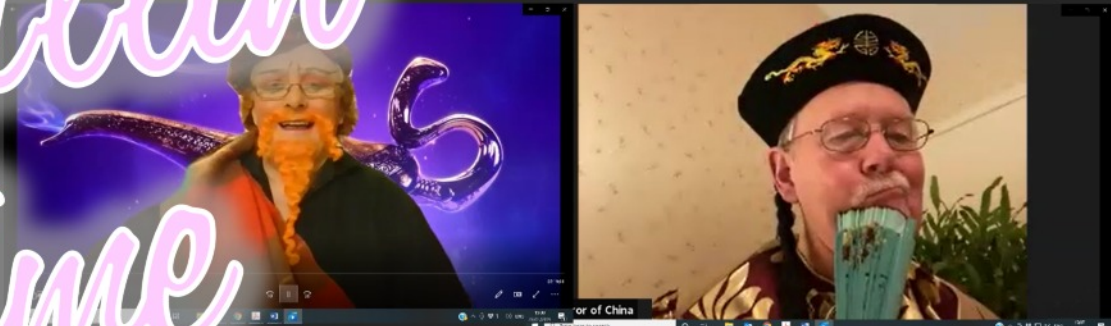
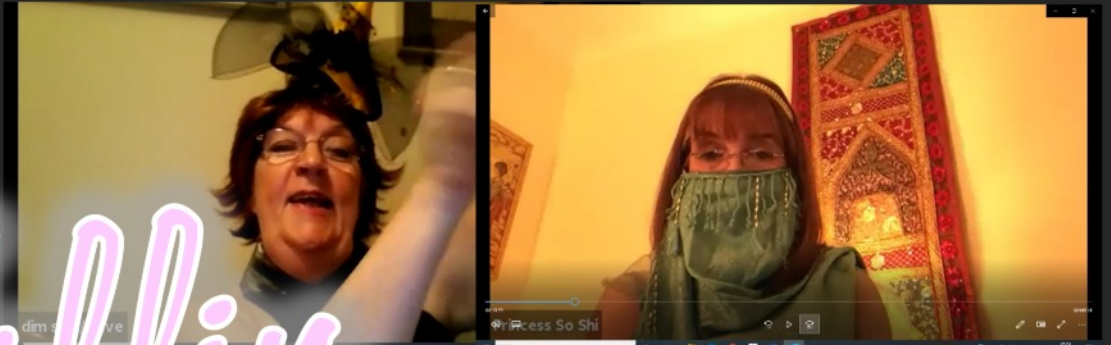


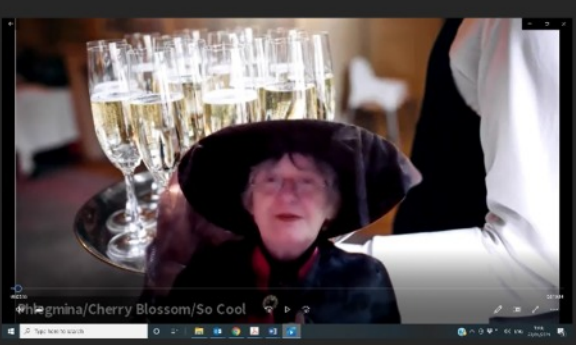
Spring 2021

scene

*Killin
&
time*



with a
laptop
Aladdin



The magazine of Scottish Community Drama



**We'll soon be
back on track**

*'First Class' Leith Theatre (2018)
Picture by Walter Hampson*

Spotlight Publications

NEW

SLEEPING BEAUTY

by Dave Buchanan

This is a complete rewrite and update (including new songs). Princess Titanya is struck down by a witch's curse and doomed to sleep for a hundred years

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by Sharon Harrison

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SCENE No.168

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

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Due to the coronavirus the office is currently closed. Brenda is working from home. Anything sent to the office by post will be collected weekly. An answering service is operating on 07407 387086 please leave a message and Brenda will get back to you as soon as possible.

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Scene magazine

Copy date for next edition : 31st March 2021

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

*Printed by Monument Press,
42 Abbey Road, Stirling FK8 1LP
01786 474763 info@monumentpress.co.uk*

Cover

Pictures from Killin Drama Club's zoom pantomime, 'Aladdin' in January.

Chairman's chat



As I write my first 'Chat' I'm reminded of my predecessor Tony who stated that it was never his intention to take on the role of Chairman and I echo that sentiment somewhat. However I see it as a great honour and privilege having been involved in SCDA for a great number of years. As the first Chairman elected by Zoom and on the same day as the American President Joe Biden, I hope to continue in the same inspirational manner as all the SCDA stalwarts who have held this post before me!

We have all had a very different Festive season and Zoom has kept us in touch over the past few months. Meetings have taken place virtually and I know many groups have had regular play readings and social events such as quizzes. I was even invited to take part in a Zoom panto with Killin Drama Group complete with costumes, music and scene changes! Fantastic as these meetings are the most common thing I hear people say is that they crave meeting others face to face and the feeling of coming together as a group. However, with the vaccine rollout well under way we mustn't lose hope that we can get back together as this is essential for our mental health.

As regards our One Act Festival, Divisions have been given autonomy to make their own decisions within the government guidelines with any updated information appearing on our website. In the meantime, we are excited about our new Monologue and our Play on Words competitions both launched at the end of the year. It would be fabulous to see members who would normally now be fully involved in One Act rehearsals take the plunge and enter either one or both of these competitions. A lot of work has gone on behind the scenes including online publicity and I hope many have been inspired to try something new. So if you're considering putting your artistic talents to good use please have a go and we look forward to seeing all the entries roll in over the next few weeks!

Carolyn

Welcome

To new Individual members

Antony Lee National
Helen Brogan ... Fife - Eastern
Paul Beeson ... Fife - Eastern
Sam Ruddell ... Angus - Northern
Bruce Gardener ... Aberdeen- Northern
Alice Maxwell ... Ayrshire - Western
David Simpkin ... Ayrshire - Western
Ian Smith ... Wigtown - Western
Jonathan Supper .. S.W. Ross - Highland

To new Clubs

Forth Children's Theatre Edinburgh - Eastern

To new Life Members

Andrew & Maureen Moyes Stirling - Eastern

Thank you

Thurso Players for your kind donation, and for the continued support from our Patrons, which is much appreciated.

One Act Festival 2021 Update

At the time of writing the vaccine rollout is going well and we are hoping soon to be making our way out of lockdown. As the days become longer and the weather slightly warmer what about the green shoots of our One Act Festival season?

After discussion it appears that all four nations remain very keen for the British Final to go ahead as planned in Rhyl late September and preparations are still in progress for our Scottish Final in September.

Highland, Eastern and Western Division have made the difficult decision to cancel their Divisional Finals for this year but will each send two teams to Scottish Final. Currently both Northern Division are still scheduled to hold their Divisional Festival later in the year. We patiently wait with fingers crossed for the gradual changes to government guidelines and the situation is permanently under review. Any further updates or information will be found on the website: sca.org.uk



'Worst Day of My Life'
St. Andrews Drama Club
(2020)

Picture Bryan Leslie

The show must go on

When lockdown was announced in March, the busy schedule that goes along with that time of year, was in full swing at the Kirky Players. We were a few weeks into rehearsal for our production of “‘Allo ‘Allo” in April, our youth section had begun rehearsals for their summer musical, “Sister Act,” our youth festival team, having received an excellent adjudication in Dumbarton, was excited to perform “Teechers” at the Western Division final in Dunoon and our adult festival play, “Being Norwegian”, was preparing to enter EK Rep Fest in May. And in addition to the usual madness, our beloved little Turret Theatre was in the throes of major repair work!

We were, of course, aware of the Coronavirus beginning to sweep a path round many countries, but, like many, we didn't really believe that it would affect us. Suddenly everything, including our building work, ground to a halt. To paraphrase a quote from the SCDA Western Division Facebook page, although we understood that we were in the midst of an unprecedented and serious situation, theatre is what we do, it's what we love and it was hugely disappointing to have to cancel so many things we were looking forward to.

However, the show must go on (even when it can't!), and we adapted to our new situation. Like most during this time, we got to grips with Zoom and have managed to hold a few committee meetings – fairly sure our president, Kenneth, will miss the mute facility once we are back to meetings in person! We extended our Zoom usage to hold a few quiz nights allowing our members a chance to socialise – however, trying to control a collection of thespians when only one can speak at a time was most certainly an interesting experience! We even threw ourselves into the most up to date social media with our Teechers' cast and crew putting together a Tik Tok video for our Facebook page!

The SCDA provided some great opportunities to keep some drama in our lives and I took part in monologue workshops and reserve adjudicator training. It was fantastic to be able to be involved in dramatic activities during this tough time and to meet like-minded folk from different Scottish divisions. I'm sure those of us who have competed in festivals have, on the odd occasion, had a little grumble about the adjudicator but the training gave me a new found respect for the difficult job adjudicators have and I promise NEVER to complain again.....until the next time!

As lockdown begins to ease, it's become clear that theatre is likely to be one of the final things to recover. We were so disappointed to have to cancel our Autumn play and our annual pantomime in January. However, we have a few plans in place to keep drama alive over the coming months. Gordon and Jillian, directed by Allan, have recorded their festival play, “Being Norwegian”, from home and we hope to make this available to our members soon. We plan to hold a reading night via Zoom in early Autumn, and Alan, one of our club members has written a hilarious radio play/podcast that we plan to produce remotely over the coming weeks. We are also delighted that work has recommenced on the Turret and, once we are able to, tidying up the theatre will be a substantial project.

Looking to the future, we remain hopeful we can be back performing and doing what we love by next spring. That, of course, remains to be seen. What we can be certain of is that when we do return, we will be so much more appreciative of the joy theatre brings into our lives.

Hilary Lynas

Kirkintilloch Players

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and women merely players, but
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When our new National Chair

There is a commonality in our membership that presents itself as a long term enthusiasm for amateur drama from a very young age and none more so than in Carolyn Harrison our new National Chair.

Her mum Winnie is of course a legend in the northern division heading up the highly successful Forfar Dramatic Society for decades. Hugely influential in Carolyn and her sisters' young lives it was inevitable they would follow in Winnie's footsteps.

On one occasion mum had required a tricycle for a production and borrowed Carolyn's and, outraged her trike was onstage without its owner, her mission became clear. She was desperate to get on that stage!

From then on it was the usual drama kid story. Helping out at drama festivals, selling raffle tickets and programmes and watching and learning.

Carolyn was a founder member of Forfar Dramatic Society Youth Theatre joining at the age of 11 and she graduated to the senior club aged 15. She took part in various productions over a period spanning 30 years including festival plays, pantomimes and musicals such as Peter Pan and at one time becoming president of the club. She spent a number of years working with the Youth Theatre when festival entries and musicals were very much enjoyed by the younger members. Thus also encouraged Carolyn's own children to become involved in drama.

In 2010 she moved to live in Carnoustie and joined another prestigious Angus club....Carnoustie Theatre Club where she took part in several productions and with the hope of more to come when circumstances allow.

She had also been on the Angus committee for some time and helped set up our youth festival alongside drama stalwarts Margaret Stewart, Betty Gibson and Morna Barron and others back in the 90s. She became chair of Angus district in 2011 and again from 2015 to 2018 and chair of Northern Division during that period.

Some of her very favourite memories include playing Chris in a Scottish final production of Sunset Song where in an ironic twist they did not win because an Irish adjudicator did not understand the Mearns accent!!.

On another occasion a real life drama ensued when travelling to a divisional final with Blue Remembered Hills one of the cast members had to pull out due to family illness and Carolyn (on sound) had to learn the part in the



car. No mean achievement in a very wordy play. They still came third!!

By far the hardest and most challenging play she was in was "Porch" a really tough 2 hander set in a sultry southern states tiny front porch. She and her mother played by Betty Gibson in a wheelchair successfully navigating their way to victory. Brilliantly done and a worthy Northern Divisional winner.

Carolyn ever modest and reluctant to take on high office needed some persuasion to take on her current role as national chair but we are confident we have a level headed leader who has amateur community drama in her very bones and is already making her mark on the development of our association in the toughest of times.

We all share her sadness for what is happening to the creative industries but it only makes us more innovative and determined to find ways of doing what we all love to do. She remains hopeful and convinced we can still perform socially distanced pieces and is very enthusiastic about our new monologue competition and rejuvenated Play on Words. Webinars / social media and articles in SCENE giving us first class advice and inspiration to get on and try something new.

was upstaged by a tricycle

Since we talked there have been so many iterations of the pandemic situation that it sometimes seems hopeless but there is something about the human spirit and 'never say die' attitude inherent in all of us that speeds us on.

Having said that and on a very practical note we need people to feel safe and Carolyn having had a hugely successful ICU nursing career is the ideal person to ensure government protocols will be adhered to.

She is determined to remain optimistic and meet the needs of our membership whose core wish is to support community drama, to perform and entertain and where there us a will there will most definitely be a way!

On her life in drama so far Carolyn says community drama has given herself and her mum so much pleasure and it has become an extension of her family. We may all come from different backgrounds but have one common interest that binds us together. It is a great way to learn and develop skills you never knew you had.

Her advice is to never underestimate the power of drama and understand how fantastic it is for young people particularly.

In her youth theatre days she wrote "The Amazing Dream Ticket" developed to give everyone from the shyest to the most outgoing a chance. Devised with and by the group with no auditions and as a team it gelled.

She says

"It is a misconception that drama is for extroverts. To see shy and more socially introverted people blossom and flourish is such a joy. It is a fantastic thing and a huge privilege to be part of. I will never forget being a wee stage-struck 7 year old and how it has become a huge and important part of my life supported by family and friends allowing me to do it."

Well said, that woman!!

Paula Gibson



Bitesize Talks

While the pandemic continues to rage and interrupt all our lives, people have become more and more imaginative about how to keep drama alive. Like all clubs, districts and divisions throughout Scotland, Glasgow District was worried about members losing touch and this potentially leaving us unable to recover when all this is over.

Keeping in touch by Zoom was the obvious answer but this had to have a purpose and so our bitesize talks idea was born. With a bit of gentle persuasion, members and supporters of the district have agreed to cover a variety of subjects in our exciting programme. This includes a practical make up demonstration, lighting, the journey from being a SCDA youth member to professional actress and how to prepare a monologue.

The decision was taken to keep the talks short (approx. 20 mins) in the hope that members will tune into talks on subjects which wouldn't normally interest them and that they would give people a brief interlude to their normal evening activities. As well as the talk, there would be a chance to ask questions at the end.

We've made a good start and look forward to the rest of the programme. If any member of the SCDA would like to join the talks then they can contact us through our Facebook page and we'll send them the link.

Lorna Campbell
Chair of Glasgow District

Carole's Zoom workshops

Current circumstances have required us all to be a bit more creative and inventive in our thinking and our members have done just that.

We have zoomed, read plays, held tea parties and quizzes, held workshops and webinars, trained reserve adjudicators and directors and embraced technology in a way none of us could have imagined at the start of this year.

We have relaunched the Play on Words project and started a brand new strand to our theatrical offering in the shape of a monologue competition.

I asked Carole our much loved NDA what the uptake had been on workshops to help hone and develop those particular skills has been.

She said from the get go there has been real interest and enthusiasm nationally and to date has conducted 8 workshops from as far afield as Braemar to Orkney. The experience has been hugely rewarding culminating in joyful sharing sessions.

How difficult had it been to navigate this normally interactive process into the virtual world, I asked.

Her response was that in fact monologues provided an ideal platform as a starting point in that respect but a lot of ground work had to be covered beforehand. She would choose monologues with the group in mind looking for opportunities for learning and send them all out beforehand. On presentation she would focus on a different aspect of delivery so for example you may have 6 different feedbacks on the one monologue enhancing the depth of your understanding.

Where to find the material, what sources are there out there?

It transpires there are loads!

Lots of books, some new contemporary writing, multifarious websites and all freely available for closed and educational purposes with no restrictions.

Carol says "You just have to find something you like and can identify with" To drill down to her chosen 15 or 20 she has probably read upwards of 60 so lots of prep (and patience) required.

Next the sticky question of performance and royalties.

"Some publishers have been really proactive in providing guidance (Nick Hern being a case in point) while others have done very little to help.

An audience signing up to see a closed performance is very different to putting something on YouTube which is publicly available. You still need to get the permission from the publisher and they vary in response."

Carole says there is advice and relevant links in her blogs and on the website.

I asked her for tips and hints for performance.

1. take time to choose the right thing. It might be something outside your own experience but you have to be able to relate to the character and analyse how they would respond to the situation.

2. Use props and vary your screen presence. Feel free to move. Use space imaginatively and put energy into your delivery. There is a tendency to adopt t.v acting but advice is to go large! We need more theatricality.



3. Don't be tempted to use accents. They can become a distraction.

4. Decide who you are talking to. Once you add in another person it puts flesh on the bones. You stop concentrating on yourself and look outward. That's what performance is all about.

5. Use a phone to record. The camera and microphone are a much higher quality than tablets and laptops. There is a very useful video produced by NTS on our website about filming yourself at home

6 .Get an honest critique from trusted critical friends and be prepared to revisit multiple times."

On writing.....

"Be quite critical and be willing to score out bits of writing you might like to improve the overall piece or to keep the writing tight. Read it out loud and listen to check for authenticity. Sometimes when you read it you will find it just doesn't quite fit. What does it actually add to the story? Make sure you have enough for the actor to explore and pique the curiosity of the audience."

On Creativity and Covid-19 and technology

Have you found there is more happening because of the situation?

"I have had a few surprises. I learned not to make assumptions about who is comfortable around technology and who isn't . One of the myths is that everyone over 50 is not tech savvy and I have discovered some of our older members are just as eager and as adept as our younger members and some of our younger members find it just as challenging. They might be used to playing games but not necessarily be comfortable with the wider use of technology."

Last words

"Whatever happens in the future this must remain a part of what we do. For me digital interaction reaps huge rewards especially when it comes to having training groups from multiple clubs all being creative together. Members from Arran to Orkney have commented on its benefits. On the reserve adjudicator's workshop one participant said ' I would never have done this training if it hadn't been online!."

As Carole wisely said

"Perhaps it's only when we are forced into a situation we are willing to give it a go"

Paula Gibson

Riverside on Hiatus

by Aaron Kirkwood

The curtain's down, the lights are off
Because of a rather infectious cough
Which means no social am dram fun
Until war on Covid19 is won.

For now, we cannot tread the boards
Try on the costumes Jacqui hoards
No need now to learn our words
Which puts you in the clear, George.

No longer can we rehearse the Steamie
Or taste Mo's tablet, so sweet and creamy
Standing onstage together now feels dreamy
Like a play that we once read.

It means us fine actors cannot be
In that curry-smelling café drinking tea
With Joyce investigating the lone 1p
Until it all adds up- oh, the camaraderie!

We had tentative plans to do May Shows
To look out at punters sat in rows
On newly refurbished seats- who knows
Where the money came for those, Anne?

So yes, right now, we are on hold
But a group like ours will never fold
We are too strong, too good (too old)
Our next act will be the best we've told.

Cressrelles Publishing

'Answers on a Postcard'

by Andrew Rock

One-act comedy cast 1M 3F

Harold relieves the boredom of unemployment by advertising for lady visitors. In the midst of an appointment, his wife, a successful business woman, unexpectedly returns home and her reaction surprises her errant husband. Running time approx. 35 minutes.

'Black Velvet'

by Winifred Trentham

One-act murder mystery set in the late 1940s. Cast 4M 4F

The Moir family has gathered for a reunion. Dinner is about to be served when the son's wife, who is hated by every member of the family, is found dead. With the family Doctor ruling the death to be unnatural, the police are called. As several members of the family seem to have good cause to murder Louise, who will be revealed as the killer? And what does it have to do with the cat?!

Running time approx. 30 minutes.

The Cardboard Cavaliers

by John Waterhouse

One Act Social farce cast 4M 4F 3 extras

Lil, Will and Bill are a family living on the streets, in three cardboard boxes underneath a railway arch. The play is basically a domestic comedy. Young Bill returns from begging in the West End with news that a TV presenter wants to interview them for a real, human-interest documentary series. The family's eagerness to impress is confounded by Bill's ineptitude. It does not end happily for the family,

but there is plenty of humour along the way. At the end, the police move them on, but as they leave, a new family moves in. And so the cycle goes on.

Running time approx. 30 minutes.

Stagescripts Limited.

'The Mazarin Stone' by Ron Nicol

One Act Drama Cast: 2 Male 4 Female

221b Baker Street, London in the early 1900's provides the location with suitable period dressing, furniture and properties.

Based on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes adventure originally written as a stage play "The Crown Diamond" but providing additional acting roles for women by introducing John Watson's wife Mary as the great sleuth's assistant.

When Countess Natalia Sylvina steals a fabulous diamond, Holmes determines to recover it using an ingenious plan involving a lifelike dummy of himself placed near the window of his consulting room to confuse the Countess and her henchman Sam Merton upon their arrival.

As the two villains discuss their dastardly plans, Holmes pretends to retire to his bedroom playing his violin although in reality taking the dummy's place to overhear their conversation and leap out to recover the diamond at an appropriate moment. As the police arrest the criminals Holmes returns the precious stone to its owner Lady Cantlemere by mischievously placing it in her coat pocket and accusing her of its theft.

Advice on positioning the dummy is provided.

Running Time 35 mins.

'Going Home' by Ron Nicol

One Act Drama cast 3 M 6 F

This script was runner-up in the 2002 Play on Words Competition and was staged by Kirkintilloch Players in the Glasgow District Festival the following year.

A Further Education College once again providing the setting of classroom decor and corridor. It's the end of the academic year and lecturer Jack Mackintosh is made fully aware that the college wishes him to take early retirement and he becomes emotional on receiving a card from a pupil Sharon addressed to her favourite teacher shortly before a tense confrontation with a fellow staff member trying to persuade him to alter Craig Skinner's examination mark to a higher grade which Jack refuses to action.

He is informed by Sharon that she is leaving to work in a solicitor's office as Jack's standards are too high to achieve.

Later Jack has to endure a vicious assault by Craig, who has broken into the building, leaving him disorientated and injured. Managing to stagger home, tragically we later learn Jack had taken an overdose and been found lying dead next to the corpse of his deceased wife. In an emotional conclusion, Sharon discovers that Jack had indeed altered Skinner's mark upwards which she changes back again.

A gripping and moving drama which Amateur Stage described as "a fine piece of theatre for those seeking a play with a bit more meat on the bone".

Furnishings, personal properties listings and lighting plan provided.

Running Time 45 mins.

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.

Les Miserabbits

Who would have thought a story about rabbits and the music from Les Mis would inspire a talented but clearly eccentric director in New York to write a mini musical for young people to engage with through the Covid crisis? And who would have thought a call to audition for same would wing its way into my email box in Aberdeen?

Well fact is I believe in serendipity and it was just that that secured young Craig Gibson-Lovie an amazing once in a life time opportunity to share in this madcap project.

Those if you who know me will understand I am a dinosaur when it comes to technology and the online form to express an interest was "challenging". However it was duly completed but on the point of hitting 'send' it jammed! After much swearing and scratching of head it transpired I had missed the deadline.

More swearing...!

But nothing daunted I e-mailed a wee story about my 10 year old grandson's passion for performance and a clip of him singing 'Little People' from Les.Mis. As I expected nothing happened!

Until 3 weeks later another missive from NY appeared in my inbox. They had just opened my email, someone had dropped out, they were charmed by his performance and would he like to join the 'bunny chorus'??

As I said, 'Serendipity!' and an example of the famous adage: 'If you don't ask, you don't get!'

Not in the least a pushy theatre gran I thought I'd better let young Craig know what I had done!!! Eek! However luckily and true to form he was super chuffed!

Next huge hurdle was the deadline and the amount of work to be done at home!

We were 3 weeks behind the other 44 cast members with 1 week to go! Had to plead for an extension, time off from school and secure the help of the musical theatre company Craigy is part of, the brilliant Music4U . Thank you, Debbie, Robb and Lucy!!

We had a very complicated score, libretto and choreography to learn quick fast. Their team was drafted in and my costume wifie Heather set the task of designing bunny ears to attach to a baseball cap (ordered from Amazon which arrived the night before we had to send the finished work to NY.)

All in the bag.

There followed a concentrated viewing of both Les Mis the film and Watership Down to give Craig the history of the story. Painful learning of many lines, music and movement (all extremely difficult) and much drama, histrionics, and cries of 'I can't do this, it's too hard!!!!'

Craigy has been part of the Aberdeen Arts Centre family since he was 3 by dint of him being with us then as unpaid



child minders, now as kinship carers and my job at the time allowing him to come to classes while I worked. Likewise he has come with us to SCDA festival and has been put to work selling raffles and programmes. Successfully and profitably I might add. Few can resist his charms.

It was never in any doubt that he would become a theatre kid.

The amazing thing about this project and we have seen many over this pandemic (not least Gareth Malone's virtual choir and the London Philharmonic doing the same thing).

All was filmed on I- phones in 45 different living rooms, with identical choreography, harmonies and delivery and edited with the finest of precision. Outstanding and frankly an incredible achievement.

The team at Prospect Theatre Company in New York should be uber proud of what they have achieved and all the young people aged 10 to 16 even prouder.

Just as an aside 43 of the cast came from the states, from Rhode Island to Florida, and Chicago to New York. There was one child from England and one small boy from Aberdeen. We hope you enjoy watching 15 minutes of Off-Broadway genius!!

Craigy is the one in the red t- shirt, biggest and most expressive ears and the cutest by far! Obviously!!

www.prospecttheater.org/les-miserabbits-on-video

Paula Gibson

My Life in Drama

In October 1947 I joined The Mercators, at that time the drama club for former pupils of the four Edinburgh Merchant Company Schools. In 1961 it was open to all, which was just as well for those who in later years joined the Club.

The Club, being affiliated to the SCDA before I joined, had presented "The Twelve Pound Look" in the 1946 Edinburgh District Festival. In 1952 some of the club (including little me) were at the SCDA Summer School, St Andrews in the male students' hostel, popularly known as "Sally's". Some members returned the following year, but not me, as I was by then on my Army National Service in distant England. After demob, I attended the Summer Schools from 1956 to 1961, meeting stalwarts as Bob and Chris Buchanan, Bill March, Alan Nicol, Ida Anderson (nee Watt), Callum Mill, Harry Douglas, Bill Graham and others, whose names now escape me. (Humblest Apologies!)

The Mercators, though a small club, produced over the years several office-bearers for the SCDA – one National Chairman, two Eastern Divisional Secretaries, one East. Div. Chairman to name but a few.

My "drama life" began at a young age when I was given a model theatre from an older cousin; an elderly aunt made a new front curtain, with my initials – D C – lovingly sewn. At the time, so I was later told, I said that I would marry Auntie, my "teetheart". Rosemary and the family will be relieved to learn that this "romance" never materialised!

I am remembering, those days: without T.V., wireless (not "radio" yet) in bakelite containers, no internet, no Word Processor, no "Zoom" (!), no social media, no mobile phones, severe rationing of most items, the media limited to the press and radio.

At school I joined the Drama Club. My first task was dropping snow outside the cottage door in "Campbell of

Kilmohr" – a favourite one-act play for amateur and school clubs. As it was War-time rice was banned for use as "snow" and ice buckets were a rarity; I had to cut up old exam papers and throw the pieces over the actors going on stage. I then had to pick them up by hand, while the stage crew set for Lob's house in "Dear Brutus". (Many years later I played "Lob" in The Mercators' production by Alan Richardson,) My first performance was as "Mrs Wadhurst" in "Hands across the Sea", which developed the ability not only to be heard, but understood as well as learning comedy technique.

The Mercators held their annual show in mid-February, for many years in the YMCA Hall, Edinburgh; which made it difficult to enter the SCDA Edinburgh District Festival in late February. The Edinburgh round was held in various venues, until the Church Hill Theatre opened in 1965. By then I was on the Edinburgh Committee and helping at the Festivals. The Club had moved from the YMCA Hall to the Church Hill Theatre. A piece of luck came in 1967; we had presented "The Income" at a concert in the Pilton area the previous Autumn; which proved so successful that the Club decided to enter it in the District Festival. From then on with only a few missing years the Mercators have entered one (or two) one act and some full-length plays in the SCDA Festivals without fail until 2016. Quite a good record!

The Mercators have since then held Killin Kimedey Festival in high regard, and have managed to take part every year. Thank you, Killin.

In 1966 I took over as Edinburgh District Secretary, and in 1970 became Eastern Div. Secretary until 1984. Leith Town Hall became the centre for SCDA drama activities: In April 1966 – the Scottish Finals being held there, with the late-Friday evening formal ball in the Assembly Rooms, George Street. I was drafted in to assist the Organising Committee.

My main task in Leith Town Hall, ably assisted by Rosemary, was to ensure that only genuine ticket holders would be allowed into the Bar – current licensing rules! We thus had to make sure that each entrant kept their ticket stub for that evening! Picture thirsty folks at each interval expecting a quick entrance to the Bar while R and I had to inspect every ticket stub! By the Saturday, we were allowing in the regulars without little inspection, while still trying to check the ticket stubs of the newcomers! Fortunately, no inspector came to check for any slight breaking of the licensing regulations! (Whew!)

The following year the British Finals took place once again in Leith Town Hall, with the same licensing rules as in the previous year! (Again, we survived!) The adjudicator at both Finals was Andre Van Gysegham, who gave his usual professional ending for both Festivals.



**'Champagne
for Breakfast'
(1956)**

The 1970s were equally busy for SCDA and my Club in Edinburgh. On Saturday 26th June, 1971 Rosemary and I spent much of the day with Bill March in the Lyceum Theatre, preparing for the British Finals; the four plays to be performed on that day, starting at 5-00 p.m. To add to the tensions, usually present at Finals, the auditorium was being refurbished, with final touches completed in the early afternoon. A successful after the show party was held on stage, with the back wall open, to allow the vision of the illuminated Castle flood on to the stage -a truly memorable evening!

In 1972 the SCDA was able to stage a show during the Fringe in the Church Hill Theatre. That August, "Skerryvore" was presented with a composite cast. The following August, Eastern and Western Divisions each staged a play – Western – "National Health" and Eastern - "Trouble in the Tolbooth". A management team of Jim Alexander, Deryck Gould, Alan Ross and myself organised the three weeks.

In April 1982 the SCDA celebrated 50 years of the One Act Plays Festival in the new Festival Theatre, Pitlochry, with special programme on the Friday evening. Our Royal Patron attended the show and the Reception in the Atholl Palace Hotel afterwards. After an Intro by Margaret Ross, the crowd divided into two lines, along which the Princess walked, her cigarette in its holder. When she neared me, two ladies opposite caught her attention. She stopped, stepped back to look at them from afar, now almost touching me. I tried to move but was blocked by two very tall "minders". For a few minutes I dared not move but had to try not to cough from the cigarette smoke. The Princess moved on and I was able to breathe again! I was shown later a photo of me glowering over the Princess with a grimace suitable for "Dracula" or another monster!



Over recent years, the Club has not been able to welcome new recruits, which means that we are all ageing and some even failing(!)

Hoping for light at the end of the tunnel (Covid 19), the Club may revive, as I likewise hope for the SCDA, whose National Committee and others are working on a plan for the future.

To end on a lighter note, against myself, the only excuse, being that I was struck down a few days later with a viral infection (in quieter times "a touch of flu".) I was in the wings of the Church Hill Theatre waiting for my cue. I was to interrupt the two ladies chatting on stage. Suddenly I was aware that the prompter across the stage was waving frantically. Realising my error, I rushed on stage to say my first lines, and the play continued. One lady was understandingly "miffed" that she had to ad-lib a "story" until I came on, but she forgave me. I went home to find out if my parents had enjoyed the play. Dad asked me "what went wrong in Act Two?" I told him that I missed my cue and went on late. He replied that I had come on too early, as I had interrupted the talented actress with the interesting story, and he wanted to know how it ended!

Douglas N Currie

CLASS ADS

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IN MOTION

In Motion Theatre are a new writing theatre company who write and tour their own work and support and nurture the writing of others and is run by Creative Director, Lisa Nicoll, past member of Carnoustie Theatre Club.

Lisa was delighted to work with SCDA to offer a set of short online writing sessions and live zoom workshops to create a short monologue or story to be read by professional actors. These were shown on youtube link :- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=weldYLSuRCI&t=33s>



The theme of the writings had to be inspired by a past or current media/newspaper headlines. One of our members Kevin Murphy, Greenock was delighted that his monologue was performed by well-known actor Alan Cumming.

Here are comments from some of our other members who took part.

Tuesday's Child by Carole Williams

I have never seen myself as a writer but when Lisa Nicoll from In Motion devised a monologue writing project it seemed too good an opportunity to miss to dip my toe into the world of writing. I waited until the deadline for signing up had passed and as there was still a space available, I joined the group.

Lisa took us through a whole process from initial idea through to performance. We learned about the importance of all aspects of the writing from creating the character and the scenario to authentic dialogue and using all of the senses to construct the environment.

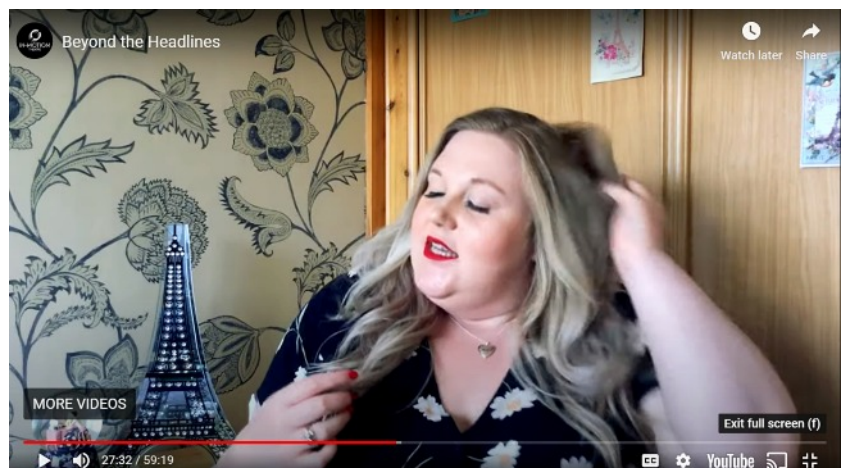
I was probably unprepared for how personal the whole process felt – my character is

called Grace and even now when I look at her I wonder how much of myself is in Grace. I was also intrigued and challenged by the process of writing freely and then having to rewrite and edit which, at times, resulted in having to leave out passages that improved the overall piece but were a wrench to let go of.

Speaking of letting go, we had to trust Lisa and the actor she chose completely as we weren't involved in the direction at all. I think that was a good thing and is how the writing for performance process generally works, but at the time I worried a little bit about whether the writing was strong enough for Grace to materialise in the flesh. All of these worries were put to rest when I sat and watched my work being performed for the first time. It was nerve wracking and thrilling all at the same time.

So what did I learn? I learned so much about the writing process and the challenges of having to write to a deadline. I also learned a lot about myself. I wondered whether I would continue writing afterwards or whether this would be a one-off. Luckily for us Lisa has created a 'writers collective' for those of us wanting to participate. I am not sure I would have had the discipline to continue to write if left to my own devices, but I absolutely love the creative process and we are now learning how to write collaboratively so I hope this will be another skill that I acquire.

I would encourage anyone to get involved in something like this. Even if you only have a tiny idea, working with someone as professional and experienced as Lisa enabled us all to cultivate and grow our ideas into something that could hopefully be enjoyed by others. Grace still occupies a place in my life and I am enjoying discovering new adventures for her.



monologues

Life After

by George Thomson

They say inspiration can strike at any time. For me this was on the way to work during Covid. The daily commute is usually a cause of stress, but during lockdown the roads were quiet and I found I had time to think. And that landed me with the question of 'What if?'

And so began the writing process.

I signed up to the Writing Workshop, in part because Covid had ended the festivals. Not being able to see my partner for ten weeks due to restrictions and having usual activities curtailed had left me with long empty evenings.

The Workshops have been excellent. They have been a good way to meet other people and to exchange ideas. Throughout the workshops led by Lisa we have looked at building characters and how they are as much a part of the story as the words themselves.

Having professional actors perform our pieces and a personal meeting with a professional director was a privilege. And it demonstrates how important the world of amateur theatre is. Not to mention how well respected it is.

One of the things I found most valuable was the feedback, along with the help when rewriting. 1-2-1 meetings allowing time to focus on my work and let me find where issues lay so I could work on re-writes. It's amazing how something that sounds right in your head or voice changes when read aloud by someone else.

I am proud of my final piece. It ended up being much more personal than a reader, or viewer will perhaps realise.

I would also like to extend my thanks to SCDA and all of those who have made this opportunity possible.

To anyone who is thinking about writing, or indeed any other type of workshop from SCDA all I can say is go for it. You will meet some wonderful people across the amateur and professional world who only want the best for you. They will encourage, mentor and applaud you along the way. Am I ready to enter Play on Words? Honestly, not yet. Perhaps that's a future project.



Going Home

by Robin Smith

I'd dabbled in a few failed attempts at dramatic writing in the past, and had also enjoyed the group spirit of a couple of 'Open Learning' Creative Writing courses at Edinburgh University. So the online programme offered to the SCDA by Lisa Nicoll and In Motion Theatre looked intriguing – could we recreate that 'group' feeling online, and would I finally 'finish' something?

There answer to both was a resounding 'yes'. My chosen headline was about a coastal village being abandoned to the elements, and I wanted to use this as the background to a wider family drama..

In a series of recorded videos and 'live' workshops, Lisa took us through character, events, motivation, behaviour, emotion, memory and the senses – and more. Who knew there was so much to (what would be) a five-minute monologue?

The course was methodical and structured and Lisa was always encouraging of our efforts. The other participants, mostly unknown to me before the course, were a friendly bunch and we enjoyed bouncing ideas around.



monologues (contd.)

Lisa drew on the experience and contacts from her career as an actor and writer to help finalise our work before it was handed over to the production team. Director Mikey Murray, who reviewed our late drafts, was brutally honest – apparently, I had a lot of things to fix before my piece would be remotely ‘ready’! That lesson was a tough one, but I took it all on board and was – I hope - able to turn it around.

Once the finished pieces were handed over, all we could do was wait for the online broadcast on In Motion’s YouTube channel: we had no idea who would be performing each monologue, or input to how they would interpret our writing. That separation between writer and performer – standard practice, of course in the world of film and television – is something I found a wee bit perplexing – how could a stranger understand how to play the part I had written without me telling him?!

I think we were all ‘chuffed to bits’ with the final result. In fact, we all signed up to Lisa’s follow-up project, a collaborative piece with each of us taking responsibility for one character. Watch this space for that coming to fruition early in 2021.

Reaction

by Tony Flisch

I never really intended to get involved in monologue writing. I knew the project was about to start and emailed Lisa to say if there weren’t enough volunteers, then I would happily take up a place. I didn’t really expect to be included but thought this would be a good project to give me a goal and deadlines. I was a bit surprised to be invited to join. No going back now, I was in!

The experience was novel for me and took me well outside my ‘comfort zone’. Most of my writing has been factual such as scientific papers, or user guidance or teaching materials. This was something completely different.

There was a programme of workshops with some ‘live’ on Zoom and others recorded by Lisa. We were given deadlines to work to including the submission of scripts a mere month away. I had first to decide the situation I was going to write about. We learned that it was important to know to whom we were talking and to be aware of a variety of factors like what music was current what memories we had, what setting we were in – time of day etc. Also, what had happened to make the character tell the story now and what consequences might ensue. At an early stage in the writing process we had to think up an opening line. Mine was “I’m just back from Lovers’ Lane and I have a problem”.

The next stage was to complete the script – we had been given timings to work to. After submission of the first draft, we each had a personal one to one session with Lisa. She started by reading my monologue aloud then we discussed the situation the characters and the wording. I was a bit downhearted as I had quite a bit of redrafting to do before it was submitted again and shared with Mikey Murray (a freelance film director and lecturer in film production). We then had individual sessions with Mikey and Lisa. Lisa had been kind in her critique. Mikey was more direct in his criticism. It was also rather disconcerting to talk to someone who was not looking at you. I realised he was reading the script on a separate monitor, but it still felt weird. After the session, I felt really dejected. I was advised to change the relationship between two of the characters and to raise the stakes emotionally. Also, speech has to avoid being ‘on the nose’. I looked it up - first definition “*Precisely correct, without any error.*” Well that’s fine, but immediately under that came “*Unsubtle or overly and clumsily direct. Used when characters in a narrative leave no room for subtext with their eye-rollingly obvious dialogue*”. Then, my script came back full of red strikeouts including all the first 5 lines. At that point I hated Mikey. The next day I

woke up more positive, accepted the changes and read it aloud to myself and had, grudgingly, to admit it was tighter and much better.

So, what have I learned? Self-criticism is fine but not really enough so you really need a critical friend and to park one’s ego. After that, glutton for punishment that I am, I signed up for the second project.



John Irvine Obituary

John Irvine died in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary on 28th April, a victim of the Covid 19 virus. He was aged 90.

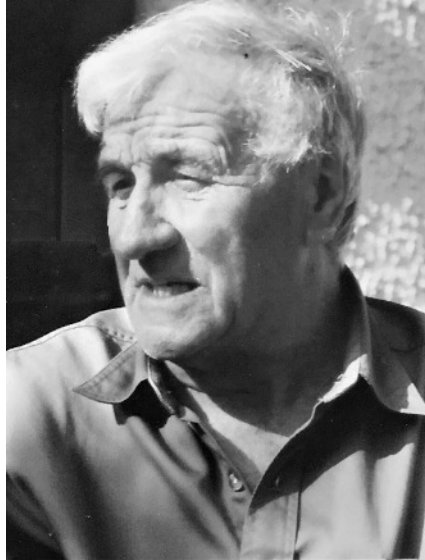
I first met John when he was directing Studio Theatre Group's production of 'The Caucasian Chalk Circle' in 1980 and he needed a 'Little Michael'. My elder son Edwin, then 5, was the right age and came well recommended by my drama teacher colleagues for ability and behaviour. That was my introduction to Studio and over the years I encountered John on many occasions in his role as SCDA adjudicator. Sometimes he liked my plays ('Orca the Goldfish', 1997) and sometimes he didn't ('Treats', 1999) but we remained good friends. He retired from adjudicating around the turn of the century as he was beginning to find it somewhat stressful. However he was always very proud of the fact (at time of writing, unconfirmed!) that he had judged more Scottish Finals than his colleague, the late Charles Barron! I am indebted to Roddy Begg of Studio Theatre Group and John's widow Alix for the rest of this revue of his very interesting life.

John was born in Paisley on 10th June 1929 and was educated at Marr College, Troon, and Glasgow University, graduating in July 1951 with an Honours degree in English. He was conscripted to the army as a Sergeant in the Education Corps. There he spent two years (in his words) attempting to drum some appreciation of Shakespeare, Milton and Dickens into the skulls of 17 and 18-year-old squaddies, who were as reluctant as he was to be there.

In 1953, having completed his National Service, he embarked on a teaching career, completing teacher training at Jordanhill College, Glasgow. His first appointment, in 1955, was at his old school, Marr College.

John met his wife-to-be, Alix, in his first year at Glasgow University, but it was several years later, when Alix returned home from her teaching job

in Ankara, Turkey, that they met again and married. Both then returned to teaching posts at Ankara College, where they remained for two years until the revolution in Baghdad in 1958 when they returned to Scotland and settled in Kilmarnock.



John had become involved in acting at University. He flirted with 'going professional' and performed with a small rep. company, the Victor Graham Players. In 1960, James Scotland was appointed Principal of the Aberdeen College of Education and quickly moved to bring about the establishment of a Drama Department. In 1969, John was appointed Senior Lecturer in the infant Drama Department and drama changed from a hobby to a profession. Sadly, in the late 1970s, the Aberdeen College dwindled to half its size and the Drama Dept. and its teaching course were closed. The staff were invited to consider early retirement and, in 1982, John - still in his early 50s - commenced what was to be nearly 40 very productive years of 'retirement'.

John's appointment had brought the Irvine family to Aberdeen, by then numbering six children, and John resumed his passion for acting and several notable performances followed. Impatient to see the staging of the plays of more modern playwrights, John joined forces with

Roddy Begg, who was to become a lifelong friend, in forming the Aberdeen Studio Theatre Group. This was 49 years ago. The newly-formed group entered Beckett's *Endgame* in the 1971 SCDA Festival, with John as Hamm and Roddy as Clov. The production was derided as 'modern gibberish' by the first round adjudicator ... to applause from many in the audience, but STG was born, and remains an active drama group to this day.

John became interested in adjudicating for SCDA and was a regular at District, Divisional and Scottish level, sometimes facing – with relish – the judging of the STG entry. In the meantime, John continued directing and acting with STG in Aberdeen, his favourite plays, included Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* and the plays of Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard.

After his enforced retirement in 1982 he moved to Banff and also bought a house in the south of France. This brought his acting and directing days to an end. He was able to enjoy the country life in both countries and to indulge his academic interests, in particular the life and times of Mary, Queen of Scots. John felt passionately that John Knox and his protestant successors had maligned the Catholic Mary. Four centuries later, John attempted to play a small part in righting this 'cruel wrong'.

In his last two decades, John continued this rural/academic life. He and Alix moved to Edinburgh and reluctantly gave up their French house. Last spring, Alix also contracted the Coronavirus. She was one of the few to survive the virus in her 90s.

John had been the first to admit in recent years that life was not quite as much fun. He had enjoyed a long, full and very productive life. His passing is a cause for short-term sorrow but mainly long-term celebration.

Tish Howard

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King Lear Award - Russell Adams

Many people in the UK are still staying at home due to Coronavirus, and older people have been particularly restricted in what they can do and who they can see. The *King Lear Prizes* were launched to encourage amateurs and beginners to have a project to get stuck into, and to create new works of literature, poetry, music, drama and art during the time they are quarantined.

The great writer, William Shakespeare, was faced with a similar situation, with outbreaks of the plague throughout his career, and in particular in 1605-06, when he wrote his *King Lear*.

The winners of the King Lear Prizes were announced and although I had entered in the Drama Section and though I didn't win I was very pleased that my short play 'Bodyshop' reached the final six on the shortlist. As there were over 500 entries in the Drama section alone this is a great achievement for me.

The play section required a script that would last 15 minutes and have up to 4 characters. Bodyshop was about a time after the National Health Service had been privatised and people had to pay for everything medical, including a transplant and what happens when an old man comes in with a Voucher. It was first performed as a One Act Play for the Ury Players at Aberdeen District but obviously had to be rewritten to fit the conditions for the King Lear Prizes. The Drama judge was **Chris Jones** who is a filmmaker and writer, and is Creative Director at the London Screenwriters' Festival He praised the standard of entries and said that "the plays were all clearly written from the heart, delivering messages of great consequence to the world at large from writers of significance and fortitude."

All the plays on the shortlist and the winner can be read on the King Lear Prizes website at www.kinglearprizes.org.uk A performance of the short play can be viewed on You Tube by typing in Ury Players – Bodyshop. It was done as part of a series of lockdown plays by the club which can also be viewed on You Tube under Ury Players.

I also had a poem Highly Commended in the Poetry Section. Again a pleasing achievement as there were over 5000 poems entered in this section. The poem was called 'Appy Chappy and went as follows.

'Appy Chappy

When he bought a new phone, he hurried straight home,
not wishing to be labelled a failure

He was one of those chaps who would load it with apps
and relevant paraphernalia.

He was almost bed wetting, as
he went into settings

And saw the screen loaded with
icons

Touched the downloading tool,
then had a quick drool

As he bought all the apps to his
liking

He could have a quick dabble in
a tense game of scrabble,

Watch T.V. and films in the
media

He can download a photo, order
a motor,

And know the false facts from
Wikipedia

He could send a nice greeting,
minute a meeting

Pretend his phone was a pen

He could monitor the footie, play call of duty, tell you the
price of a yen

He could play golf to par, get a route for his car, and see
from a map where to park it

He could forecast the rain, tell the cost of a train, monitor
his shares in the market

He could pamper his pet, tell when the sun set

He could Kindle and read an epistle

He could buy what he wore and tell you the score

The moment the ref blew the whistle

As he made a download while crossing the road,

A truck ran into this chappy,

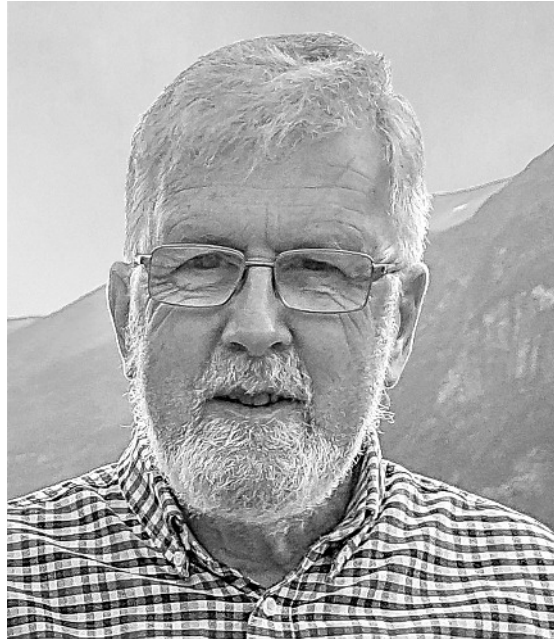
The policeman who came, said, "it's really a shame,

But in the end he died 'APPY

I have been a member of the Ury Players in Stonehaven
for over 40 years and have written several plays and
pantomimes for them to perform, including some One
Act Plays for the SCDA

Competitions. Two have been awarded the Scott Salver
Original Playwriting Plate and a further three have come
second.

Russell Adams



SCDA Adjudicating

Being asked to write a few words about my first experiences of adjudicating has proved quite difficult. This was surprising to me (and I imagine those who heard my adjudicating) as having an opinion or thought about something theatre based has never usually been a problem for me. Perhaps it was because I have nothing to compare it against – my confession is that I had never and still have not been able to attend an SCDA festival event – as I have never heard anyone else adjudicate. I have experience of being in an amateur or community theatre company as my theatre interest first started as a teenager, in Dunfermline, as part of the local church drama group St. Margaret's Players. No mention was made of taking part in SCDA there, though I suspect the more glamorous Dunfermline Players probably took part regularly. As a professional, I have worked on many community and youth theatre productions but again never had them adjudicated in the formal way that SCDA festivals requires, therefore my thoughts are solely based on my experience only.

When I was asked to adjudicate in Aberdeen, I flippantly said, "that sounds like fun, yeah I'll do it!" It was great, honest, but when I took my seat at the back of the auditorium the first night it was with a cocktail of excitement, nerves, pressure and trepidation with fun being far down the personal emoji list. From the point of receiving the entries list and the scripts to read, right through to the final adjudication, it was quite clear that you have to find your own way around the challenge of comparing the apples and pears of productions and groups that enter. How can you judge, using the same criteria, a primary school group full of children, many who have never stepped on stage before, alongside a duo



whose combined years of experience is at least 70?! Happily you do find your own way, with support from local committee members and the guidance of the SCDA scoring sheets. Whether you fully agree fully with the breakdown and nuances of the weighting and subtleties of points, it gives you a strong foundation for your decision making. Having this foundation also allowed me to enjoy the productions beyond looking for the "judging criteria points", albeit sometimes only half looking while scribbling notes that would require a hieroglyphics expert to later translate. So once I relaxed about making it fair, because the system created is fair, I was able to share thoughts beyond the criteria set out. This is where I felt that having someone with no preconceptions of what was expected could be a bonus. So here are some general thoughts of my experience so far (which I hope will continue for a while yet) for you to agree or disagree with



- On events with multiple nights it would be good to encourage performers from other groups to attend when they are not performing – perhaps for free. You can learn as much from watching as doing.
- Sometimes the choice of plays was hard to understand in terms of the make-up of a group. I suspect this is often down to time to read a wide selection or the cost of rights, but opting for the play that calls itself a comedy or one with only two characters, doesn't always mean they are easier to direct.

- Yeah I can do that!

I think it is harder to earn laughs than to silence an audience. I don't really like seeing plays (no matter how classic they are) where young people are all playing adult characters. Often it is out of their experience and they struggle and there are many fantastic plays written to be performed by young people. I think that investing in one of them can bring greater rewards and many deal with very strong and dramatic themes.

- The note I mentioned most often was "keep working out the truth of the scene as that will help you know where and when people move and not just because you wanted a pretty picture, worried that it wasn't down stage enough for the



audience or a character has been sitting for five minutes and you are concerned the audience will get bored with no movement."

- The area I found most challenging in deciding was, not first and second places, but the special prizes, which change from area to area. Best theatrical moment, best technical support, greatest achievement can all bring prizes to productions that don't win overall. They can, however, also be a distraction when producing and directing the play as there is a temptation to focus on this too much that then breaks the overall pace, style or momentum of the production. The best moments for me were ones that just happened because the actors new the what, where, and why answers in the moment.

Each night I have had the honour of adjudicating has continued to bring the cocktail of emotions with fun being much higher in the jug. SCDA may not have the profile it once had, which is a shame, as I found it a wonderful and very supportive organisation at the local levels I experienced. It clearly encourages many fantastic theatrical moments, mesmerising performances and a dedication that can only be admired and respected. I look forward to Feb, fingers crossed!

Stewart Aitken

Creating a Podcast

How do you do some drama in the middle of a pandemic, when people are not allowed to meet up? Create a podcast of course!

One member of Kirkintilloch Players came up with that exact idea. He wrote a short play inspired by his recent visit to Millport. Care had been taken in the script writing to tell the story through a series of insights into the characters' thoughts with limited dialogue. The play was cast and they met over Zoom to discuss the characters and to read through the play. Then they went away to work on their parts on their own.

Each actor recorded their own pieces of dialogue and sent them to another club member who used a bit of

technical wizardry to put together all the pieces of dialogue into a whole play. Some sound effects were added to create atmosphere for the various scenes and 'Wish Ye Wur Here', the podcast was born.

Although we are all missing opportunities for visits to the theatre and meeting up with our drama friends to create the variety of shows that clubs produce across the country, lockdown and all the restrictions are producing opportunities for us to use our imagination and be innovative, resulting in interesting drama projects. Wish Ye Wur Here is available on the club website.

Lorna Campbell
Kirkintilloch Players

PLAYWRITING COMPETITION

Play
on
words

Our new Play on Words Competition 2021 was launched on 7th November 2020 with an excellent promotional video from Lisa Nicoll. It is for new playwrights based in Scotland. Entries should be in one of two categories. An open category for playwrights of any age and a young playwright's category for those under 30yrs.

At various intervals during November and December promotion videos were made by Nancy McPherson, Mike Tibbetts and David Hutchison along with an excellent interview by Lisa with Guy Hollands, former Artistic Director of the Citizens Theatre who is our final judge and will mentor the two winners helping them develop their scripts for performance and publication.

You can see Guy's interview on our scda website (scda.org.uk/pow)

We have 18 readers excitingly waiting for your scripts to come in and at time of publishing we have received fourteen entries. This is a wonderful opportunity to try out your writing skills, each script will receive basic feedback to assist you for any future writing.

Deadline for entries is 31st March so you still have plenty of time to put pen to paper. We are especially looking to encourage new young writers, think of the thrill you would feel if you were in a theatre and heard your very own words performed to an audience.

Entry forms and rules can be found on our website

Still time to enter, submit your script by the 31st March

Make a fresh start with Carole's help

As we head out of lockdown it's a good time to explore how we approach performance and rehearsal and adapt to new ways of working.

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.



MONOLOGUE LOGUE COMPETITION

It all started with an email. All I did was respond positively to the suggestion that the SCDA look into the idea of creating a monologue competition and that was how I found myself at the helm of a group tasked with the creation of this new competition.

Of course, I wasn't alone in thinking this was a good idea. During lockdown, so many of us have turned to monologues as a way to express our creativity. They will never replace the thrill and joy of being part of a production on stage but they do present a different challenge for actors, writers, and even directors.

It is with these challenges in mind that we set about trying to create the new competition. At this stage, it is important to mention that this is not a "Covid competition" or replacement for the festival but it is hoped that it will run alongside the festival for years to come. So what exactly is this new competition? First and foremost it is an opportunity to showcase and celebrate the amazing talent within the SCDA. It is always worth remembering that the "C" stands for community and we have such a great community of actors, directors, writers, and even techies who could become involved in this.

Naturally, the competition side is what draws so many of us in and this new monologue competition has two prizes up for grabs. The first prize is for performance, every entry submitted will be judged (using the new marking criteria created) by a panel of experienced members. The panel will produce a list of finalists which will then be judged by a professional adjudicator to determine the overall winner. The other prize is for writing, to find the best original monologue written for the competition. This will also be judged by a panel of experienced members

using different newly-created criteria. You can find both criteria and the full set of rules on the SCDA website.

Not everyone likes to write, I know it fills many of us with fear. That is why, for the performance competition, you can enter any monologue (provided it is between three and six minutes long). A word of warning though, when seeking permission to perform a monologue, recording rights are different from the normal royalties we are used to enquiring about. It can take time to secure these rights because some publishers don't hold the recording rights and they will have to seek permission from the original author or their agent.

One thing that is particularly exciting about this competition is that it is about performing to a camera. For many of us, used to live theatre, this presents a whole new set of challenges but also opportunities. There is no pressure to get it right the first time because you can have as many takes as you like. Once you have finally chosen your monologue, you don't have to construct a big set because you could film it wherever you wanted - within reason! This presents challenges we are not used to because of the need to think about where to place the camera but I'm sure many of us already know what our best side is!

I am very excited about this new competition and the opportunities it presents. I know that our members will rise to the challenge and let their creativity shine through. I really cannot wait to see what everyone comes up with. All that remains to be said is, break a leg!

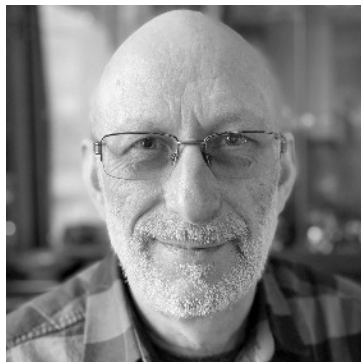
Lee Dunn

Your National

SCDA is governed by its National Committee. Each year the Committee appoints office-bearers and representatives from each of the four divisions to form the National Executive which manages the Association.

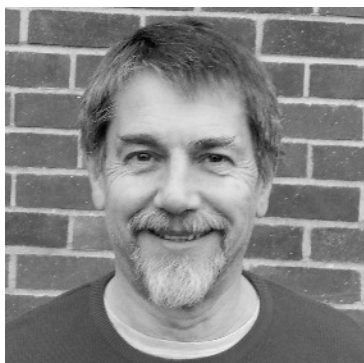
Carolyn Harrison National Chair

Carolyn Harrison is our new National Chair, see page 6 to learn more about her.



Alan Gerrard National Vice Chair

I am an engineer by training, originally from Wigan but I moved to the north of Scotland over 40 years ago. I only planned to stay for a couple of years but have stayed ever since. I have been a member of the Thurso Players for over 40 years. My involvement is backstage, concentrating on set construction and stage management. It's a real family affair as my wife and two daughters are also active members of the club. We have our own 70 seat theatre in an old Mill building and I am also heavily occupied with all the maintenance and theatre licence requirements of the building. It is only in the last few years, having semi retired, that I have become actively involved in the SCDA. along with sitting on the National Committee and Executive, I am currently chair of Caithness District and Treasurer of Highland Division and National Vice Chair.



Robin Smith National Vice Chair

I've been a member of Aberdour Players since moving to Fife in 1997 from Stockport, where I had been a member of

a Heald Green Theatre Company. As a regular participant in SCDA festivals (as an actor and/or director), it seemed natural to get involved in the Fife and Divisional committees, to help organise events and see what else our organisation does - or maybe should be doing. I am now one of the National Vice chairs. Apart from drama, I'm a keen runner and dinghy sailor.



Lesley Syme National Treasurer

Lesley Syme, member of Killin Drama Club, keen director of one act plays, enthusiastic stage manager for pantomime, and occasional actress. I can also turn my hand to lighting and sound and wield a paint brush. In the small amount of time left from drama commitments, locally and nationally, I'm addicted to my Kindle, and also enjoy cooking. I am now National Treasurer of the Association.



Morna Barron National Secretary

I have been a lover of theatre and a member of SCDA for over 50 years. I have acted, directed and adjudicated at many SCDA One Act festivals. I have also been active on many of the various Committees over the years, District secretary, Divisional chair and secretary, National Chair and now National secretary. When there is any spare time I like to spend it in my garden or with the grandchildren.

Executive



Chris Hewett
Highland

Born in South Wales I acted in my first play aged 5. My first “proper” job at 16 was as a general dogsbody, doing everything from stage management to stage sweeping at the local theatre. I moved to Scotland in 1999 and joined the Buccaneer Theatre at Lossiemouth. My first dalliance into the world of SCDA was in 2000. Since then I have performed in a couple of SCDA entries but, more frequently have been responsible for all things technical at district and divisional festivals. I’m currently Chair of the Buccaneers and Moray Firth District.



Paula Gibson
Northern

Both parents having run rural community drama clubs in Halkirk and Reay in Caithness it was inevitable I would get the bug. Thurso Players, drama clubs and G and S at school followed by a review group at uni led to co-founding Ferryhill Players in Aberdeen in the 80s. Press ganged onto General Council back then (as a 30 something year old whippersnapper) I have never been far away from SCDA and festival .

Having had a huge connection to Orkney from childhood I am proud to represent them on the mainland and am currently and for the third (and I sincerely hope last) time , Chair of Northern Division.



Anne McIntyre
Western

I am a director and actor with the 88 Theatre based in Castle Douglas, Dumfries & Galloway and also the Secretary of The Stewartry Drama Association and SCDA Stewartry District. More recently, I have also become the Chair of Western Division.

Away from the theatre, my hobbies include tending my 3/4-acre garden and greenhouse. Walking my dogs, arts and crafts and playing guitar.



Martin Butler
Eastern

My first experience of an SCDA club was when a keen member of Leslie ADC took me up to a rehearsal after the church drama group folded. She saw a young man interested in drama and, as we all know, keenness is always far more important than talent! Since then, I have become a “jack of all trades” being involved in performance, stage management and direction. I have over the last few years started to stretch my wings into committee work.

Hamlet, (socially distanced)

Shakespeare in the Park (Orkney) Ad-Hoc Players **29/30 August and 5/6 Sept. 2020**

In April 2020, a small group of local players from Orkney were in their initial phase of producing an outdoor *Hamlet*, to be held at the historic Earl's Palace in Kirkwall, with the assistance of the world renowned voice coach Kristin Linklater.

Sadly, in the words of the Bard himself 'When sorrows come, they come not single spies, but in battalions.' The outbreak of Covid-19 had paralysed the theatre industry across the country; venues such as the Earl's Palace closed indefinitely; mandatory stay-at-home rules had defeated the possibility of rehearsals; cast members had to leave the production; and the devastating news came of Kristin Linklater's passing away, aged 84.

It seemed all but impossible that this, or any production, could be put on. The choice was simple: postpone, or try to continue with no fixed venue and no guarantee lockdown would be any different in three to four months time. The question truly was: 'To be, or not to be?'

For the cast of the Ad-Hoc Players directed by Vivia Leslie, the choice was simple. The show must go on!

Rehearsals began over Zoom, with the mantra of either having a finished play ready for a lockdown-eased show in August, or the simple pleasure of rehearsing the greatest play ever written. Much akin to the premise of the BBC Show *Staged*, this did not come without its challenges; the usual assortment of connection delays, muted microphones, and flat batteries continued to afflict the sessions. Yet endure they did, and this allowed the cast to

meet each other, learn their lines, and build the foundation of their characters.

Starting mid-May, the players practised in groups of three in the garden of Vivia's home, twice weekly, once the lockdown rules allowed for this. Whilst it was delightful to begin speaking the words of Shakespeare outside rather than sat at a screen, this too brought difficulty for the cast. "*Juggling the actors, getting some to leave when others arrived to maintain the permitted number, was pretty challenging*" stated the director. The large garden, with its central spouting willow tree was for a brief time considered the only possible venue for the show, which would hold no more than three family groups. However, as restrictions lifted and the weather held, a new hope was found in the local Firth Park in Finstown, and despite the many setbacks till then, come July a cast of fifteen-strong players of varying age and experience were ready for socially-distanced physical rehearsals.

Dedicated to being the first to bring arts and culture back to a local community amidst the constant tidings of woe from the news media, the Ad-Hoc Players were successful in putting on four full-house productions of *Hamlet* on August 29/30th, and Sep 5/6th, with a spaced crowd and several Covid-safe measures put in place. The audience were so riveted they endured rain and midges just to see Shakespeare's tragedy brought to life. In the words of reviewer Sarah Sutherland "*Despite all the odds having been against them from the start, the cast of this production gave us the drama, the madness, and the humorous wordplay of Shakespeare's tragedy... and a whopper of a revival for Orkney's amateur theatre scene.*"

The cast of *Hamlet* comprised of both 16-24 year olds with a passion for acting, and local veterans of the amateur dramatics scene. Adam James Johnston (Hamlet), and Grace Bown (Ophelia) are both members of the National Youth Theatre, and are due to begin acting training soon. Both Adam and Audun Towrie (Horatio) undertook Shakespeare training with the late Kristin Linklater in January. Joining them was a handful of drama students from Kirkwall Grammar School: Rajmund Olah (Laertes), Leah Gunn (Rosencrantz), Jessica Sinclair (Guildenstern), and Liam Tait (Osric). On the other side of the scene were Ad-Hoc regulars Bob Ross (Polonius), Imogen Kerr (Queen Gertrude), Gareth and Jean Williams (Gravedigger, and 'Players'), Cate Evans (First Player), and Jim Chalmers (Old Hamlet), some of whom, with Vivia, have reached SCDA Scottish finals with their performances of Pinter's *Celebration*, short plays of David Ives, and more.



Acting outside at a two metre distance was very challenging for us, but we were rewarded by some magnificent individual performances and a story that was easy to follow and not too long. This was in fact a great team effort and all the cast worked very hard and enthusiastically to bring about a very memorable piece of theatre.

Some special mention must be made of Adam Johnston who acted the part of Hamlet. This young man was exceptionally good and he hopes to go on to make acting his career – we are very sure he has a bright and rewarding future in front of him. Grace Bown who played Ophelia was also very good and she is actually off to Drama College in London at the end of September. This is not to diminish the parts played by other younger actors who gave us full commitment and acted their parts so well.

But of course this wouldn't have come about if it were not for Vivia Leslie. She truly has been the mainstay of this production and although we faced a number of hurdles



and obstacles along the way she never wavered in her commitment. COVID 19, lockdown, rehearsing on Zoom and at the very end of the rehearsal process losing our King Claudius - (sadly the actor wasn't able to continue and we all wish him well) – didn't stop her from pressing on regardless.

Hamlet's Adam said "I feel so very fortunate to have had the opportunity to play such a role, at such a time when it was considered impossible. Many friends I know in the acting sphere have faced huge loss due to Covid, and so I know how lucky I am. I'm eternally grateful to the cast and crew of Hamlet for making this possible, to the late Kristin Linklater who mentored me and got me involved from the start, and to our wonderful locals who came out in force to support us and cheer us on. This has been a truly special production."

Bob Ross



Pictures from the old normal



'Zero for the Young Dudes' Mill Youth Theatre (2019)

Pictures by **Walter Hampson**

'After Midnight, before Dawn' Leittheatre (2018)

