

Spring 2020

# scene



Panto  
time



The magazine of Scottish Community Drama



St. Serf 's Players' 'Little Red Riding Hood', picture by Walter Hampson

Our panto special.

Article on p.19 and more pictures on the back cover

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**SCENE** No.166

The magazine of the  
**Scottish Community  
Drama Association**

Scottish Charity No. 021397

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Our staff work flexible hours but the national administrator's normal office hours are Tues-Thurs 8am-3.30pm, so please leave a message and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

### Editorial Team

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- Angela Binnie
- Paula Gibson
- Walter Hampson
- Stephen Lambert
- Isabella Rae
- Benita Wylie

### Scene magazine

**Copy date for next edition : 15<sup>th</sup> March**

Retail price for non-members : £4

#### Editorial Statement:

The editorial committee reserve the right to edit or not print items submitted to Scene.

We always welcome news or opinions, please email letters or articles to the Scene Editor at [scene@scda.org.uk](mailto:scene@scda.org.uk)

*Printed by Monument Press,  
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01786 474763 [info@monumentpress.co.uk](mailto:info@monumentpress.co.uk)*

### Cover

Pathhead Players production of 'Aladdin'.  
photo by **Walter Hampson**.

# Chairman's Musings

## Hello

At this time of writing, it's between Christmas and New Year and, as I have been given a deadline, I'm dutifully sitting in front of my keyboard musing on SCDA and what 2020 will bring.



My own club in Fintry has just finished its panto which this year played to 8 full houses and involved some 90 adults and children working together on a really successful community project. While we regularly enter the SCDA competition, it's actually a small part of what we do. This pattern of activity is, I'm sure replicated across our one hundred plus member clubs all across Scotland.

However, ask a club member what SCDA does, and in most cases, the answer will be 'Runs Festivals'. This is our most visible activity which will culminate this year in Kirkwall on 23-25 April. Amateur drama is a really big thing in Orkney. So, while Orkney is not a worry, it is harder in other venues to attract members of the local community who know little or nothing about us.

If we are to attract external funding in the current climate, SCDA needs to be seen as what it is - much more than just about festivals.

We continue to support:-

- aspiring directors through the provision of workshops which will continue at divisional levels
- potential reserve adjudicators through training events
- playwrights through our playwriting competitions and we are actively considering a new competition;
- clubs and individual member development through our Drama Adviser Carole Williams;
- clubs by providing guidance and practical assistance on legislation.

We are currently engaged in an exercise to find out more about what our members think about us and what they would like us to be doing. We must also improve our communication, both internally and externally and hence get better at telling our story. I'm also trying to get SCDA recognised by the Scottish Government as a main voice of Amateur Drama in Scotland. I believe 2020 is going to be a good year for SCDA.

**Tony Flisch**  
[chair@scda.org.uk](mailto:chair@scda.org.uk)

## Welcome . . .

### To new Clubs

- Carradale Youth Drama Group      Argyll/Kintyre (Western)
- Crash Test Dummy Theatre Co      Argyll/Kintyre (Western)
- The No Refunds theatre Co.      Argyll/Kintyre (Western)
- Sideline productions      Inverclyde (Western)
- Red Tag Theatre      Stirling (Eastern)
- Bon Accord Players      Aberdeen (Northern)

## Thank you . . .

### For donations from

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

## Eastern Division premiers at the Byre

SCDA members and clubs will be descending on St Andrews, Scotland's famous University town and legendary Home of Golf, on 20 and 21 March when the Eastern Divisional Final comes to the stage of the popular Byre Theatre, the vibrant artistic and cultural hub of the local community, easily accessible with lift to all floors of the building.

With performances on the Friday and Saturday evenings at 7pm plus Saturday matinee at 2pm, the Organising Committee are hoping that many supporters will choose to stay for the weekend and an accommodation package is currently being produced, allowing visitors to explore this Royal Burgh and the scenic countryside of North East Fife. St Andrews boasts a large variety of quality eating places, including the theatre's own Café Bar open from 10.00am each day. Adjudicator Alasdair Hawthorn will have the honour of assessing the productions.



In 1933 freelance journalist and playwright Alexander B Paterson with help from a local church theatre group renovated a derelict cow byre and transformed it into a theatre space marking the beginning of St Andrews Play Club which still performs at the theatre to this day. Seats were acquired from a local cinema, sets constructed from beach driftwood, ladders from decommissioned Naval vessels – and within a few years the theatre had established a considerable reputation attracting large audiences to their productions.

During the war years the company struggled to survive under Charles Marford former S.M. at London's Old Vic Theatre until A.B. Paterson returned from war service in 1945.

After more than 30 years of continuous theatrical use, the old byre building was finally demolished and a new theatre erected in 1970 doubling the audience capacity.

A.B. Paterson was a regular guest of honour at Fife District Festivals until his passing in 1989 but his onward vision of creating facilities for a new generation was realised when a £5.5 million rebuild was opened by Sir Sean Connery in 2001.

Sadly in January 2013 the theatre went dark after experiencing major financial difficulties but within two years thanks to a management agreement led by the University of St Andrews, the Byre re-opened and continues to maintain an impressive programme of arts events.

We extend an especially warm invitation to our friends from Northern Division just across the Tay. Tickets will be obtainable through the Box Office, 01334 475000 or [byreboxoffice@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:byreboxoffice@st-andrews.ac.uk).

**Stephen Lambert**

## Is this your magazine ?

If you've just picked up this copy of 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: [sdda.org.uk](http://sdda.org.uk) for more information.



## Play reading event at Royal Lyceum

On a beautiful sunny summers day in July, fourteen participants made their way to the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh not really knowing what to expect. We had each volunteered to take part in a play reading event, a new venture set up primarily by Carole Williams our National Drama Advisor, linking SCDA with the professional theatre.

On arrival at the theatre we met with Carole and Tony Flisch our National Chairman before being shown to the rehearsal space across the road. Amongst the group were representatives from different clubs all over Scotland and we had only a short time to introduce ourselves over coffee before filing in to meet the professional Directors.

David Greig the Artistic Director welcomed us explaining that he had selected a couple of scripts for the group to read that may be considered for future programming at the Lyceum.

The aim of the afternoon was that the participants would benefit from the experience of play reading in the presence of professionals while the Directors would perhaps gain insight as to how the scripts sounded read aloud. David Loumgair and Jenna Watt assisted the session by talking us through the plot of the two completely different pieces.

Volunteers were sought to read the various parts in the first script and although some of us were slightly nervous everyone was keen to take part. We all relaxed surprisingly quickly and enjoyed the experience of reading through the highly amusing initial piece. After a brief discussion about the play we adjourned for refreshments and returned to find our next parts randomly placed on the chairs. The second play was far more challenging to read and raised more than a few eyebrows. Indeed, our Chairman read boldly on where others would fear to

tread! During the debrief it became clear that the script had divided the group in enjoyment terms but most had appreciated the challenge.

The time allocated for the afternoon session passed so quickly that it left little time for a debate over the mutual value of the event. The Lyceum Directors thanked everyone for their contribution and suggested it had been extremely beneficial to hear the scripts brought to life. Members of the group commented that they thoroughly enjoyed being involved in a collaboration between amateur and professional theatre and the opportunity to read plays which they may not otherwise have encountered. Everyone also seemed to relish the interesting development experience and the networking aspect of meeting fellow SCDA enthusiasts in a different setting. However, there was a general feeling that there was insufficient time allocated to the play reading session to allow for detailed discussion of the material to take place and this should be considered when planning a similar event in the future.

Buzzing about our fun and lively afternoon we made our way round the corner to enjoy a hearty Italian meal, taking the opportunity to acquaint ourselves further and exchange thoughts and ideas. As if the afternoon hadn't been rewarding enough we were then treated to tickets for the Royal Lyceum Youth Theatre Summer on Stage productions of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and 'Teachers'. It was a surreal experience sitting in the stunning auditorium packed full of talented, enthusiastic young people and a perfect end to an amazing day. Opportunities to work alongside professional theatre don't come along often and would I volunteer to take part again? You bet your life I would!

**Carolyn Harrison**

# Scottish Finals

## at the Orkney Theatre

The culmination of this year's one-act festival sees the Scottish Finals making their second visit to the Orkney Theatre in Kirkwall. The best of Scottish amateur drama will be on stage there from 23rd to 25th April, making the most of the excellent facility.

While the Orkney Theatre is very well equipped and perfectly formed, with a seating capacity of 384, tickets are going to be at a premium, as is accommodation for visiting participants and spectators. We are currently working with local accommodation providers to ensure that there are a range of options available to SCDA supporters who travel to Orkney for the Scottish Finals – there's more information on the website and the booking form enclosed with 'Scene'.

We are also in negotiation with Serco Northlink Ferries, the provider of Orkney's state-subsidised life-line ferry service, for some assistance towards fares on their routes for anyone travelling to the Festival. These will hopefully apply to travel between Aberdeen and Kirkwall, and between Scrabster and Stromness. Other ferry companies and routes are, of course, available, as are flights from all of Scotland's major airports!

What else can Orkney provide, alongside performances by the top two teams from each of the four Divisions, and Dave Bennet's insightful adjudication?

Well, Kirkwall's award winning high-street offers a range of shopping experience ranging from some of

the major national chains to privately-owned boutiques. Stromness has a street which her most famous son, George Mackay Brown, described as 'uncoiling like a sailor's rope' along the shores of the harbour. There you will also find a number of quirky gift shops, as well as the best small bookshop in the world – no word of exaggeration!

If you want to get out of the town, Orkney has a wealth of history – from the Neolithic through our Viking heritage to the scars on the landscape of two World Wars – an abundance of wildlife, beautiful quiet beaches and ruggedly dramatic cliffs. With Orkney's growing tourist industry, there are several tour guides who can be booked to give you a bespoke tour to suit your interests. Check out the Visit Scotland website, or Orkney.com for more information.

Or you might just prefer to stay closer to the theatre and find a pub or a café where you can enjoy the produce of our two breweries, our two whisky distilleries, our three gin distilleries or even our own coffee roastery.

In any case, we can guarantee that there will be something for everybody, all accompanied by Orkney's famous hospitality. We look forward to seeing you here.

**Graham Garson**  
*Orkney District Chair*

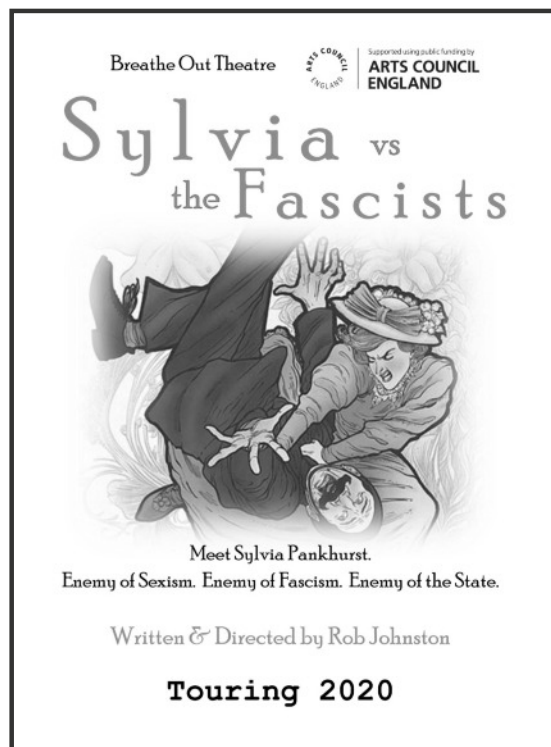


# From Little things Big Things Grow

Hard to believe it is twenty years since I happened across a flyer for the SCDA's Play on Words competition (which I'm happy to hear is still going strong) asking for new scripts for three SCDA companies to perform in Dingwall later that year. I was in Edinburgh, visiting from Manchester, and had gone on a whim to a local theatre to see Brian Friel's excellent and little-seen 'Lovers'. The SCDA flyer was in the foyer. I wrote my first play 'Now Breathe Out' as a direct consequence of picking up that flyer. Twenty years later and I am working on my 34th produced play, 'Sylvia vs the Fascists' which tours this year, with Arts Council England funding. Arts Council England have generously funded around fifteen of my productions, putting to good use some of that National Lottery money!

Between that first and 34th play I have also written dozens of short stage-pieces for schools, festivals, conferences, competitions, and Bar Mitzvahs. (I'm joking about that last one. But then again, never say never!) My work has been performed all over the UK and Ireland, including three shows at the Edinburgh Fringe, as far south as Brighton and as far north as ... you guessed it ... that first SCDA gig in Dingwall. But my furthest-travelled play is 'Catalysts', performed last year in the National Science Centre in Singapore. And I was also lucky enough to be invited to Singapore to direct the play, a huge adventure, with fifty children dashing around the Singapore Science Centre chasing dinosaurs and rocket-ships, and wearing headphones that piped in actors' voices, crazy sound effects, and music!

As well as being a commissioned writer, that is writing plays for other people, I also stage my plays through my own professional theatre company (called Breathe Out Theatre after that first SCDA success). If you are a 'jobbing playwright' (that is, not a household name with plays on at the National; or the writer of 'Fleabag') then you should think about being a theatre-producer too. That way you don't have to always be waiting for other people to stage



your work. It's nice when they do, of course; and when you are first starting out as a playwright, somebody having faith in you is the fuel you need to keep going. But once you have developed your craft and know what you are doing as a writer, you don't need to wait for other people to choose to stage your play. Stage it yourself with all the actors, directors, and lighting-technicians you meet. The most enjoyable part of being a playwright is getting to work with so many talented people who are all keen to bring your play to the stage. That includes amateur companies. Some of the best work I see on stage is produced by amateur companies doing rarely-seen plays or new-writing. My first five staged plays were performed by amateur companies long before professional companies got interested. My work is still regularly performed by amateur companies.

My life as a professional theatre-maker started with me picking up that SCDA Play on Words flyer and having something I wanted to write about. (In my case that was surviving cancer; but something less scary will do!) The SCDA competition gave me a target and a deadline to write to, which can be the biggest incentive in getting a script finished. So I'd encourage anyone who thinks they have something interesting to say, and an interesting way of saying it, to write that play and submit it to Play on Words. Eighteen years after writing that first SCDA script my play 'Dark Satanic' won BEST DRAMA at the Manchester Fringe Festival. 'From little things, big things grow.'

**Rob Johnston**

[www.breatheouttheatre.org](http://www.breatheouttheatre.org)





# Carole's

**23 April 2019** – an email, an invitation ‘..we would love you to come and deliver a keynote speech at our summit and talk to us about all things community theatre..’

That’s just my cup of tea I thought but I had to read the email two of three times to be absolutely sure of the contents. This event was being held in Banff, not Banff in Scotland but Banff in Canada. A few emails and a Skype meeting later I discovered that Jake from Alberta Theatre was looking for an International speaker and after getting a few online hits about me via SCDA, Voluntary Arts Scotland and the Edinburgh Fringe festival I had made my way to the top of his shortlist.

Always up for a challenge, I agreed to take on the job with full support from the National Committee who were also interested to see what I would learn while there.

**Tuesday 15 October** - I flew to Calgary and my adventure began. I had allowed a little bit of time in Calgary before being collected on Thursday 17 October for the scenic drive to the Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity. After settling in there was no time to waste as I was whisked into the venue for a rehearsal, it was all becoming very real at this point!



**Friday 18 October** – 9 am the summit was opened with a very interesting Health & Safety talk about what to do when coming face to face with a bear and the importance of keeping a safe distance, at least 2 bus lengths, from the elk who were roaming freely on campus and were in rut. It made an interesting addition to being told the location of the toilets!

I stepped up to the podium and took a deep breath, I was about to take a big risk, which seemed appropriate as my presentation was called ‘Can Amateur Theatre be a Risky Business?’, as I had decided to teach everyone a warm-up song. Scanning the 85 faces looking back at me expectantly I searched for reassurance before jumping in enthusiastically. The warmth and support that came back at me from the whole room set the tone for the entire weekend and the next hour flew past as I talked about the growth of amateur theatre in Scotland and how SCDA fitted into the picture with a final glimpse of what the future could be and the resilience required to face the challenges. I learned very quickly through the Q&A but also the many conversations I had over the next 3 days that we have so much in common and that we truly are a global community.

You might think that I could relax once my speech was done and dusted but as I was sitting on a couple of panels and delivering improvisation workshops there wasn’t a lot of downtime but who needs rest when surrounded by like-minded people all wanting to share their experiences.

The focus on the summit was very much on all of the activities that a club needs to get done from Health & Safety to How to run a Board Meeting with some Technical Theatre skills and Demystifying financial statements. The panel discussions themes ranged from marketing to how to develop plays with and about your local community. There were some really fascinating additions to this programme one of which looked at Consent and creating a safe environment in the rehearsal room which I would have loved to attend but I was on another panel at the time. I was really fortunate to be able to attend the KAIROS Blanket Exercise, a theatrical participatory history lesson developed with Indigenous Elders with the aim of fostering truth and reconciliation which will stay in my memory for a very long time.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> keynote speaker was Lynda Adams, Freelance Artist, Education and Adjudicator, who talked about adjudication in a presentation titled Feed Forward (Not Back) providing a fascinating insight into play festivals



# Canadian Adventure



know that if SCDA is to continue to provide services that clubs need across Scotland fundraising becomes increasingly important.

Theatre Alberta offer a wide range of workshops which they market really well through their website and social media. They don't have an equivalent role as freelancers deliver workshops but they do take care of finding and contracting the artists. I can definitely learn things from their approach and am already looking at how to improve what I offer.

Clubs are quite focused on attracting as wide an audience as possible and it

appears that people are willing to travel quite long distances to see community theatre if they know about it. I was able to share the trend I have seen here of clubs using social media to introduce characters and actors in upcoming productions and there was a lot of interest although we also agreed that stories in local newspapers still work really well, often better than adverts.

across the province which are run along the same lines as Scotland. Lynda raised some very interesting points about how adjudication sits within criticism, constructive criticism and education. She was clear in her viewpoint that in order to feed forwards she believes that moving to more models of mentoring and creative collaboration is what is required to move adjudication forwards and questioned how helpful competition is within this framework. She also had some really great suggestions for valuing everyone involved in sustaining amateur theatre not just actors and directors. Lots of food for thought from an amazing and inspiring speaker. What else did I learn?

It feels almost impossible to summarise the experience in this article but I hope it gives you a flavour of how exciting and enjoyable the trip was. I've provided a much fuller report to the National Committee (which you can download from the website, [scca.org.uk](http://scca.org.uk)) and hopefully there will be some interesting things that will come out of what I have learned.

Theatre Alberta have a really busy library service which is a similar size as ours. As you will know we have a fantastic resource in our own library but we would love it to be used more so it will be good to see what we can learn from them.

Festivals are really big across schools in Calgary but not in Scotland, is this something that we should be considering?

Marketing – I gathered some tips and suggestions that I will convert into a resource that can be made available to clubs so watch out for more news about that.

Theatre Alberta successfully work across the amateur and professional sectors. They are very direct about fundraising and sponsorship and we could definitely learn something from them as we all



**Carole Williams**

*National Drama Advisor*

# JOHN MORLEY'S PANTOMIMES

*"The doyen of good pantomime writers" (The Times 1994)*

**CINDERELLA**

**SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS**

**PETER PAN**

**BABES IN THE WOOD**

**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**

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Festival diary  
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# How's the festival doing?

As always, the middle pages of this issue of Scene contain the Festival diary. The listing of entries to our One-Act Festival. The festival is the heart of SCDA, so its health is important.

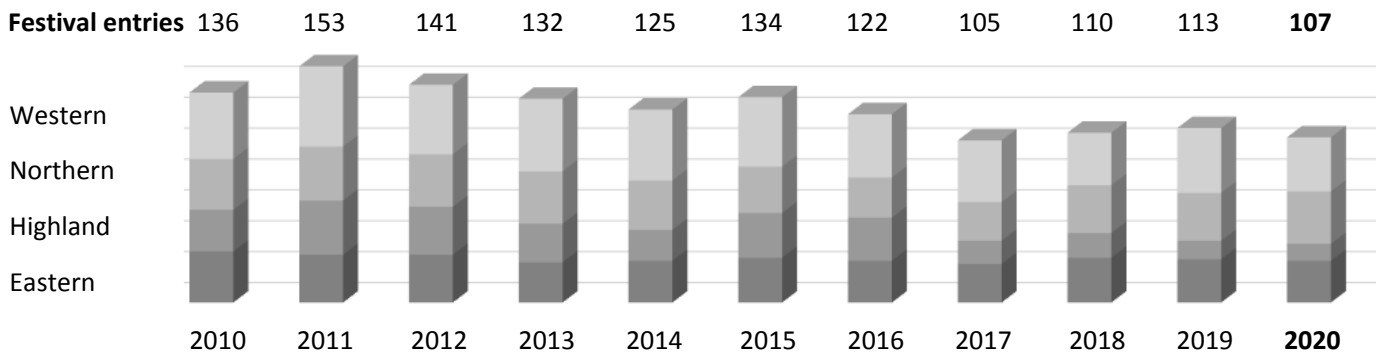
The festival peaked at over 500 entries in 1950, but with the coming of television and other distractions soon subsided to between 150 and 200. Entries stayed fairly constant at this level for around 40 years and it is only in the last two decades that the numbers have steadily declined.

The number of entries over the past ten years is shown in the graph below. 107 this year is not the worst, there were only 105 in 2017, but it is still part of a downward

trend. Over the same period, the number of District Festivals reduced from 18 to 14. We've lost Falkirk, Skye, and Ayrshire. Wigtown propose to have a festival every second year.

The number of youth teams has inevitably reduced as well, though has remained at around 30% of the total. There were over 20 new plays in 2013 and 2014, but this has been down to single figures for the past three years.

We certainly can't be complacent that the festival is in good health, but it's far from dead. Hopefully we can revive or create some new District Festivals over the next few years and start to bring the numbers back up.



## SCDA library contacts

### National Library, Edinburgh

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

Hours : Tuesday 2.15 - 6.30pm

Contact details : [Library@scda.org.uk](mailto:Library@scda.org.uk)

### Inverness Library

Inverness Public Library, Farraline Park,  
Inverness IV1 1NH

Hours : Mon & Fri 9am - 7.30pm

Tues & Thurs 9am - 6.30pm

Wed - Sat 9am - 5pm

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# SCDA's annual accounts

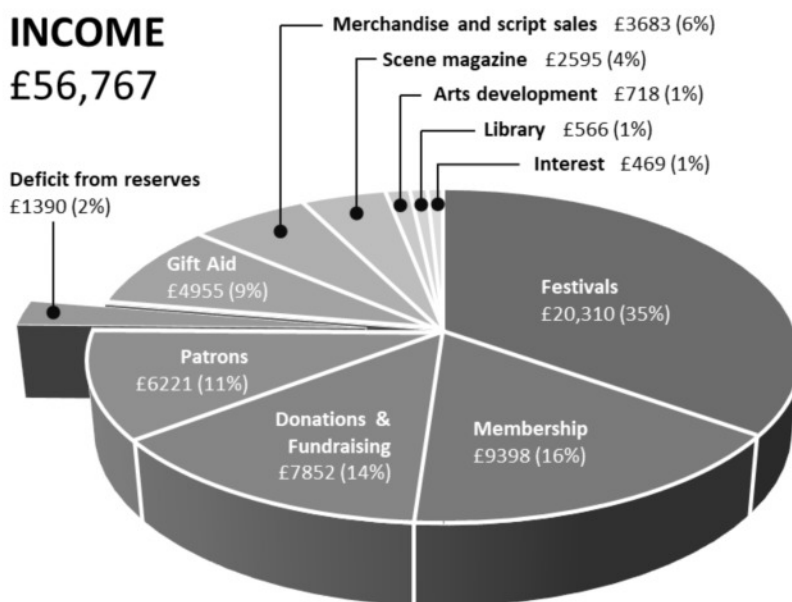
This year's accounts for SCDA HQ showed a deficit of £1,390. Bear in mind that each Division and District has their own accounts being separate entities for charity purposes. This relatively healthy outcome was largely due to the "late" arrival of two items of income after the end of the previous accounting period. These were the Scottish Final surplus from April 2018 and a Gift Aid claim. These two items represented income of £7,157.

There was however a further increase in income over and above the items already mentioned. One of these was an increase in donations, largely due to Committee members donating their expenses. A reinvigorated merchandise campaign has also helped.

On the opposite side though there was an increase also in expenditure.

Most significantly, SCDA Executive made a decision to fully fund a Directors Workshop in the year, following an inability to attract grant assistance. The whole of the National Committee agreed that we needed to spend on

## INCOME £56,767



"artistic" activity even though our finances are still not strong. It is worth bearing in mind that without that item of expenditure, £3086, we would have produced a surplus for the year.

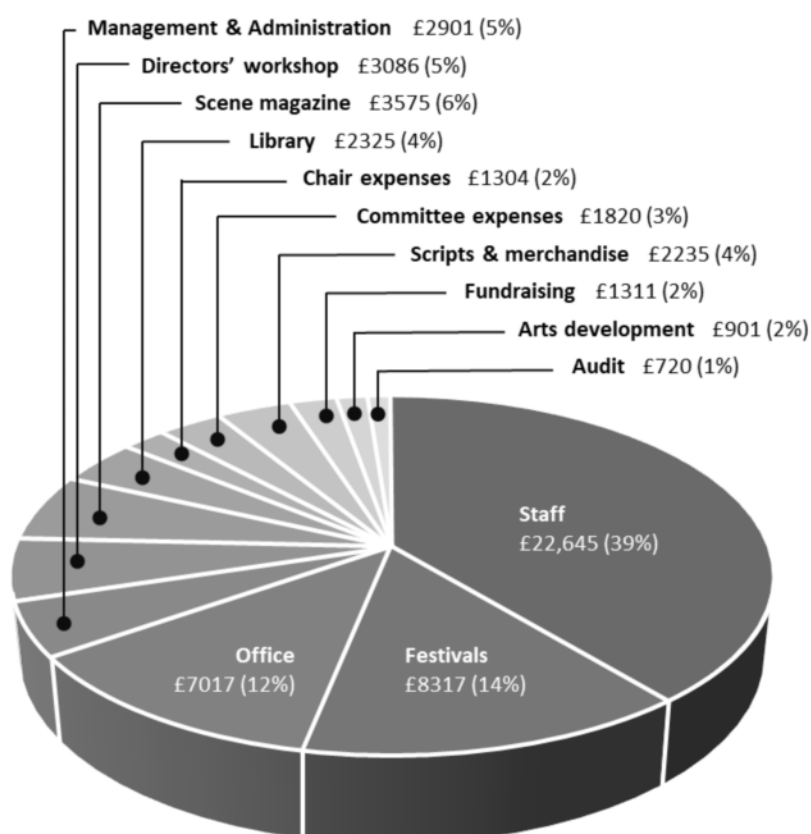
In earlier years we have had donations which largely met the annual Library rental. All donations have now been exhausted meaning that, apart from day to day income from people using the library, the rental is being funded nationally. An appeal has been sent to Divisions and Districts asking for financial support for the current year.

We continue to be heavily reliant on income from our Patrons. We are very grateful to them and all our other supporters be they Divisions, Districts, Clubs, individual members or just people who like to help.

The association must continue on the path of financial prudence in order to ensure a long term future. We continue to explore new avenues to increase our income. Our budget for 19-20 shows a deficit once more but this is shown as just £2,894. We hope this is achievable and we have to work towards at least breaking even in future years to retain the Association's future. Please support our Scottish Final in Orkney in 2020, buy our branded merchandise, and anything you can do to bring in more members and Patrons helps take us in the right direction.

**Lesley Syme**  
National Treasurer

## EXPENDITURE £58,157





# Business and pleasure

"Business and pleasure don't mix" so the saying goes, but SCDA's National AGM is certainly the exception that proves the rule. A definite must! The very comfortable Queens Hotel in Perth was our venue, and what better way to start the weekend than with a sociable dinner, a time for catching-up, stories, and exchange of views and experiences. As for the post dinner entertainment, that was really something to savour!

Members of National Committee, ably shepherded by Morna Barron, did us proud with a variety of very funny, clever sketches. All excellent performances, but I feel the OSCAR for "The Most Wooden Performance" definitely goes to our past Joint Vice Chair, Gordon Hibbert. I should make it clear that this is in no way a reflection on Gordon's legendary acting ability as he was actually playing a ventriloquist's dummy, ably handled by our Chair, Tony Flisch. The Chair managing his Vice Chair from behind - perish the thought! All good fun!

Saturday morning we were down to the business in hand with approximately 40 attendees at the AGM, Chaired by Tony Flisch who extended a warm welcome. As always the AGM is an opportunity for members to hear firsthand from the Office Bearers a summing-up and update on the year's progress artistically and financially, and it certainly makes you realise the amount of work and effort involved in maintaining the smooth running of the organisation and its future. This is also an excellent forum to clarify any queries you may have. High on the agenda as always is the essential role of fundraising, led by Gordon Hibbert, who outlined the various ways we can contribute to ensuring a

healthy future for SCDA, including many additions to the range of merchandise. The results of a survey circulated to all SCDA members and Clubs were outlined by its designer, Robin Smith, and had proved an interesting exercise, giving members an opportunity to express their views on "all things SCDA". Members were encouraged by Douglas Currie to support the excellent SCDA library.

For the final part of the meeting we were treated to a report by our Drama Advisor, Carole Williams, on her visit to Canada, following an invitation from Alberta Theatre for her to provide international input at a Community Theatre summit. Carole's enthusiasm was infectious as she had obviously found this to be a hugely rewarding experience and had brought back to us a myriad of information so much of which could be beneficial to SCDA. What was so good to hear was that there was a real interest in our Festival organisation and format, and it was hoped that personal exchanges between our two countries would result. Carole had certainly done us proud!

My Stornoway and Orkney friends remained to spend an evening down memory lane, amongst other things, with Douglas and Rosemary Currie. A lovely end to a great weekend.

To sum up I would say to anyone, if you're thinking of coming to the AGM, don't hesitate, just do. It's an opportunity to have the best of both worlds and gives you a feeling of "belonging"!

**Benita Wylie**

## SCDA's new National Committee



Photo: Walter Hampson

# THREE CHEERS FOR SCDA'S NDA

Braemar Creative Arts Festival, now in its 9<sup>th</sup> year, exists to introduce the ARTS in its many different forms to our small village community. Living in the Highlands, over 50 miles from any major city, access to theatres, evening classes, art galleries etc is a challenge. So throughout the year we bring the ARTS to Braemar by engaging first class tutors to offer workshops to interested participants.

In 2013, we decided to add drama to our list of creative arts workshops and we were very fortunate indeed that our internet search led us to SCDA where we discovered the amazing Carole Williams. Carole agreed to come to Braemar for two full days and was welcomed by a very keen but very amateur bunch of thespians.

Although this was 6 years ago, I remember as if it were yesterday - the atmosphere, the fun, the learning, and the engagement of our first experience of Carole's tuition. We played, we laughed, we invented; we had games, improvisation, voice work; we read scripts, discussed characterisation, looked at staging and so



much more. It felt like we had packed a whole term of drama classes into just two days. But there was more.

As part of the Festival, the committee expected the 'drama class' to come up with a production for an audience at the end of the second day. That was a tall order. Was Carole fazed by this? Absolutely not. So what did she suggest? Let's write our own! And we did. It was amazing how Carole pulled us together into a team of writers, directors, and actors. We wrote and staged a 20 minute play, called 'Be Careful What you Wish For', to a packed audience. Locals still talk about it today, as it was all about what might happen to Braemar if it became a more easily accessible destination.

Since that time Carole has made several trips to Braemar and always comes well prepared with new ideas, techniques, and helpful hints. Her visits are always the highlight of the year for the keen dramatists among us, and we look forward in anticipation to her next visit in June 2020.

**Marilyn Baker**  
*Director BCAF*



## Let Carole help your club reach its potential

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](mailto:nda@scda.org.uk)



# BIPS panto

Once upon a time in Birnam-by-Dunsinane, long after Macduff had dispatched Macbeth and the three witches had gone home for their tea, there appeared a motley band of players bent (some doubled up – some did double-up) upon producing 'Almost a Pantomime' titled "Disorder in Court" by Stewart Auty.

In a very realistic court room we saw first Goldilocks charged with breaking and entering then sampling a certain breakfast food of the Bears family.

Under cross-questioning Georgia Brockway showed skill at self-defence of both real and notebled variety.

Second defendant was Big Bad Wolf (Melanie Brockway) accused of doing a lot of huffing and puffing thereby vandalising 2 of the 3 little pigs houses.

Papa Brockway did sound (keeping it in the family) while Ben Coleman did lighting. The tech team were spot on.

Was ever a court Usher more lugubrious than John Anderson? As Judge Menthol, Billy Neilson could

have won any drag Queen contest. Defence counsel Liz Archibald an angelic vision of innocence complete with halo argued convincingly with prosecution Michelle Rodway a devil exuding bias from her horns to her stilettos.

Fran Norris showed gender fluidity bridging the gap between Daddy bear (Act 1) and Mrs Pig (Act 2), while Karen Michie managed somehow to avoid tripping over her eyelashes as Minnie the Vamp.

Benita Wylie, Inspector Clueless was type-cast.

Red Riding Hood, (Freya Campbell ) character witness charmingly set the record straight. Nice Mr Wolf had saved her grandmother.

A trio of Primary's, Abigail Kettles, Madison Lewis and Millie Dunbar-Moncur ages 8 – 10 (going on teenagers) all had fun in turn playing Baby bear – as a typical little Madam – giving glimpses of their Thespian futures – we hope.

Patti Jessiman ably directed and is recruiting for next winters show!

**Benita Wylie**



## 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](mailto: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](http://www.cordinerpress.co.uk) or contact 36 Mansefield Avenue, Cambuslang, Glasgow G72 8NZ  
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## Samuel French Ltd.

**'Miss Littlewood'** by Sam Kenyon

Musical in Two Acts (26 scenes)

Cast: 3 Male 10 Female (multiple roles)

ISBN 9780573115622

Joan Littlewood was undoubtedly the anarchic revolutionary of 20th Century Theatre and her truly unique Theatre Workshop was responsible for many stage successes including *Oh, What a Lovely War!*

Breathing fresh life into the Theatre Royal, Stratford East and helping to launch the careers of Victor Spinetti, Harry H Corbett and Dame Barbara Windsor.

Visionary, ferociously anti-establishment, rude and glorious, Littlewood fired the imagination of a generation of artists.

Based on her life story, this new musical first presented by the RSC in the Swan Theatre at Stratford Upon Avon in Summer 2018 charts the emotional highs and lows of Joan's journey from East End to the West End.

It reveals a mighty love story at the heart of her uncompromising honesty with seven actors portraying Joan throughout diverse in age, ethnicity, appearance and accent.

Any fully realised production should draw on the theatrical economy of using basic settings and the band a solo piano played live.

Staging features a large screen projecting various images and a useful year counter.

Script supplied with extensive property listings under each scene

heading. There are 24 song numbers and notes on music copyright laws.

## **'Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em'**

by Guy Unsworth (based on the television series by Raymond Allen)

Comedy in Two Acts

Cast: 4 Male 2 Female (with doubling)

ISBN 9780573115509

This adaptation of the 1970s situation comedy achieves something truly remarkable managing to stay true to the original plotting whilst delivering fresh writing that is entirely of its own.

A hugely enjoyable sparkling, frothy farce with a script packed with cracking jokes and humorous wordplay which crosses the generations providing a redoubtable comeback for the comic creation that is Frank Spencer.

Complete with fascinating biographies of writers Guy Unsworth and Raymond Allen and an author's note on the development of the piece.

The production was premiered in February 2018 featuring comedian Joe Pasquale in the lead role prior to a UK tour.

Contains detailed set plan of Frank and Betty's house highlighting the collapsing and exploding items with full property list, lighting and sound effects crucial to the frenetic action.

## Cressrelles Publishing

**'Off the Rails'** by John Waterhouse

Three Act play

Cast 5 male 4 female

Set in a country railway station threatened with closure. The

resourceful stationmaster resists, but with varying success - thanks to the hilarious incompetence of his staff. The first professional production starred Roy Hudd, Frank Randall and Hylda Baker.

A single set, merging the domestic into the railway area, is highly effective in a play which amateur societies have seized on with great zest.

## **'Pieces of Hate'** by Richard Franks

Dark comedy cast 3 male 3 female

Judi and Thomson are about to host a fancy-dress party to introduce themselves to their new neighbours. From this simple plotline, the play gathers momentum and drama. Unbeknownst to our hosts, who have troubles of their own, the other two couples are inter-connected, with a tense back-story. The black humour is funny without becoming sick. The characters, their individual "kinks" and the constantly fluctuating relationships between them are a source of amusement.

Running time approx 50 minutes.

## **'My Name Is Oscar Wilde'**

by Norman Holland

Cast 9 male 4 female (flexible cast)

This play sees the famous playwright and wordsmith facing the harsh realities of incarceration in Reading Gaol. He takes refuge in memories of his earlier triumphs and his subsequent fall from grace. A stark, powerful play. Duration is 55 minutes but can be cut for Festival performances.

**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.

# Our ever rising festival costs

According to the Encyclopaedia Britannica “The Pirates of Penzance” was written in haste – but – nevertheless was carefully crafted! Now – I am neither an Arthur Sullivan (thought my voice aint too bad!) nor am I an able Librettist as was W.S. Gilbert but I will herein after do my very best to produce a reasonable bit of readable and informative material appropriate to my chosen subject – “Our ever rising festival costs” – by which I mean the ever rising (steadily and sometimes speedily) cost to our Districts and Divisions of organising, producing and eventually successfully staging their One Act Drama Festivals.

Where do I start? Perhaps by considering appropriate/affordable venues for such like festivals which in many cases will be relatively poorly attended are we not all ‘in the same boat’ with regard thereto?

Tom Gibson reflects on the difficulty of finding an affordable venue

So- I then determined to pen a simple letter or enquiry to all of our district and division secretaries.

*My purpose in writing to you is to enquire how your District and/or Divisions are finding suchlike costings. I would very much appreciate appropriate and brief comment from you at your convenience*

I duly received most informative and sometimes quite expansive and revealing responses from nigh all of our districts and divisions – almost all thereof ‘singing from the same hymn sheet’

Surprise! Surprise! – really!

There can be little doubt that the major ‘overcharging’ culprits are the ruling/government local authorities within the cities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow – Inverness also, for apparently Eden Court is now ‘beyond affordability’ Rental rates for school halls and for community centre and suchlike accommodation has simply rocketed in the course of the past ten or so

years and is likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future – so much so that even that scale of accommodation (invariably with very limited lighting and/or sound installations and very few with technically knowledgeable employees) can scarcely be afforded by any of us.

Several respondees comment particularly upon the fact that, whilst accommodation rental costs and the costs appropriate to the direct employment of sound and/or lighting operatives continue to rise, audience numbers continue to fall at times quite alarmingly so! Even here in the city of Aberdeen, with a known permanent resident population of 240K plus, we are delighted with an evening audience of 100 or greater! Obviously reduced income from audience numbers further exacerbates the pertaining problems arising from the barely seldom affordable venue rentals – a situation which is unlikely to improve all that much – if at all – in the foreseeable future.

I now quote randomly from a puckle of the responding letters and/or emails viz:-

“We have not used Glasgow City for years for not only were the venue rentals and other directly relevant costs far too high but so was the competition for suchlike accommodation from other groups. Smaller theatres on the outskirts of the city – at East Kilbride and Cumbernauld etc – have been available but, there is invariably the additional cost to teams of renting sound and light facilities which some of these smaller units simply do not have and furthermore the additional cost of employing competent sound and/or light technicians – and – so on!”

*Continued overleaf*



# A play, a pie

## *Continued*

Eden Court is now well beyond affordability. Fortunately affordable appropriate accommodation has become available in Nairn – but – for how long? It is perhaps significant that the Nairn facilities are run by a local Board of Trustees and not by the appropriate Local Authority.

One could go on! Is there any light at the end of this particular tunnel – even a wee glimmer whilst our fellow thespians close by Nairn and, of course, the muckle clubs on Orkney and “managing”, the rest of the country would appear to be finding it all ‘hard going’ – but we soldier on in spite of obstacles in front of us – aye so!

It is also suggested, by more than the one respondee, that perhaps our audiences are desirous of seeing more modern/new One-Act Plays being performed ‘live’ on stage- after all, say they, our association does hold an annual competition for playwriting – so surely it is not unreasonable to consider that a greater number of plays should ‘see the light of day’. Food for further thought/comment perhaps?

Several responses for us all to further/ increase our self-funding attitude – implementing efficient/effective fund raising both locally and nationally – now there be a deliberate throwing down of the Gauntlet! In respect thereof my own SCDA Aberdeen District committee – mixed bag of very experienced troopers and ever eager to learn/participate recruits very recently did just that. We have made a very successful start therewith – both audience attraction-wise and most certainly, financially. I am personally more confident of our District having a future – some exciting times to look forward to.

We provide the public at large with an amazing array of local talent and produce some wonderful plays – all at an affordable price. I would hope that we will all have the courage and the foresight to soldier on. Cheers,

**Tom Gibson**  
*Chair Aberdeen District*

Sincerest thanks for the invaluable ‘contributions’ from the following:

Anne McIntyre, Jill Charnley, Betty Matheson, Margaret Allan, Donald Farmer, Mary Tweedie, Eric Wesencraft, Susan Wales, Fiona Grant and Peter and Emily Esson.

This is a short explanation about the process with regard to getting a play (in particular, my own play – ‘It’s Behind You!’) produced under the Play, A Pie And A Pint franchise, which originates from Oran Mor, Glasgow, and has tie-ins with The Traverse, Edinburgh; The Beacon Arts Centre, Greenock; and The Lemon Tree, Aberdeen.

There are a number of ways whereby a writer has a play accepted for PPP.

You can submit an unsolicited script, and if they think like it, they will then commission that play retrospectively, and work with the writer to develop it into a rehearsal script.

You can approach them with an idea, and if they like it, they will ask you to develop that idea into a treatment/synopsis, and if they think that this has mileage, they will then commission you to produce a first draft, and work with you to develop this into a rehearsal script.

PPP can approach a writer and ask them to submit an idea for consideration, and if they come up with something they like, they will then commission them to produce a first draft, which will then be developed into a rehearsal script.

The other way is that the PPP team simply commission a writer to produce a first draft, which is what happened in my case.

One of the PPP producers, Morag Fullarton, had asked me if I had any ideas, and I said that all I had was an opening image of a panto dame walking onstage with a rubber chicken in her hand, and launching into the famous Macbeth speech... ‘*Is this a dagger which I see before me?*’ On the strength of this, PPP commissioned me to write the play!

They say that you should write about what you know, and having played panto dame annually and professionally since 1994... and having written pantos for many of the country’s leading theatres for the last twenty years, I reckoned I had a bit of insight into the genre.

From that opening image, I had to ask myself who this person was, and why he was doing this... and came up with the concept that he was returning to his dressing room following a panto performance, and rehearsing his lines for an audition the following day for Macbeth. This character had to have someone to play against, so I created the character of his panto double act partner, with whom he shared a dressing room. This allowed me to delve into their personal and professional relationships, and on the basis that that evening’s show had been a bit of a mess, who was to blame for the slip ups, which allowed me to have them going over the onstage routines which had gone wrong. So, the audience got to see a bit of both worlds – the backstage world, and the material they were also performing onstage.

## & a pint

From my original idea, I didn't just sit down and start typing. I can't really write a word of dialogue until I have the whole story clear in my head. Structure is everything, and I first work out my roadmap of the story and characters' journeys through the play. Although only an hour long, and played out in real time, from a structural point of view, this play was in three very definite acts. Act One is the introduction of the characters and the set up for what is to be revealed in the second act. Act Two is the revelation of what is really motivating the actions of the characters. (In Act One, there is a lot of personal and professional animosity, and it is only in Act Two that we find the true reason behind all the animosity... and the consequences of this revelation) Act Three is the resolution of the characters' situations, and a new beginning for both of them. I spent two weeks creating the characters and their relationships and motivations... and taking them on their individual and joint journeys through the play... which involved years of travel through their personal and professional lives which have brought them to this crucial moment in their careers and lives in this dressing room on that particular night.

Most of this was done not in front of a computer screen and a keyboard. I do a lot of running, and find I get my best ideas and inspirations when I'm out on a long run. Due to an injury, I was cycling at that point, and would do two hours a day on the bike on a dedicated cycle path where I didn't have to worry about the dangers of traffic, and could let my mind run free. I had a recording device



attached to my jacket, and I spoke into this for the two hours on the bike, and one idea would lead to another... and another... and another... including exchanges of dialogue... and when I got home, I would transcribe this onto the computer. In many ways, the play was writing itself before I even sat down to start the writing/typing process. After two weeks, I had the whole play in sketch form, and it was then a matter of rearranging all the splurges of inspiration and material into script form, and developing the dialogue around this foundation. It took me three or four days to complete a first draft, and of course, more ideas come during this process, and the first draft was a fully realised script. I got a couple of actor friends to read it for me so I could hear how it sounded, as well as recording the audio. After listening to this, I was able to do a second draft, which I sent to Oran Mor. Despite a few comments, they were happy with this draft to go into rehearsal.

I was also performing in the play, and it continued to develop in rehearsal, thanks to the input of the director and other actor. As the writer, I sometimes can't see the wood for the trees, and I'm keen to have outside eyes add their input.



The play has been performed at Oran Mor in Glasgow and at The Lemon Tree in Aberdeen. It has also been picked up by Fintry Amateur Dramatic Society, who will produce it in 2020 as part of the SCDA one act play programme.

**Alan McHugh**



Killin Drama Club, *'The Wizard of Oz'*

Picture by Walter Hampson

Fintry ADS, *'Mother Goose'*

Picture by Tony Flisch



Edinburgh People's Theatre, *'Aladdin'*

Picture by Terry Railley

