

Summer 2025

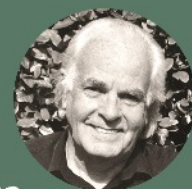
scene

Storytelling



the magazine of
Scottish Community Drama





Looking for ideas for your
next theatre production?



ONE-ACT
PLAYS



MONOLOGUES



SKETCHES



FULL-LENGTH
PLAYS

by award-winning playwright MIKE TIBBETTS

Full details, synopses and sample
scripts available from our website



playsplus.co.uk | info@playsplus.co.uk

Gordon & Co

Insurance for Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Societies

A specialist insurance package underwritten by a leading UK insurer

Modern, easy to understand policy
wording including:

- Material Damage All Risks (minimum £7,500)
- Public and Products Liability with Indemnity Limit of £5,000,000
- Personal Accident cover
- Cancellation cover

For more information please contact:

Robert Israel, Gordon & Co.

2 Sekforde Court, 217 St John Street, London, EC1V 4LY

Tel: 020 7251 1001

Email: firstnight@gordonandco.co.uk

Website: www.firstnightinsurance.co.uk



Don't let your First Night be your last night...

We've got you covered!

Israel, Gordon & Co. Ltd. Are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority,
Registered in England and Wales, Registered Office as above. Registration number 1003646.



SCENE No.178

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

Scottish Charity No. 021397

National Address

John Player Building, Stirling Enterprise Park,
Springkerse, Stirling, FK7 7RP.

email: secretary@drama.scot

National Drama Advisor : Carole Williams,

email: nda@drama.scot

Website: drama.scot

Office Admin

An answering service is operating on 07407 387086
please leave a message and someone will get back
to you as soon as possible.

Library

1st Floor, Argyll Court,

Castle Business Park, Stirling FK9 4TT

email: library@drama.scot

Editorial Team

- Morna Barron
- Paula Gibson
- David Henderson
- Stephen Lambert

Scene magazine

Copy date for next edition : 29th September

Retail price for non-members : £5

Editorial Statement:

We always welcome news or opinions, please
email letters or articles to the Scene Editor at
scene@drama.scot

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

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

Cover picture

Bon Accord Players' production of 'Storytelling',
winners of this year's Scottish Final at Kirkcaldy.

Photo by **Tony Flisch**



Chairman's chat

Many of us are currently enjoying a well-earned break from rehearsals and planning over the summer months before rehearsals begin again for autumn productions and pantomimes. Our festival season has concluded, and thoughts will soon turn to the search for scripts for next season. Remember that you can now access our fantastic script library in Stirling with details and directions available on our website. It is a resource that we are extremely proud of so please take the opportunity to visit if you can.

Our youth workshop programme has already commenced with workshops taking place for young people across the country over the next few months. They are a valuable opportunity for youth members to benefit from professional tuition in various aspects of theatre craft so please encourage your members to book a space. We are also in the process of organising workshops for our adult members in conjunction with our national AGM weekend in November so watch out for further information appearing over the next couple of months.

Many will be aware that SCDA will be celebrating its centenary year in 2026 which is a fabulous achievement for any organisation. Our centenary sub-committee are currently working on a programme of events to mark this significant milestone and are hoping that all our members will join in the celebrations over the coming year.

As I come towards the end of my time as National Chair of SCDA, I would like to sincerely thank you all for your friendship and support over the last five years. It has been both a great honour and a privilege to meet many of you across the country, sharing experiences over our love of drama. Here's hoping that SCDA continues to flourish and develop over the next 100 years!

Carolyn

Welcome

to new Individual members

David Hunter

Harry Kirkland

HQ (National)

Edinburgh (Eastern)

to new Club members

Prestwick Theatre Group

Dunlop Players (rejoining)

Newport Theatre Co.

Culter Theatre Club

Ukranian Amateur Theatre

Ayrshire (Western)

Ayrshire (Western)

Glasgow (Western)

Aberdeen (Northern)

Angus (Northern)

Thank you

for donations

Red Wine Productions

Thanks to our Patrons for their continued support.

SCDA's new script library

Looking for a Play?

Visitors to the relocated script library in Stirling have all been very impressed - the usual reaction from first-time visitors coming through the door has been "Wow!".

The extra space means we can arrange the books in a much more accessible and browsable way than was possible in the past. The office area available to us also includes meeting rooms (available to clubs and committees) and a kitchen/dining area - feel free to have a brew while you browse!

We're open every Tuesday and Wednesday from 10.30 to 14.00, and Saturday mornings from 10.00 to 12.00.

There's ample parking at the library, just two minutes off the M9 at J10, and a Park & Ride right next door for those travelling by train or bus. If you can't make it in person, a full mail order service is available and - apart from postage - it's all free to SCDA Individual and Club members.

Further script donations are always welcome, and we have already negotiated hefty discounts and some donations from major publishers. It's our aim to keep the collection as up-to-date as possible. We're also on the lookout for posters from past productions to decorate the walls, so do let us know if you have suitable items, in good condition.

We're looking forward to a high-profile launch in the early Autumn, so watch this space.

See drama.scot/library for details, including a full list of scripts available - more than 12,000 unique items and many multiple sets.

We hope to see or hear from you soon!

Contact the SCDA Library Team at library@drama.scot



80 years of Auld Avondale

Avondale Young Farmers Club, based in Strathaven, Lanarkshire celebrated their 80th Anniversary over the last year with a huge variety concert, a family day, a gala dinner dance and also a small Drama Showcase. After the 70th Anniversary of Avondale YFC, a drama Club was formed to give ex local Young Farmers the chance to



enjoy drama on stage and raise some money for Charity. Drama has always been a big part of Avondale YFCs annual concert and over the years have enjoyed many successes at District, Regional and National Competitions. Now these same actors and actresses are appearing back on stage – reliving their youth? Since 2016 we have now enjoyed performing 7 times on stage and have raised over £7000 for local and National Charities.

But back to 2025 – to celebrate Avondale YFC's 80th Anniversary, Auld Avondale Actors wanted to do something a bit different while hopefully encouraging more people to get involved and possibly inspiring more young farmers to enjoy Drama. We decided to stage the same 3 one act plays each night for 4 nights in the Town Mill Strathaven with 3 different producers and casts. It was a bit of a challenge logistically organising rehearsal space on the same night for the 3 casts but it all came together beautifully in February 2025, with the 400 tickets selling out within a fortnight.

Margaret Millar produced the first play – Last Tango in Little Avondale by David Tristram. A version of this play had been performed by the Young Farmers

a few years previous but this one attracted us because of the lack of set – performing 3 plays in a stage with little wing space and only one small access door back left somewhat limited the set options for all the plays. Laughs aplenty in this play as the story centered around the imminent demise of an amateur dramatic group.

The second play was Halloween by James Scotland and this was produced by Tom Kirkland. This involved a full box set which we (hopefully) cleverly concealed with drapes for the previous and next play. The whole cast got involved in sourcing props and furniture for the set which looked really authentic. Again, more laughs of a completely different sort with the brothers clad in monks cassocks complete with balding heads and the ladies dressed as women in the 1400's ought to.

The third and final play was produced by Caroline Leggate and was Melons at The Parsonage by Nick Warburton. This same play had been produced by Caroline and performed by Avondale YFC in 2011 and had won the District and Region prizes. Most of the cast were the same and they just slotted back into their characters although the difference was being 10 years older – leaping about the stage was not as easy as it had been!

The whole week was a tremendous success and allowed us to present 2 cheques to charities totalling £1000. We must extend thanks to our extended families, the young farmers club and also to John Smith and Andrew Clark (Spark) our fabulous stage managers and set builders who have more than 100 years experience between them in this area and can turn their hand to anything!

Now the decision is what to turn our hand to next year! After a big rest this summer of course first.

Christine Hall



The National Theatre at Beath High

If you'd told me this time last year that the National Theatre of Scotland would be staging a full-scale production in Beath High School's Assembly Hall starring my students, I'd probably have laughed. Not out of disbelief in our wonderful Drama kids – quite the opposite – but because the sheer scale of such a partnership seemed worlds away from our daily reality. Yet, this March, we found ourselves in the thick of a whirlwind collaboration with NTS and 21 Common, hosting their powerful production *Thank U Next* in our school in Cowdenbeath, and I can honestly say it was one of the most rewarding experiences of my teaching career.

How It All Began

We've been fortunate at Beath in recent years to work with some brilliant theatre organisations – from performing with Wonder Fools at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, to hosting workshops by Stellar Quines and taking our work to the Byre Theatre in St Andrews.



Getting an email from local cultural agency OnFife asking if we would be interested in working with the National Theatre of Scotland though? That was on another level! My initial reaction was somewhere between excitement and terror, and we only had a week to figure out the logistics of whether or not we could make it happen.

Logistically, March is our busiest month: coursework deadlines, practical exams and, of course, our annual appearance in the SCDA One Act Play Festival. We entered four plays this year, with our director and stage

manager appearing in a fifth with an adult club. The thought of adding in yet another production seemed like insanity. Even after deciding it was too good an opportunity to pass up, there were the practicalities. I wasn't sure how we'd manage the space, time, or staffing for an intensive three-week rehearsal schedule. Luckily, our incredible Business Manager Sandra Duncan tackled every obstacle with positivity and a "let's make it work" attitude. Staff from departments across the school agreed to let us use their tutorial rooms and staff bases, and colleagues gave up their cherished free time to chaperone rehearsals. It was a true team effort.

About the Show

Thank U Next, created by 21 Common and presented by NTS, is a high-energy, thought-provoking piece of physical theatre exploring the world of teenagers navigating friendships, identity and social media. It features vibrant visuals, and a soundtrack pulsing with the chaos and beauty of teen life. The decision to host it

at a school – and to involve young people both on and off the stage – made perfect sense, and the effect on our pupils was nothing short of extraordinary.

We limited onstage participation to S1–S3 pupils to avoid disrupting senior exam preparation, but were delighted when NTS offered Front of House training to some of our senior pupils passionate about drama. They approached these roles with real professionalism and pride, and for many of them, it was the first time they'd been treated as

equals in a professional arts context.

A Transformational Experience

From the moment the technical kit rolled into the Assembly Hall – truss, big screens, dance floor and all – the buzz was palpable. Pupils from every year group paused to marvel at the transformation. It was a rare and wonderful thing to see professional theatre come to us, and for many of our students who had never set foot in a traditional theatre before, it completely changed their perception of what theatre could be.

Amy Hanson reports on an amazing drama experience

We were able to open two dress rehearsals to S1 and S3 Drama classes and the response was electric. Students raved about the smoke, lights, and special effects – one S1 pupil, usually very shy in class, messaged me later saying, “It was ASTONISHING. I give it infinite/10. I want to MABYE do that one day.” Moments like that made (almost!) all of the stress worthwhile.

The real transformation happened with the performers. Our cast included a wide range of abilities and backgrounds – from confident Drama Club regulars to first-time performers still settling into high school life.

What they all gained was immeasurable: confidence, community, creative expression. They formed deep, supportive bonds and developed a resilience that many of them hadn’t realised they had. Some pupils, struggling with teenage self-image, embraced performing on screen and in costume – supported by a cast that made them feel safe, celebrated and seen.

One performer captured it best: “If you had a bad day and you went to the NTS, everything just changed. You had something to look forward to.”

Raising the Profile of Drama

Every single staff member who chaperoned rehearsals came back to me to say how blown away they were. Many admitted they had no idea of the skill, passion, and creativity involved in putting together a production. For us Drama teachers, it was a chance to learn too – watching professionals at work, understanding their rehearsal process, and being reminded of the vital importance of what we do.

The ripple effect was huge. Drama’s profile was raised not just in the school, but across our wider community. Pupils were inspired. Teachers were invigorated. Crucially, our young people saw the arts as something they could belong to – not something distant or reserved for the privileged few.



A Lasting Impact

In a deprived community, where aspiration is often in short supply, this project gave our pupils a tangible example of what they can achieve. They learned that theatre doesn’t only live in big city venues; it can come to your school, your Assembly Hall, your doorstep. It showed them that they have stories worth telling, and voices worth hearing.

We are deeply grateful to everyone at the National Theatre of Scotland, 21 Common, and OnFife for making this dream a reality. *Thank U Next* wasn’t just a show – it was a memory that will stay with us all for years to come.



Long Way Back to the Stage ...

I can't get away from the SCDA. Not in a Liam Neeson in *'Taken'* kind of way, but in the sense that the Scottish Community Drama Association, and especially its One-Act Play Festival, has had a habit of reappearing in my life for as long as I can remember, even when I least expect it.

Growing up in Lochgelly, Fife, I was surrounded by community theatre, musicals, opera, Gilbert and Sullivan. I even wrote my university paper on Joe Corrie and the importance of his work in Scottish communities. I began my foray into the One-Act Play competition in the 1990s with Kirkcaldy Amateur Drama Society, acting, directing, and generally having a lot of fun. Although looking back, maybe a little too competitively at times.

When I moved to Caithness in 2005, I had the pleasure of being part of the festival with both Thurso Players and, quite memorably, as part of Donald Farmer's *Pushcart Peddler* cast with Wick Players. We went all the way to the British Finals. We were robbed, of course. But as you can tell, I've completely moved on.

It was in Caithness that my love of community theatre was truly rekindled. I was lucky to work with Eden Court Theatre as part of their brilliant outreach programme. Seeing school kids develop and perform in productions with both Wick and Thurso Players was something really special.

So why am I writing all this? A nostalgic recap of yesteryear? Well, after leaving Scotland for Canada six years ago, I thought my days with the SCDA were over, a lovely memory tucked away in newspaper clippings and old programmes destined to be binned when I'm gone.

But fate had other plans. Theatre New Brunswick took an interest in my first play, *Clynelish*, which I originally wrote through the National Theatre of Scotland's

Starter Artist programme. Nothing really came of it at the time. I moved to Canada and figured that was that.

I even rewrote the play for a Canadian setting, but quickly realised that, although the serious themes still held — that men, in particular, struggle to openly discuss what they're going through — there's just no easy equivalent for Scottish pub culture, football banter, or the art of slagging off your pals. Canadians are just too *nice* to each other.



I toned it down a bit, cut out most of the swearing, and it sat quietly on my desktop. I didn't take it the wrong way at all. I've always loved working on plays that don't come with the pressure of selling tickets. Plays where you can take creative risks. Do something a little different.

After a bit of humming and hawing, I reached out to Carole at the SCDA to see if she'd be willing to read it. She kindly did — and liked it. She even put a wee note about it in *Scene* magazine.

Soon after, I was contacted by a few lovely SCDA members, and I was delighted when Tish Howard reached out to say she wanted to direct the play with Amici Theatre Group.

Suddenly, *Clynelish* was in rehearsal. Characters I'd written years ago were being brought to life by a cast 4,000 kilometres away. I got the occasional update and a few rehearsal photos. I started following the SCDA Aberdeen Division and Northern Division Facebook pages. And then — I just had to let go. It was all out of my hands.

But the excitement was real. When the tickets for the Aberdeen round went on sale, I saw it; my name, my play. After six years, *Clynelish* was finally going to be staged. What began as a script in a reading room, followed by a Zoom readthrough during lockdown, was now being brought to life.



... 'Clynelish' and the SCDA festival

The performance date crept closer, and I was getting nervous. I've acted in and directed more one act plays than I can count, but this, watching from afar, was a different kind of nerves. I'm four hours behind here in New Brunswick, so at 6pm I sat refreshing Facebook, waiting for updates.

Then it came. I squealed when I saw it: Amici had placed second and won **Best Theatrical Moment** — through to the next round! I got to live through it all again.

A little while later, I noticed that the Scottish Final would be at the Adam Smith Theatre in Kirkcaldy. The same stage where I'd once performed with KADS, Fife Opera, and the Kirkcaldy Gilbert and Sullivan Society. Could this be my Hollywood ending? Would I be booking a flight back to walk into the Adam Smith and see my play?

Well ... it wasn't to be

I watched the livestream of the Divisional Final at the Birnam Arts Centre with bated breath. Amici once again won **Best Theatrical Moment**, but weren't placed overall. Still, I could hear the cheer when they received their award. I could tell the play had landed. It had connected. And for me, that was more than enough. Tish and the cast had done a wonderful job of staging the play. I was so proud.

Clynelish is a very personal play. It tackles a difficult subject. But I hope the cast, crew, and audiences took from it what I intended — that it's okay not to be fine. That men, especially, need to talk more. Open up. Share what they're going through.

The SCDA One Act Play Festival has always been about exploring new writing, taking chances, challenging audiences — and most importantly, bringing people together to celebrate theatre. For that, I'll always be grateful.



About the Author

David Thompson Hunter is a Scottish playwright now based in New Brunswick, Canada. With roots in community drama stretching back to Fife and Caithness, he's worked with amateur groups across Scotland and now supports young artists and international students in Atlantic Canada. *Clynelish* is his debut play — a tender, funny, and raw exploration of grief, friendship, and the things we don't say out loud.

SCDA Youth Workshops

After the success of our previous youth workshops, we are running them again this year. The first workshop was held in Carnoustie in June, (see pictures on back cover). There are still places available for the upcoming workshops in Thurso, Dunfermline and Kirkwall which will take place in September and November.

Workshops are held over two days with participants specialising in Drama & Movement, Song Lyrics & Singing and Sound & Lighting. Working together at the start of the weekend, before breaking off into specialist workshops with the aim of creating an original short performance by the end of Day 2. None of us know where we will end up, which is what makes the whole weekend so exciting and unpredictable. The tutors will work as hard as they can to incorporate all of the ideas the groups come up with, so it is very much a participant-led experience. If our first workshop is anything to go by, the possibilities are endless and we will all be surprised by the outcome.

Who are they for : Anyone between the ages of 10 and 18

Where and When are they taking place : The Mill Theatre, Thurso - 6th & 7th September, Dunfermline High School - 27th & 28th September and Orkney Theatre, Kirkwall - 1st & 2nd November 2025

How do I sign up? Go to the SCDA website and follow the link: drama.scot/summer-school

Please contact Carole, our National Drama Advisor, with any questions on nda@drama.scot

play reviews

Reading copies are available from
Morna at secretary@drama.scot

I Know a Place by Tony Domaille

Winner Geoffrey Whitworth Competition - 2025

Cast: 2 male, 2 female

Running time: 40 minutes

Lucy Evans is missing, and her ex-boyfriend Damien Curtis is in police custody, as the prime suspect. Curtis won't speak to the police, the only person he will talk to is forensic psychiatrist, Dr Vincent who finds himself in a race against time to find Lucy. This script has energy and drive which makes one want to discover the outcome of this conversation piece and the future of this deluded besotted young man.

Elegy for Georgie by Seamus Steele

Runner-up Geoffrey Whitworth

Cast: 2 Male

Running time: 35 minutes

Retribution and vengeance are the central themes of the tight little play. Two well contrasted men meet apparently by chance but there follows a cat and mouse game which escalates both verbally and physically. The atmospheric peaceful opening setting of a quiet hillside wit sound of chattering birds is in contract to the final stark moments with the birds shrieking reflecting the physical life threatening battle between the two men

Eisd Ri Glaodh Na Feannaig by Jo McCartney (translates as *Listen to the Crows Cry.*)

Cast: 1 male, 1 female

Running time: 40 minutes

This comedically tragic play follows the Scottish myth of the Baobhan Sith, a vampire like woman who roams the highlands dancing with men until they were tired before drinking their blood. Athol of MacDonald chief of the clan MacDonald in 13th century Scotland finds himself alone in the highlands looking for peace and quiet when he meets a strange beautiful woman. He tries to impress her and asks her to dance to prove he doesn't believe the myths. Soon he realises how much danger he is in but there is no point in trying to escape. Are predator and prey more alike than they think?

**In this issue we focus on
plays from our playwriting
competitions**

Waiting Fir Ken by Graeme Ferguson

A Scottish play paying homage to 'Waiting for Godot' by Samuel Beckett.

Cast: 2 males

Running time: 45 minutes

Two world weary friends await the arrival of the eponymous Ken. Whilst waiting they bicker, joke cavort and ponder their place in the world as they kill time while they wait. In this clever homage the rams are now discovered in a wild area in Scotland where they continue to wait for Ken. The language is broad Scots and what the playwright conveys so well is the rhythm in the dialogue which skilfully echoes Beckett's work. Much of the humour comes from the banter between these disparate lost souls.

Loose Ends by Brenda Read-Brown

Cast: 2 male, 4 female

Running time: 30 minutes

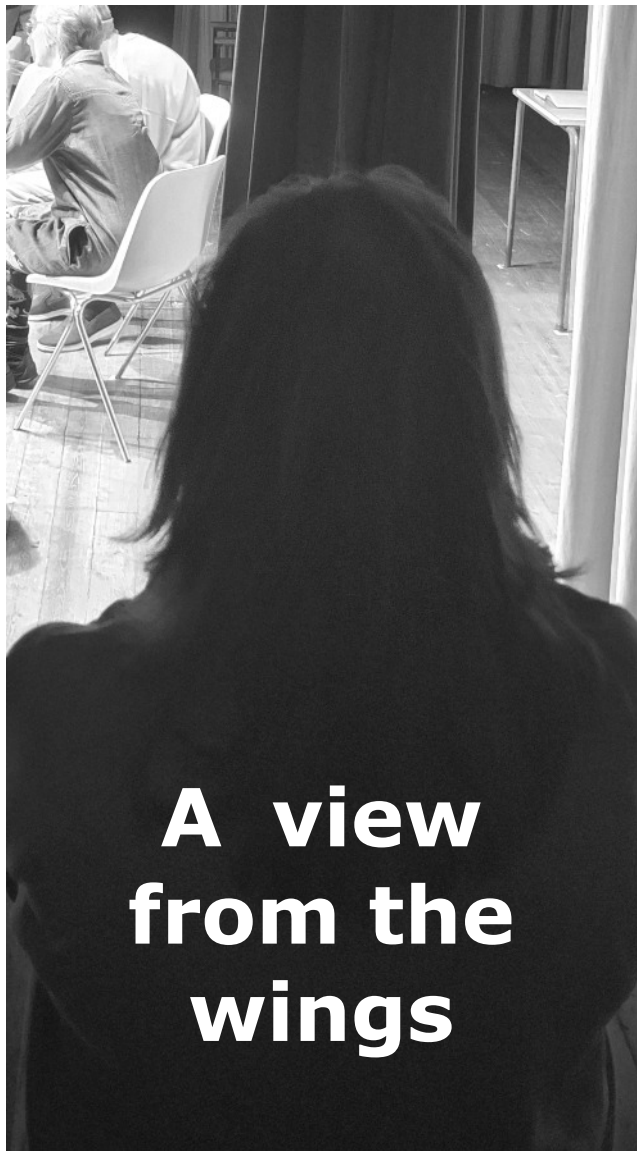
It's Julie's wedding day. There is half an hour to go to the ceremony, and Julie and her Mum are getting ready in a slightly run-down suite in a slightly run-down hotel. Things don't go quite as planned. There is nothing like a family celebration for old sores and hidden angst to boil to the surface as secrets and lies emerge. The final moments of the play are pure farce as family members clash – literally! That said the dialogue is bright and pacey.

Perchance to Dream by David McCann

Cast: 4 male, 3 female

Running time: 45 minutes

Perchance to Dream is a fictional account of part of Joseph Merrick's life, the so called elephant man. All characters portrayed are real, except for Mary, who is included for dramatic effect. The story revolves around the involvement of Sir Frederick Treves, a senior surgeon at the London Hospital in the late 19th century. Treves died in Switzerland and in this play he wants his wife Anne to understand his unusual relationship with Joseph. The story is told in a series of flashbacks. The most interesting part being the scene with Joseph and Mary. Her blindness means she never sees his deformity but focuses on his gentle voice and character.



A view from the wings

What do they know? *

So you have spent hours of your free time interpreting the authors every word, every line, every character and the relations between them; What's been said and more importantly what has not, plotting and replotting the ensembles' every move.

Oh! What a beautiful dance they will display. The tableaux created by each actor who are naught but liquid marble, flowing together to paint a picture of emotion. The days fretting over each outfit. What's in the wardrobe that will more than just do? And can the actress disrobe, tastefully? The wondering if whether the lightening effect imagined in that over wandering, over active 3am brain, illuminates the emotion of the narrative, or has dentists contacting you on tips on how to light dark interiors. Bob Ross would weep to draw a scene that good, you think.

And the props! Don't forget the props, (that's the actors job, LOL 'cries'). Hours surfing online market emporiums, and then there was the, definitely not searching at work for that item, time. How does one get on the dark web anyway? Grating family nerves on days' out, insisting on popping into just one more charity shop to seek out the Holy Grail of props the play needs, and

on the off chance a charity shop in Falkirk actually has the holy grail, well why not?

And then there are the actors. Oh the actors, they know best of course, but do they know better? How to ask them to stand, sit or move when they insist on sitting, standing or being still? Or how to suggest, nicely, that maybe next run through the lines could be said... Differently... Oh, of course they can't make that rehearsal, or the next one, and yes you say, no problem, painting on the best actors smile upon your coupon, reminding them that the curtain opens the week after. Never a mistake in rehearsals, just happy accidents as Bob would say.

And then before you can believe it, and definitely at least one week and 42 more rehearsals before its ready to be released from the behind the curtain, the audience is in, the house lights dim and the tabs open to the tune you chose so many weeks ago. You wonder if you could train to be a deep sea pearl diver, as discovering you can hold your breath for 40mins was a previously unknown talent and Oysters don't need props or to remember lines and moves.

Then it's over, the tabs close and the audience claps as they check if their legs are awake and if the bar is open. Expect its not. (The festival, I mean, not the Bar, that's always open) Then it's The Adjudicators turn to command the stage. (Note the capital T and A) They stand and slowly, methodically begin to disassemble the play, poking at the soft bits and scraping at the hard.

They detail their deliberations on why this play was a challenge (to do, not sit through you hope) and that the performance was not exactly flawed, perish the thought, but it did have some holes in it and maybe the Director could have answered the challenge in a different way... and as the audience nod like dashboard ornaments in a vehicle travelling along a Stirlingshire road, you wonder what play The Adjudicator is talking about it, it dawns on you, that it's yours!

No, that's not why the Actor moved down stage at that point you fume; Yes, it may have been better had they faced the audience to say their lines, I told them that you agree through gritted teeth; No, the lights were supposed to be dull as I didn't want to be plagued by Fife Dentists. Yes, the Ensemble was supposed to dance like that, well sort of. When stage left is actually on the right how is anybody supposed to choreograph that lot? They are as mobile as tombstones at the best of times. That costume choice symbolises ... Oh never mind. Challenge? You have no idea, and what do you know anyway?* Yes, I will have a drink, the bar is open.

So cheers to the winners and to The Adjudicators and roll on next year's festival!

*Quite a lot actually and without them the festival couldn't happen.

Graeme Ferguson

2025 Scottish Finals

The wait is over. After 14 district and 4 divisional competitions the 8 finalists are all set to perform. One last chance to impress. At stake, a chance to return home with some silverware and to represent Scotland at the UK Final.

Thursday

There is the customary excited bustle of people in the foyer, Gordon's dedicated Front of House Team intent on relieving anyone of their cash who are brave enough to negotiate the raffle and programmes sellers. "Have you thought about becoming a Patron"? Hugs, kisses and the sound of pals renewing their friendships. Some not seen since last year's final and introductions to new folk. There is the happy chatter and general anticipation, looking forward to 3 evenings of drama.

The theatre was reopened in September 2023 following an extensive refurbishment programme. The standard of the work looks good and offers both audiences and performers a superb venue.

First on stage is our National Chair, Carolyn Harrison to welcome, the Teams, the Audience and our Adjudicator for the Festival, David Price from Mid-Wales.

The auditorium lights fade, the opening music is heard as the stage lights come up revealing an appropriately grubby looking set for Thurso Players' performance of *'Taken'* by Winsome Pinnock.



A mother is confronted by the child she had to give up. The play looks at how three generations of a family are each affected by the decision to give up a child.

Liked by the adjudicator for its realism, opening lighting effect and the juxta position of Nanna Nola's sparkling ballgown and slippers.

After, the customary temptation of the ice cream vendors, the bar and the chance to purchase more raffles we settled in for Aberfeldy Drama Club *'Tending'* by El Blackwood.



Based on over 70 interviews with nurses of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities, *Tending* immerses you in their day-to-day lives. It asks an essential question: when the systems under pressure and lives are on the line, who takes time to care for the carers?

There was a highly functional set comprised of movable hospital screens, a wheelchair and trolley that were constantly repositioned to give a huge variety of settings for the cast to perform in. Strong emotions were stirred within many of the audience members. David thought it was a highly accomplished team of actors who ensured the narration and action were woven together successfully.

The final play for the opening night was *'Land of the Dead'* by Neil LaBute from 88 Theatre,

Land of the dead features an arguing couple. She wants to keep the baby, he doesn't, so she agrees to go to the clinic to get an abortion. Having gone through with the abortion, the woman receives a message on her mobile phone: it's her husband, perhaps they should keep the baby after all? Unfortunately it is already too late. The husband works in the World Trade Centre and it is 9/11. The woman is now alone with only the recorded message to remind her of a previous life. There was a minimal set, just a couple of boxes. The use of haze and discrete lighting brought the sad reality of the script to life. David felt this was credible performances from both actors in highly demanding roles. They conveyed an assured sense of how to play this unusual style of storytelling of interwoven monologues.

Chris Hewett reports on the Scottish Final at the Adam Smith Theatre in Kirkcaldy, with pictures by Tony Flisch



Following the long-established ritual of drawing the raffle prizes, our adjudicator David Price summed up his thoughts.

He provided a detailed review of each of the 3 plays that focused on the many positive aspects he saw in the performances.

Friday

Adding to the melee tonight, Gordon has arrived in person with his famous merchandise stall. There's even less chance of getting past the foyer with your wallet or purse intact, but it's all for a good cause. Putting on the Festival is an expensive business. So thanks must be given to all those individuals willing to help by collecting or parting with cash.

First up tonight is Kirkintilloch Players with '**A Super Happy Story (About Feeling Super Sad)**' by Jon Brittain & Matthew Floyd Jones

Sally wants to change the world. At the first glimpse, this witty, bright teenager, looks on track to go anywhere she wants. That is, until depression rears its ugly head and rips her plans into shreds.



The lights come up to reveal a "live" pianist, Sam McDonald, a step ladder stools, costume rails and a circular window with projected images.

There was abundant energy and fantastic singing with multiple seamless costume changes as cast members played numerous roles. The play (or was it a musical) incorporates great humour in a plot that followed Sally on her journey of depression, denial, discovery and recovery. Few were not moved by her attempted suicide scene. It was a great ensemble piece. I suspect we will be seeing more of these young actors in the future.

Next came The Florians with '**Funeral Tea**' by Pat Wilson.

We are presented with a traditional box set with functional doors, well-appointed, with all the paraphernalia required to support the plot. The play started with music from the Grimethorp Colliery Brass Band played on the radio while Mrs Ellis went about her business of preparing for the Wake.



Whilst the mourners are sipping their tea, it becomes evident that the urn containing Uncle Jacob's ashes has gone missing. When Sarah suggests the tea tastes funny, they imagine a horrifying possibility. How could Mrs Ellis make a brew when they know the tea caddy is locked in the sideboard?

There was a great deal of humour all done in strong northern accents. The adjudicator especially enjoyed the spectacle of the ladies on hands and knees under the dining table.

The closing play for the night was '**Something in the Basement**' by Don Nigro, performed by Fintry A.D.S.

A married couple move into an old house where they are troubled by the wife's reluctance to allow her partner to touch her and by her growing insistence that there is something making bizarre noises in the basement.

Scottish Final - contd.

In common with other plays, the stage was pre-set with tabs already open so that the vast apron could be used and the action could be brought closer to the audience. One side had a bedroom, the other a kitchen and up centre a raised platform with a door and steps leading down to the stage.



I liked the use of lighting effects. From the simple simulated pull of a cord to turn the bedroom lights on and off to the silhouetted Cecilia as she stood in the cellar doorway gazing down on Mary.

The cast were not afraid to venture deep into the auditorium simulating the exploration of the basement.

Following the raffle and another in-depth public adjudication many retired to the downstairs bar for the traditional Tom Gibson quiz. Sadly, Tom is no longer with us, but his legacy lives on. Our able Quiz Master was Robin and competition for the Tom Gibson Trophy was fierce. A pleasant evening of theatre, quizzing and socializing. What's not to like!

Saturday

The Civic Reception. The Competing Teams, members of the National Committee and National Executive were invited to be hosted by the Provost of Fife Jim Leishman MBE at the Beveridge Suite within the Theatre. For those fortunate to attend a previous reception by Jim, you will recall his wit and humorous antidotes coupled with a genuine appreciation of drama provided an entertaining event. Unfortunately, last-minute illness kept The Provost away. We wish him a speedy recovery and thank him for his ongoing support.

Carolyn our National Chair said a few words and there was an opportunity to mingle and chat whilst supping tea or coffee and munching on cakes and biscuits.

The final evening is here. One last chance to relieve the audience of any financial resource they may have hidden up to now! Raffles, lucky squares, memberships, patronages or merchandise. Heck! Just empty your

wallets and purses. "Don't have cash"? "Not to worry – we have a card reader".

On a serious note. Thank you to all those individuals, clubs and organisations that donated, advertised or bought "stuff". It's greatly appreciated and will help keep the Association keep going as we approach our centenary next year.

Bon Accord Players, *'Storytelling'* by Oliver Emanuel. A play about the life and imminent ending of a man called Robert. He was 44 and led a fairly decent life, but one day he decided that today should be the last day.

There was a minimal set. Just an open stage with a cyclorama, several boxes, a pineapple (yes, I said a pineapple) and a lot of imagination.

The boxes were set along with the pineapple before the start. At this point the conversation in the audience was for the most part centred around, "why is there a pineapple on stage?"

The lights came up to expose a silhouette of the two cast members (who have no character names in the programme) atop several boxes and the pineapple.

This play amply demonstrates that minimal set is enough to transport the audience into a different world. (It's also easier to tour with). The storytelling abilities of the actors incorporating differences in pace, body language, humour and mastery over the lines were evident. The actors were also comfortable enough to sit on the edge of the apron right up close to the audience.



Last, but in no means least, was the Edinburgh Graduates with *'Being Norwegian'* by David Greig.

Sean, recently out of prison, invites Lisa back to his flat for a drink. Lisa declares she's Norwegian. She feels Sean must be Norwegian too.

The lights come up. The setting is an upstairs flat portrayed by a cluttered sofa, heaps of packing boxes scattered around and a single hanging pendant lamp. The various boxes supported the onstage action effectively. Looking for an illusive bottle of wine and providing a temporary seat for Sean while he awkwardly shies away from Lisa. The actors were engaging, drawing

lots of humour out of the play. A good way to end the Festival.



The raffle followed the Public Adjudication. Prizes included the now famous pineapple from Storytelling along with the more traditional items.

Time now for the adjudicator to jot up his scores and head to the stage with the rest of the Platform Party. The scores must have been close as there was quite a wait for

the tabs to open. Carolyn provided some appropriate words before handing over to David Price for his final summing up and announcement of the winners.

What a festival! We had, tragedy, murder, suicide, sickness, mental health problems and a funeral. But that's not all. We also had drama, comedy, excitement, spectacle and performance. The acting and production values were extremely high, and all 8 clubs should be proud of their achievements.



Scottish Final Results

Wheatley Tassie - First Place ...
 Jim Porteous Trophy - Second Place ...
 David Baxter Salver - Third Place ...

Connie Fisher Trophy - Highest Direction Marks
 Donald T Farmer Trophy - Best Theatrical Moment
 Grampian Television Trophy - Best stage Décor

Bon Accord Players *'Storytelling'*
Aberfeldy Drama Club *'Tending'*
Kirkintilloch Players *'A Super Happy Story (About Feeling Super Sad)'*

Bon Accord Players
Aberfeldy Drama Club
Kirkintilloch Players

Poster competition 2024

There were a dozen entries to the poster competition this year which was great. Remember it can be any show between January and December, and you can enter more than one. All it needs is either the SCDA logo or to say you are a member of Scottish Community Drama.

This year's winner was Stromness DC with *'Sammys Magic Garden'*. Runner up was Dollar DC with *'Lord Arthur Saville's Crime'* and third was Bon Accord Players with *'God of Carnage'*.

It is time to send in your posters for this year to scene@drama.scot.

Dates for your diary

The Association's AGM and workshops will be held on the 14th & 15th November 2025 at Stirling Court Hotel



From Abbeyview to the Traverse

I grew up in Abbeyview, a working-class estate in Dunfermline. Theatre didn't feel like it was for people like me—it seemed distant, maybe even a bit snobby. But this March, my play *Wasps* was performed as part of *A Play, A Pie and A Pint*, and with it, a lifelong dream was realised: something I wrote was on the main stage of the Traverse Theatre, the home of new writing in Scotland.

For me, playwriting starts with voice and character. The moment I realised I wanted to write plays was when I saw *Black Watch* by Gregory Burke. Hearing my accent, my slang—seeing my world on stage—changed everything. It made me believe that stories from places like Abbeyview mattered.



Coming from the stoic tradition of the Fife working class, celebrating personal achievements can feel like bragging. I'm still learning to be okay with that. So when I was asked to write this article, I hesitated. I never expected to be part of that world, let alone end up teaching drama. Yet, here I am, working with young people—many from backgrounds like mine—who might feel like theatre isn't for them either. That's exactly why I want to share this.

Writing a play isn't easy—but it's not some mystical, untouchable craft either. It's work. What makes playwriting unique is that it's all about character in action. There's no room for long descriptions or backstory dumps. Your audience paid to be there—so get straight to it. Cut the fluff. But also, don't spoon-feed them. Let them work. Let them find the cracks in relationships and

piece the story together themselves. They will. That's the magic of theatre.

So I started writing. Badly. Each draft was less bad than the last. I read everything I could get my hands on—classic plays, modern ones, obscure ones. I got a bit obsessed, but that's how you learn. Find what works in other plays. Steal it. Twist it. Make it your own.

The obsession kept growing and I found myself exploring different forms and styles. I started writing something about club culture and consent. This became two stream of consciousness monologues which started a trend in all of my plays of not offering a clear ending. This play ended with a clear question for the audience. I didn't think it would work. But, surprisingly, it got a lot

of attention. The play needed a title so I took a repeated line from the colliding monologues—*It Never Ends*.

The resulting play won the Scotland Short Play Award in 2015. The winning of this award encouraged me to keep going. More recently, I won the Scott Salver Award in 2024 for *Two Out of Three Falls*, a play rooted in working-class experience, performed at the SCDA Youth One Act Festival in Kirkcaldy. The gap of 9 years can be explained by the following facts...

- 1- A lot of my plays are rubbish—any playwright will tell you that but in my case I feel it is true!
- 2- I have been teaching for 9 years and, with any skilled profession, it takes time to feel competent enough in my work to devote time to writing.
- 3- I am exceptionally good at starting plays...I am terrible at finishing them.

The idea for *Wasps* came during lockdown. My friend and collaborator at Moon Fly Theatre suggested we write plays to perform live on Zoom. He had a script. I had nothing—until a wasp flew into my living room and a character's voice popped into my head. She reminded me of a former pupil with a knack for storytelling. From there, the script unfolded.

The character Rianne is a usual 16 year old girl trying to survive school, friendships, and boys. But her mother falls ill. The play is about survival, grief, and overcoming the odds.

... why you should write that play

When I revisited *Wasps*, I tightened it up and submitted it to the Playwrights' Studio Scotland, who read scripts for PPP, who recommended it to the artistic team. This got me a meeting with Artistic Director Brian Logan who loved the script enough to programme it for the Spring 2025 season.

Working with director Lesley Hart and the amazing Yolanda Mitchell was a gift. *Wasps* is a monologue, and Yolanda had to hold the room solo for almost an hour. She didn't just deliver—she transformed it.

I missed the rehearsal process due to illness—typical! - but through voice notes, script edits, and the incredible work of the team, the play thrived. Their belief in the piece was humbling. The production was warmly received, with a handful of 4 star reviews, including from theatre giant Joyce McMillan, and a gorgeously written 5 star review from The Wee Review. To say I'm deeply proud of it would be an understatement.

Sitting in Oran Mor on opening day, watching something that began as a lockdown experiment come alive on-stage—that was full-circle. Seeing it move to the Traverse? That was the dream.

If you're reading this and wondering if this article has a point- I apologise...I'm not good at writing things about myself or about my achievements. If you are reading this and wondering if your story is worth telling, the answer is yes. If you think your voice doesn't belong in a theatre, it *does*. There is space for stories like yours—especially through initiatives like PPP and the Playwrights' Studio Scotland. Their script reading service is a brilliant starting point.

So write. Write badly. Write what scares you. Write the



things that make you laugh or cry or rage. Write what you wish someone had said to you at sixteen. Then finish it. Reread it. Cringe. Rewrite. Then send it in. Share it.

If someone like me—who once thought theatre was for “other people”—can have a play staged in Glasgow and Edinburgh, then so can you. All it takes is one idea. One page. One wasp in a living room.

So go on. Write it.

Cameron Forbes



Why I say you'll see more real theatre at an SCDA festival than in most of London's West End.

I write plays. Mostly one-acts and mostly aimed at the biggest market for short plays – the community theatre circuit. A while ago, Fintry's Gavin Paterson kindly said he was thinking of producing one of my pieces and asked for a copy of the



script. He made a firm stipulation, though: "Please take out all the stage directions." Now I think my stage directions are OK; why would Gavin reject them? The answer is that he is an artist who wants to produce some real theatre. Which, nowadays, is not what they typically do in the West End of London.

In 2017 Leonardo da Vinci's painting entitled "Salvator Mundi" sold for \$450 million, the highest price paid to date for a painting. Suppose you could buy a "Painting by Numbers" set which was so highly detailed that, when completed, it was indistinguishable from the original. Would anybody pay \$450 million for the copy? Of course not. So no sane person would ever bother to put the huge time and effort required to produce

even a passable replica of the famous original.

But that is what they routinely do in the West End of London.

I suppose I'm mostly talking about musicals, which are the economic life-blood of London's theatre scene. They start out as real theatre, beginning with an original script – in musical terms "the book". A production company then realises the potential of the book in an actual stage performance. It's all new. Everything, from the composition of new music to the design of the set and costumes, not to mention the crafting of characters who will act out the story, has to be invented entirely from scratch. This is where the artistry comes in.

If the artistic endeavour works and audiences enjoy the final result, the show will be a success, both in artistic and commercial terms. Critics will hail it as theatrically worthy and the general public will pay to see it in large numbers. But the endeavour can also fail. That is an inherent – and I would say almost defining - factor in real art. If it isn't risky and if it isn't breaking new ground, is it really art?

But something usually happens to a successful musical which bleeds all the artistry out of it – they make a movie of it. On the stage, Julie Andrews can gallop from the

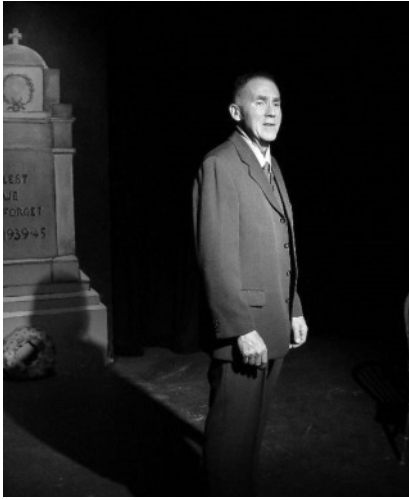
nunnery to Captain von Trapp's chateau in any outfit the costume designer thinks fit and an innovative director might conclude that as this is set in Austria, carrying a zither to entertain the children might be more appropriate than a guitar case. But not after the film is made. It's just a fact of life that thanks to the combined reach of film and television, the number of people worldwide who get their first experience of "The Sound of Music" via a screen far outweighs the number of people who saw it performed on stage.

Which petrifies the work – sets it in concrete.

After a successful movie version of the musical any subsequent stage production of it has to be a painting-by-numbers copy of the movie stereotype. As an artistic director you might think that this story has a lot more to say to an audience if given a new and radical interpretation. That's what real theatre ought to be about. But if your Maria approaches the von Trapp house in anything but a short blue jacket, wide straw hat and carrying a guitar case, your audience will be shifting uneasily in their seats murmuring, "That's not Maria".



get Real Theatre?



So West End producers aren't relying on copycat painting-by-numbers production because they lack artistic integrity. They do it because that's all their audiences want to see. But thankfully that's not the case with the audiences for SCDA productions.

Back to my stage directions.

I put them into my playscripts for two reasons, one selfish and one, I would argue, more artistically justified. The selfish reason is that many of my new scripts are entered for playwriting competitions and I want the readers to get an impression of the production of the

play that I had running in my head when I wrote it. The more artistic reason is that my stage directions offer a potential director at least an insight into what I was thinking when I put this together. This is the same philosophy behind the published "acting editions" of plays which are basically the prompt copies showing how the piece was originally staged.

Like my friend Gavin, if a producer wants to create real artistic theatre, they will never follow stage directions slavishly but look for a fresh, innovative and surprising new way to tell the story. If you're just trying to carry out the instructions laid out in your French's acting edition or simply copying into your production the moves, props, costume and set remembered from the brilliant production you saw at the Lyceum or downloaded from YouTube, you may end up with a polished result but

you really can't legitimately call it art and in my opinion, it isn't real theatre.

Thankfully SCDA member companies don't typically fall into the "painting by numbers" trap which has ensnared so much of London's theatre scene. Which is why I assert that audiences will find more real theatre at an SCDA festival or in the church halls around Scotland than you will get from your £125 seat on Shaftesbury Avenue.

And long may it continue.



CLASS ADS

Playwright? small business? buying or selling? All kinds of small ads accepted. Have your ad read throughout SCDA land. Contact scene@drama.scot
Send your details to Scene Magazine's classified page. £15 - up to 30 words

CORDINER PRESS One-act plays and pantomimes by Isabella C. Rae – comedy, drama, fantasy! For information contact Isabelle at isabella_rae@hotmail.com or at 36 Mansefield Avenue, Cambuslang, Glasgow G72 8NZ
Phone 0141 641 1465

NANCY MCPHERSON PLAYS For a selection of pantomimes and award winning One-Act plays including 'Fusion' (Scott Salver winner 2012) and 'Waste Management' (Geoffrey Whitworth runner-up 2011). Visit www.nancymcphersonplays.co.uk

MARTIN FOREMAN PLAYS, *Eleven short plays for drama students and amateur theatre* (comedy, drama, absurd etc) and other plays by Martin Foreman can be found on arberybooks.co.uk. Discounts for SCDA members through contact@arberybooks.co.uk

The Scott Salver

A total of six original scripts were received for this season's annual playwriting competition. The delighted recipient of our silver salver this year is Jo McCartney. The Queen Margaret University student's play **'EISD RI GLAODH AN FHEANNAG'** (*Listen to the Crow's Cry*) was presented by QMU Drama Society at the Edinburgh District Festival.

A carefully constructed drama for two characters; Athol, a clan chief and Nairne, a vampire woman, based on the mythical Scottish legend of the Baobahn Sith. The staging allows for imaginative lighting and sound plots to create atmosphere within a minimalist setting with crisp, economical dialogue and lyrical passages to accent mood changes.

Both characters are strong and interesting with their developing relationship providing moments of humour, conflict, tenderness and sadness. A skilfully handled conclusion provides ambiguity for the audience.

In Runner-up position came Andy McNamara's **'LINING UP THE DUCKS'** premiered at Arran District Festival by Whiting Bay Club of Music and Drama.

This short comedy provides some "laugh out loud" moments as a super-confident insurance scammer meets his match from a wily, highly imaginative and seemingly frail, elderly adversary. Dorothy's frequent interventions to stall the document signing result in Hector granting almost impossible concessions - unblocking her toilet, foot massaging and paying vet bills with the denouement dealing the final blow with the arrival of Dorothy's mother!

Tightly written piece with contrasting characters, well-paced comedy build up and a just ending for the audience to savour.

Third place was Elizabeth Levy's **'CASTING OFF'** for Ury Players at Aberdeen District Festival.

A technically sound piece of writing with helpful descriptions of ten cast members. Principal characters are introduced gradually with plenty of business concerning knitting projects until Fergus' dramatic

arrival providing opportunities for comedy and innuendo. The revelation that the women are a cult group setting themselves against men and the callous nature of Fergus' death and Simon's arrest felt a trifle over dramatic.

Another entry from Aberdeen District was Studio Theatre Group's **'THE AUDIT'** by Joshua G.T. Horsfall.

This is written for a large cast ensemble and was a bold attempt to touch on serious issues through a morality tale where our protagonist discovers that he has committed all Seven Deadly Sins in quick succession. The device of characters acting out multiple roles does

at times become confusing as the plethora of scenes sacrifices the opportunity for more subtlety.

A further submission from Queen Margaret University was Tara Semple's **'AND THERE HE WAS, LIKE ANOTHER ONE OF THE FISHES'**.

An intriguing piece featuring three female characters stranded on a promontory - one of whom is inebriated and another has vampiric tendencies whose stories

are gradually revealed as the tale progresses. Dialogue is well written throughout, although it lacks coherence. The women's fate unclear at the conclusion, leaving the audience to ponder whether they had witnessed a piece of comedy, tragedy or absurdity.

'WAITING FIR KEN', Graeme Ferguson's homage to Samuel Beckett's famous *Godot* script, staged at Fife District Festival, presented the competition assessors with a dilemma - is the script a commendable Scots translation of a theatre classic or a stand alone original piece of writing.

Although certain minor characters and sections of original narrative have been revised with updated references, much of the play's comic business has been retained with the two principal characters facing the same predicament. The rhythmical flow of authentic Scottish dialect highlighted the humour and absurdity of the situation.



Geoffrey Whitworth competition

The Geoffrey Whitworth Trophy is awarded annually to an original short play first performed in the UK one-act play festivals organised by the four nations

Geoffrey Whitworth founded the British Drama League in 1919. He was heavily involved in drama for many years and encouraged original work. His philosophy was to ensure that writers would benefit from seeing their plays performed and adjudicated.

In 2025 there were 15 plays entered for the competition **four** were entered from Scotland, **two** from Northern Ireland and **nine** from England. The scripts were judged and marked by groups of experienced people from all four countries with the top nine being sent to final Judge Colin Dolley to pick the winner and give his comments.

Two of the Scottish entries, *Eisd Ri Glaodh Na Feannaig* by Jo McCartney and *Waiting Fir Ken* by Graeme Fergusson were highly commended by Colin.

Runner-up this year was *Elegy for Georgie* by Seamus Steele from Northern Ireland. Colin said Retribution and vengeance are the central themes of this tight little play. Two well contrasted men meet apparently by chance but there follows a cat and mouse game which escalates both verbally and physically. There is a good build to the several shifts of domination between the pair which gives the play a definite shape and gradually builds the tension to a powerful conclusion.

The atmospheric peaceful opening setting of a quiet hillside with the sound of chattering birds is in contrast to the final stark moments when the birds are shrieking In a cacophonous crescendo reflecting the physical life threatening battle between the two men. For the most part the dialogue has a crisp authenticity and the



playwright has captured the right style for this challenging short play.

The winner however for the third time was *I Know a Place* by Tony Domaille Set in a police interrogation room this tightly written script explores control, coercion and power - all apparently exercised under the guise of infatuated love.

The script has been shaped thoughtfully moving smoothly through time and space. The dialogue between the main male characters is crisp and varied in intensity. That said, there is little in the way of movement and the script might work best as a radio play. The well-drawn central character had depth but the other characters remain somewhat two-dimensional.

But the script has energy and a drive which makes one want to discover the outcome of this conversation piece and the future of the deluded besotted young man.

A rehearsed reading of Tony's play was held in the Garrick, at Lichfield performed by TACT in front of many of the competing teams attending the festival. Tony answered questions from the audience on how he came to write the play and where he got his ideas from.



British Final at the

Hard to believe it was a year since we held the British Final in Perth and now we headed off to The Garrick, Lichfield to see who would carry off the Howard de Waldon in 2025.

The weather was glorious, and Lichfield was a perfect little town to spend a lovely weekend meeting up with old friends and making new ones all drama enthusiasts.

The Garrick Theatre proved a great place to hold the festival and there was the usual excitement on the Friday evening as we took our seats. MC David White welcomed us all and the adjudicator Chris Jaegar, but before the start of the serious competition we were entertained by the Together Community Gospel Choir. The choir sang three songs and had the audience joining in so it had a real festival feeling from the start.



Nantwich Players were this year's winners

Opening the competition was Nantwich Players, from England with '*Lemons, Lemons, Lemons, Lemons, Lemons*' by Sam Steiner. The play centred round a new government law which allowed everyone only 140 words spoken per day. Oliver & Bernadette are up against a big challenge; how do you communicate all your feelings when there is such a strict cap on words? The play opened with loud voices off and two large screens with various projections throughout the play. A couple going through life in many short scenes with some beautiful choreography and many mood swings. A great start to the festival.

Second on stage was PMA Theatre representing Wales with '*Echoes in the Static*' by Alyn Smith & Robert Smith.

Set in a remote radio relay station during World War 11 this is a gripping drama that explores love, loss and the haunting echoes of war. Evelyn is anxiously waiting for her fiancé to return from a dangerous mission when she hears distressing signals during a fierce storm. Reality and illusion blur which grips the imagination of the audience. The set and sound effects were realistic, and we were all interested to hear how the adjudicator would compare two completely different plays.

Chris started off by saying this was his third British Final and he was delighted to be in Lichfield. Nantwich's *Lemons x 5* was an award-winning play but extremely difficult to perform. He had seen this production before at a previous round! He loved the simple set and thought the sound effects and projections worked really well. He praised both actors for their energy and pace and the innovative choreography of the director. There were good physical movements between them and he particularly liked the song and dance routine. This was good teamwork and a well-balanced impressive production.

On PMA's production of '*Echoes in the Static*' Chris acknowledged this was an original play which was a good idea but he found it a little strange. However, he liked the set and though the sound effects were excellent, they were perhaps at times too loud, and we missed some of the dialogue. He loved the detailed items in the war room and thought the makeup of the officer's burned face was exceptional. He wondered about having the live pianist on stage as although the music was perfect, he felt having him there distracted at times from the action. All in all he thought there was a lot to commend this production and was glad to have seen it.

Well, that was the first night done and dusted and we were off to have a good supper, and a barn dance in the studio theatre.



Bon Accord came a close second

Garrick

Morna Barron reports on the festival
with pictures by Valentin Rotaru,

facebook.com/vali.rotaru.10/
Instagram.com/valentysoft/

Saturday morning bright and early we were back at the theatre for the Civic Reception hosted by Mayor Claire Pinder-Smith. She was delighted to host the event and hoped we would have time to look at the wonderful cathedral (which we did, and it was beautiful). Lichfield was a vibrant town going places. The UKCDFF chair Ian Thomas presented her with the Federation shield and the four countries introduced their teams and exchanged the annual gifts. Then we all settled down to see the rehearsed reading by TACT of the winning Geoffrey Whitworth play *'I Know a Place'* by Tony Domaille which was thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Saturday evening opened with Bart Players from Northern Ireland's production of *'Visitor from Mamoroneck'* by Neil Simon. Karen and Sam's marriage hasn't been very happy of late, and they are celebrating their wedding anniversary to try and fix that. This is a hilarious and heartbreaking tale as Karen does her best to save her marriage with champagne and hors d'ouvres – but no anchovies! An excellent start to the evening.

Last but by no means least was Scotland's entry *'Storytelling'* by Oliver Emanuel from Bon Acord Players. This is a play about the power of stories and how they can overcome the darkest moments in life. Two characters tell the tale of Robert, who isn't sure who he is and whether he even wants to be in the story of his life anymore. A powerful end to the festival.

Chris opened his adjudication on *'Visitor from Mamoroneck'* Chris loved the set and felt the cast used every inch of the stage. He found the cameos of the waiter and 'bell boy' greatly enhanced the production. The actor who played Karen had great stage presence and kept the pace throughout working well with husband Sam, both had excellent comic timing.

On Bon Accord's production Chris explained that the author wanted the actors to tell the story using anything and everything you can do to move the audience. Well, Chris loved the set, music and lighting changes. He felt this was teamwork at its best with imaginative directors. There were some beautiful pictures produced with the many boxes and of course the pineapple! There was variety of pace, and neither actor was afraid to pause. He felt this was another excellent performance and a great finale to a very high standard of productions.

The platform party assembled, and tension was high, who would walk away with the Howard de Waldon Trophy. The friendship quaich was handed over to Teri McCarthy and she invited everyone to Theatre Clwyd,

Mold in July 2026. Chris summed up the two days as excellent quality of all aspects of theatre. He said it had been incredibly difficult to separate the top two and wished they could share the trophy but with only one mark in it, he announced Nantwich Players from England the winners.

It only left us all then to head off to the Studio theatre for another buffet supper, where old and new friends agreed had been yet another great British Final and we looked forward to meeting again in 2026 in Mold.



Carnoustie Youth Workshop



There are still spaces for the Youth Workshops at Thurso, Dunfermline and Kirkwall in September and November. See page 9 for details.

