "There are not a lot of drama companies now in Aberdeen and this group had



such a lot of talent. With fresh young blood, Union Theatre could develop into something very special and provide a springboard for aspiring young actors and directors". She would advocate this model being developed nationally and feels new talent should be strongly supported. "They need support now, but it means I might have to go into a home! They would just have to come to the home to show me the plays".

Final words....

"Drama is a great leveller. You could be a doctor, a lawyer or a scaffie, but you're all the same on the stage".

Paula Gibson

Happy 90th Douglas

Reaching 90 is a great achievement, but all the more so for Douglas Currie as he still regularly volunteers at the SCDA library in Edinburgh.

To celebrate the occasion, Douglas had two parties. The first for around 40 family members, including 13 children. It was a lovely informal day, with the weather smiling on us and the children playing happily in one of the rooms. The essential story of Douglas's long and fruitful life told by son Graeme.

The second party, a couple of days later, was for Douglas's many friends from the world of acting, as well as from his other interests. The birthday cake in the shape of the figures 9 and 0 was baked by daughter Judith and enjoyed by all. A second "cake" was also much admired. It was wooden, more than a metre in diameter, and told the story of Douglas's life both in drama and teaching, as well as photos of him as a young man, and with his wife Rosemary.

Truly two lovely and memorable occasions, to mark a life lived to the full – long may it continue.

Margaret Grant





Auld Avondale Players recent production of *'Tomb with a View'*



EK Rep Theatre Club rehearsing for their upcoming production of *'Mother Goose'*.

27-30 Nov. & 3-7 December
at the Village Theatre, East Kilbride

Dunoon Players' *'Bound for Dunoon'*

Photo by Ken Clark

