

Summer 2023

scene

VK DAY



the magazine of
Scottish Community Drama

Victory for Kirkintilloch

'The Beaches of St. Valery'
wins the Scottish Final



More from the Stirling festival on the centre pages and back cover

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Cover

Kirkintilloch Players' winning production of the
'The Beaches of St. Valery'.

Photo by **Tony Flisch**



Chairman's chat

With the summer months fast approaching and at last the arrival of some warmer weather many of us are looking forward to holidays and a rewarding break to recharge the batteries. Those of you who know me as an avid football supporter of a team with a very unsuccessful season behind them will realise the importance of taking stock and time to rebuild! In SCDA we work tirelessly in our clubs and Districts and it does everyone the world of good to have some relaxation.

Our Festival season is drawing to a conclusion as I write with the Scottish Youth Final and the British Final still to come. I recognise and admire the energy and commitment required to keep a play fresh for six months and I'm sure all the remaining groups are really looking forward to performing one more time to an appreciative audience.

This summer SCDA have a number of events for our members with the re launch of our popular Monologue competition to keep creativity going over the next couple of months. The standard has previously been very high and we anticipate many entertaining entries this year. We are also hosting Summer Schools for youth members across the country starting in July where they will benefit from a weekend of professional tutoring so please encourage your young members to get involved in this fabulous opportunity.

Our new Media Team will be working hard to keep you up to date with the latest news so keep an eye on our website, newsletter and social media channels. In the meantime, have a fabulous relaxing summer everyone, enjoy this beautiful weather and I'll hopefully catch up with some of you in Nairn or Belfast!

Carolyn

Welcome

To new Individual members

James Wallace

Stewartry / Western

To new Life members

Alison McCallum

Edinburgh / Eastern

Robin Smith

Fife / Eastern

To new Patrons

Chris Hewett

Moray Firth / Highland

Vivia Leslie

Orkney / Northern

Anne & Peter Walton

Aberdeen / Northern

To new Club members

The Fyne Acting Company, Tarbert, Argyll

Thank you

For your kind donations

Alan Henry

Killin Comedy festival

Thank you also for the continued support from our Patrons, which is much appreciated.

Exciting times for our Youth

It will be an exciting time during the summer months across most of Scotland with the SCDA holding drama weekends for our young members.

Starting with the Dibble Tree, **Carnoustie**, 1st/2nd July, then off to **Kyle of Lochalsh**, 11th/12th July.

In September we head to **Dunfermline** High School, 9th/10th and the Orkney Theatre, **Kirkwall**, 23rd/24th.

The youngster will be assigned into three groups, mixing them up from different drama groups and they will carousel around the three workshops exploring acting skills, musical theatre and technical skills with the three guest tutors (2 on Saturday and one on Sunday) before all coming together for a final workshop on the Sunday.

The tutors are all home grown as it were having all graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and with a background in SCDA One Act festivals.

Sharon Mackay

Sharon is an actor and intimacy co-ordinator and is originally from Thurso. Sharon's passion for theatre began when she joined the Thurso Players at eight years old. She took part in SCDA One Act festivals when growing up and is extremely grateful for all the wonderful experiences it gave her.

Caitlin Forbes

Caitlin studied Musical Theatre and since graduating her professional work has included performances at Eden Court and Dundee Rep. She enjoys teaching musical theatre to all age groups. Caitlin was an avid watcher of SCDA One Act Play festivals growing up and was lucky to be in Wick Players Scottish Final production in 2017.

Neal Clark

Neal is a sound engineer/creative collaborator from Thurso. He is a graduate in Production Technology and Management. Neal has been involved in many projects including the Edinburgh International Festival. Neal's first experience with SCDA was with Thurso Players at an SCDA Final. He was bitten by the theatre bug and Thurso Players and SCDA were responsible for him pursuing a professional career in technical theatre.

Carole Williams

Our own Carole Williams of course has a passion for community drama and loves nothing better than working with SCDA members to solve problems or introduce new skills and ideas to clubs. She passionately believes that the arts are for everyone and that they can enhance all aspects of a person's life.

A Contemporary Chorus

A learning journey with SCDA National Drama Adviser Carole Williams

Over the years I've attended many workshops delivered by SCDA's National Drama Adviser Carole Williams, enjoyed them all and learnt so much on the day. However, I often wished I'd been involved in a production at the time of the workshop so I could try ideas out 'in practice' as I doubted whether I'd remember enough to use them in the future. Although Carole always encourages workshop participants to contact her during a rehearsal period so she can support us with trying out new ideas, once caught up in the production process I have never quite got round to taking her up on that offer until recently.

Some time ago, certainly pre-Covid, Carole delivered a workshop about developing a contemporary chorus which made a big impact on me and I really hoped I'd get the opportunity to try some day. Recently, when working on a production of *Ladies Day* by Amanda Whittington, I decided 2/3 scenes in each Act would benefit from the addition of a small chorus so, finally, I'd found the chance to revisit Carole's workshop. With rehearsals underway I emailed Carole to ask for her support in refreshing my memory so that I could develop some of the ideas she'd presented. Back came a very prompt reply to arrange a video chat and to start the ball rolling she sent the video clip that had inspired her workshop.

The video was so helpful in giving me a few ideas to start with which we tried out at a chorus rehearsal. Working on repetitive movement with the chorus then threw up lots of questions about facial expressions and working in unison or sequence which gave me lots to discuss with Carole. I must say that video chat was invaluable. Carole took what we'd done so far and provided clear and specific ideas for how we could build on that and take things up a level. The chorus really took on board the new ideas and enjoyed working in a different way. Their performance



really enhanced the scenes they appeared in supporting a brilliant cast of principals. Our production of *Ladies Day* went on stage the last week in April 2023 and got lots of positive feedback from the audience which was very gratifying.

Lessons learnt from this experience include

- It's harder than it looks for everyone to maintain the same tempo in choreographed movement on stage but it's also surprising how trying something new grows and energises folk
- There were lots of things we could have played with to develop the idea of a contemporary chorus a bit further so I wish I'd allowed way more time for rehearsals.
- Just how much can be achieved working with Carole where rehearsing a specific production, even from a distance! I really wish I'd taken her up on her offers of this type of support earlier.

So, don't make the same mistake I did, whatever production you're planning or rehearsing make the time to get in touch with

Carole, you'll be amazed how much of a difference it can make. As for me, I'm really keen to build on this first attempt and continue to develop the contemporary chorus, Carole's offered to virtually attend a rehearsal next time and *Ladies Day* has a sequel so... watch this space

Audrey O'Brien



Up for the One Acts?

"Are you still wanting to do a 1 act? If you are we need to get the entry in by Friday..." Not the ideal news to hear when the curtain has just come down on pantomime in December but I had "volunteered" to produce an entry so the Christmas presents would have to wait a wee while.

Our club, Ury Players from Stonehaven, had been regular competitors in the Aberdeen District over the years but had stopped taking part for various reasons concentrating on pantomimes and full-length summer productions. The club required that to be in the pantomime you needed to be 14 but we had some younger actors who wanted to take part. This coupled with the fact that we had the largest cast in the pantomime for several years meant that it seemed like an ideal opportunity to take part in the festival again.

So how to choose a play? My strategy was:

1. No auditions – anyone who wants to be on the stage would get a speaking part so I needed to find gauge interest before starting to search for a script
2. Very little in terms of set – hiring a van means a lot of extra hassle, everything should fit in a car
3. No longer than 30 minutes – short enough so that we could do a full run through and feedback twice on a rehearsal evening
4. A comedy – it needs to be enjoyable

A quick e-mail to members with an a.s.a.p. request for a response meant I had 10 actors to cast which restricted the number of 1 acts to choose from. Lazy Bees Scripts proved to be a great resource and its searchable database came up trumps and after 15 minutes I had found *Finding Goddard* by Deborah Hugill. Not much in terms of scenery and a sizeable cast list meant it ticked all the boxes.



The first read through saw two unexpected faces showing up but one dropped out so the final roll call was complete and parts could be dished out. A good mix of youth and experience boded well with cast ages ranging from 13 to "beyond bus pass age".

The play was basically a main character and an on-stage narrator who were present through the whole play with a host of other characters entering and leaving in a series of short scenes. Several of the cast played multiple roles and, for the final courtroom scene, some artistic licence allowed all of the cast to be on stage by filling the public benches to the full.

A lot of time was spent in rehearsal on characterisation and general stage craft. Most work was on getting pantomime out of the system and addressing the challenges that an adjudicator would be looking for. Every rehearsal saw improvements with the less experienced players always willing to take advice from those with more experience and taking that advice on board. The bar was not set too high but with incremental improvement, things started to take shape.

A final rehearsal in front of club members and family and friends went well and gave the cast a final boost although the director stood in for a late call off due to covid.



The hall in Peterculter was the first time we'd used the sound cues and lights for scene changes as well as dealing with 11 players in the smallest wings in Scotland. A few changes of entrance meant that we could spread the load to both wings but meant a few close shaves during scene changes. It was great to see the nervous energy before hand being turned into elation afterwards – a few glitches but everyone supported each other and were pleased as a team.



Coming second and getting a place in the divisional was a welcome but unexpected bonus.

Not expecting to get through to the next round (in Orkney) we faced the next problem that due to a pre-booked holiday, a wedding, a stag weekend, another show, and a martial arts grading meant that most of the cast had other plans for the weekend. Thanks to some help from the district committee, we were pleased to be



scheduled for Thursday meaning that everyone could take part – with some quick getaways planned for the Friday morning.

Fortunately, the good panto run meant we had enough in the bank to pay for the travel for 16 cast a crew – a sizable outlay. Some non-flyers had to drive up in the van with the scenery or get the train and a ferry but most helped to boost the profits of Loganair. A missed ferry (going to the wrong ferry terminal for the last ferry of the day) meant that some of us got there a little later than expected!

Thursday was for sightseeing but due to the other mainland team being delayed our technical was brought forward.

Unfortunately, the producer was on the other side of the island visiting Skara Bare on a hire bike when the news of the change came through. The folk of Finstown would have wondered why a bike was thrown into the back of a transit van and driven off at speed towards Kirkwall one wet and windy Thursday afternoon.

The theatre in Kirkwall is wonderful and the team couldn't have been more accommodating – the famous Orcadian hospitality came to the fore.

We did the best we'd done but it wasn't enough as we were up against a lot of strong teams but we'd played in front of a big audience in a modern theatre and done ourselves proud. The trip helped to form a close bond between the cast.

For me as a producer I was happy things were over as I much prefer being on the stage but with other members of the company wanting to do one acts next year the promise has been made to go again in 2024. Hopefully some of the cast will be looking for bigger roles in forthcoming productions and a larger number of strong playing members can only be good long term for the company. UP seemed to have found their one act mojo again.

'Cowie Loon'



Youth on tour . .

Last year Blairgowrie Players Youth were blown away by progressing though to, and winning both trophies, at the Scottish Final in Bathgate with their production of the two hander, 'Down Came the Rain' by Burgess Clark.

Each year we try and have at least one to two plays competing in the One Act Festival with a purely youth entry demographic. We are also lucky in Perthshire that there is quite a strong youth contingency with entries from Breadalbane Academy, and sometimes Aberfeldy, although we miss not having Unmasked with us now. Performances are always strong and often put the adult plays to shame.

At Blair Players we like being able to include as many youth members in our plays as we can but sometimes it's hard to find suitable scripts, especially for the range of ages that we have within the club, from 8 upwards. It can also be very challenging for the production team, especially the directors, who have to try and bring all cast members to the same level of performance – no mean feat when you have such a range of ages, skills and abilities. There are a



few writers who do cater for large casts.

Cue 2023 when our President Graham Reid decided he wanted to do Geoff Bamber's parody of *Macbeth*. We tackled this a few years ago but since then we have had a big influx of keen new members from last year's, mainly youth, play *Dracula*, the Final Countdown and our ever-popular annual pantomime. We also had many new members join us for festival this year which is hugely encouraging.

Whilst it is great to have so many youth interested it doesn't make life

easy, from trying to fit everyone on the stage, movement, costumes, characters and choreography meant that before we knew it *Macbeth* 2023 had turned into an all-out PRODUCTION with enough costumes, sound effect, routines and cast members to rival our yearly Christmas Pantomime. Huge kudos goes to the wardrobe mistresses who had to create upwards of 40 costumes for the various characters, the props team, sound lighting and stage support who created all the set, props and tricks. Everyone played their part, came to rehearsal and started to bring *Macbeth* to life!

Before we knew it, it was time to get on the stage at Perthshire District Festival. The cast were up against two older and more experienced teams and what a level of skill from all teams present. Its very hard to call it in Perthshire as we have some truly excellent productions from the participating clubs but certainly the audience absolutely loved it with huge belly laughs all the way through. Something must have certainly resonated with our adjudicator, Jan Palmer Sayers, as the team won through to the Youth Divisional Final – just the week later.



. . next stop Nairn

11th March came and they were back on stage again at Birnam, up against two brilliant young casts from Shazam Youth in Aberdeen and Palace Players. As a first time Stage Director, for this round, I have to congratulate every member of the competing teams for being brilliant to work with, they were all attentive, polite and performed to the highest level – again I did not envy the adjudicator his job. That job was for Stuart Aitken this time round. Very interesting seeing how different adjudicators liked different aspects of the plays to others. There were a few glitches

with props but hey, this version of *Macbeth* lends itself well to business going wrong and our kids are so brilliant as they tend to be unphased and just work through it – which they did, finding themselves the winning team again – amazing buzz for them all.

So, we find ourselves continuing rehearsals, challenging with so many cast members involved in exams this year, honing and fine tuning parts of the play and set; and I'm sure trying out new ways of doing certain bits of the play. Will be great to see how

they work on the 21st May when we put all our festival plays on for the local community.

Its not just the rehearsals that are causing headaches for the production team. The logistics of taking 30 odd children to Nairn for the Youth Final is no mean feat especially when you factor in the parents, family and friends that all want to come along. We are so lucky to have such a supportive group around us all. So, the bus is being booked, cars and family weekend trips are being planned, set, prop and costume transportation is being organised and final rehearsals are being scheduled.

So, Nairn, watch out, Blairgowrie Players Youth (soon to be known as Curtains Up) are ready, excited and buzzing to be on the road to again to compete at the 2023 SCDA Scottish Youth Final on the 17th June from 5pm. We hope many members of the clubs in Scotland come along to support the huge youth talent we are so lucky to have in the SCDA, and celebrate some wonderful theatre – I mean where else can you get three high quality plays for the cost of a coffee and fish supper?!

Pam Howat



Have you got a trophy in the attic?

SCDA's trophies are one of the few tangible links to the clubs and actors who have appeared in our festivals over nearly a hundred years.

We don't even know how many SCDA trophies there are, but probably about 250. Of these, around 130 were awarded at the various rounds of this year's One-Act and Youth Festivals, but as districts have folded and full-length festivals have gone out of fashion, many trophies are sitting unused.

A few may be valuable in monetary terms, but all have a story to tell about their donors and past winners. From Skye's *Wakefield Quai* to Arran's *Millhill Players Trophy*, they bring back memories of the people and clubs who made our Association.

We would like to make a trophy list and record these memories. So, if you have a trophy in the attic, let us know. Even better, take a picture and send it to secretary@drama.scot.

Morna Barron

Kirkintilloch's centenary

In April an exhibition celebrating the 100th birthday of the Kirkintilloch Players drama club opened at the Auld Kirk Museum at Kirkintilloch Cross.

A large turnout of current and former members, patrons and friends of the museum came along to see club President Kenneth Stewart give the opening remarks at the ceremony.

Kenneth has been President during Covid and lockdown,



Kenneth's remarks were followed by the club's two longest serving members performing duties. Iain Carmichael cut the ribbon to formally open the exhibition and Myra Scott cut the special Centenary cake. Iain spoke of his experiences over the last 50 years or so. He recalled anecdotes about former directors such as Norman Gilzean, Maisie Weir, Elsa Currie, Rosina Robinson and the contribution of former President Bill Todd.

The exhibition featured photographs, posters, press clippings, props and costumes. There was evidence on display of old adverts which shows the club was even in existence in 1908-1910 making it one of the oldest amateur drama clubs in Scotland.

100 years, celebrating the past to build the future

David Henderson

through extensive renovations at the Turret Theatre and now during the recovery from the pandemic. He outlined the development of the club from its humble beginnings in 1923 through the last 100 years to modern times, including establishment of a strong Youth theatre, successful productions of one act and full length plays and the ownership of the club's own premises at the Turret Theatre, Eastside.



Cues are not just for Actors

This article is intended not as a rant from someone on the receiving end but rather as an attempt to coach amateur clubs on how to handle the technical aspects of their productions, be they festival entries, regular club shows or pantomimes.

The principles outlined are universal in their application.

Actors rely on their onstage partners to deliver the right lines at the right time, but the technicians behind the scenes are also entitled to receive their cues in a consistent and timely manner.

How often have we seen a performance when something technical doesn't happen as it should? Murphy's law states that "If something can go wrong, it will go wrong", and in more than 30 years as a Stage Director at SCDA festivals I have often seen proof of this. The results can be hilarious or embarrassing, depending on where they are seen from.

There are ways to combat Murphy and ensure that a production runs smoothly by using a disciplined procedure to run the show – we may be amateurs but a professional approach to this is essential.

Detailed preparation and unambiguous instructions to the technician(s) are the key items.

- **Preparation**

Buy an extra copy of the script, to be used only by the person who will be cueing the performance.

Mark it up in pencil with all that needs to happen after FOH clearance – House Lights (at start and end), Sound Cues, Tabs cues (start and end) and Lighting (LX) Cues. Mark a Standby for each cue, about half a page before the cue point.

Do not number LX cues until the Technical rehearsal as the numbers will be assigned by the lighting technician.

- **Technical Rehearsal**

Working with the venue tech(s), set up each different lighting state required and assemble the cue list on the LX desk, noting the cue numbers on the working script as they are allocated.

Do a rapid run-through of the cue list to ensure you are happy with the result.

Set levels for each sound cue, remembering that an audience will soak up some of the sound.

Top and tail the show to give the technical crew a chance to get used to the timings.

- **Performance**

This is where the unambiguous instructions become really important!

Remember that the technical crew have probably only seen bits of the show once, while the director and cast

have been living with it for weeks or possibly months.

There is an industry standard procedure for running all tech cues, and the sequence relies on two key words – STANDBY and GO.

The procedure is the same whether you are sitting beside the techs or talking to them via headsets from elsewhere in the venue.

At the Standby point in the script, usually a minute or so before the cue, say clearly -

"STANDBY LXQ nn", "STANDBY House Lights", "STANDBY Sound" or "STANDBY Tabs" as appropriate.

Tech will acknowledge and there is now a better chance of the cue happening as planned.

GO is the operative word, so pace your words to ensure it is said at the appropriate point in the script -

"LXQ nn (pause, wait for the line) GO" "Tabs (pause) GO" etc.

There can be refinements to the wording, for example -

When several cues happen together – give the individual Standbys, wait for acknowledgement, then say -

"LXQ nn, Sound, Tabs, *any other relevant cues*, (pause) GO"

When several LX cues happen close together -

"Standby LXQs nn thru xx", followed by the individual GO command for each cue as it occurs.

What could possibly go wrong?

If you forget to put someone on Standby – cue may be late or not happen at all. One possible result could be actors left frozen on a dimly-lit stage with the Tabs still open at the end, the House Lights up and the stopwatch still running!

If you don't say GO - cue will not happen.

If you say something that sounds like GO (answering "No" to a question for example), a nervous tech on standby may take that as a GO.

If you use any alternative words, the results are completely unpredictable.

Follow the principles outlined above and you will be closer to achieving the dramatic entity you dreamed of without providing unwanted amusement or other surprises for the audience.

Aberdeen SCDA District has run workshop sessions on this topic, giving directors and other club members a chance to practice cueing in a live situation, working with a technician who has strict instructions to be bolshie and react only to the standard wording.

On recent experience at this year's festival, perhaps now is the time to revive these workshop sessions.....

Hugh D. McLachlan

The Scottish Final

The Macrobert at Stirling University was once again the centre of attention for SCDA members as the venue for this year's Scottish Final. With accommodation available at the Stirling Court Hotel and lovely spacious grounds to stroll around it is an ideal spot for a drama festival.

Thursday 4th May

On entering the foyer it was obvious from the start that this Festival was getting off to a good start. The buzz of excitement as folk stocked up on programmes and raffle tickets was palpable. With an excellent turn out for a Thursday this Final promised well. It is a cliché beloved of adjudicators to say that we had a good mixture of types of play. It can seldom have been more true than with the trio we saw this evening. Edwardian "noir", modern angst and the impact of war; how great a contrast is that. We opened with **Palace Players** presentation of *'Sequence of Events'* by George MacEwen Green. This is a dark troubled play with a set dominated by a rope and a hangman's noose suspended from above. The background story was vividly built up by The Hangman and Claude's



The Florians
'Super Seniors Keep Fit Class'

parents before the action switched to Claude attacking and killing Lily-Ann and then to the execution scene which The Hangman had been awaiting from his bench.

The second entry was **The Florians** with *'Super Seniors Keep Fit Class'* by Fiona Black who also directed it. Set in a keep fit classroom where three middle aged ladies were at least as much concerned with developing a variety of tensions, angst and troubles as they were with developing their physical fitness The final play came from **Kirkintilloch Players** with *'The Beaches of St Valery'* by Stuart

Hepburn. This was based on the fate of the 51st (Highland) Division in 1940 when they were trapped on the French coast in the final stages in the Battle of France and forced to surrender. The story follows Young Callum from his early days through the retreat and surrender to his escape, living in hiding before making his way home while finding love in the process.

Our adjudicator Jennifer Scott-Reid closed the evening with her comments on the plays. She commented favourably on the style which **Palace Players** brought to their production, achieving a good balance between melodrama and natural acting and they achieved this with convincing performances by all the cast. They had an excellent set and the production allowed the play to flow, although we were never in doubt as to what was to happen. For **The Florians** she felt their set was appropriate although perhaps a bit understated. The audience had to believe in the credibility of the characters and she felt that they had achieved this. They made effective use of space although they tended to form static lines on occasion. Comic timing was good and they provided



Palace Players
'Sequence of Events'

returns to Stirling

an entertaining performance with good ensemble playing. Given the nature of *'The Beaches of St Valery'* it was essential that they established the integrity of the piece and they achieved this. Their use of lighting and sound as well as the projection on the back wall played a key part in achieving this. The changes of character were well thought out. Production was realistic and well choreographed and gave an excellent example of effective story telling. She congratulated the team on their performance.

Friday 5th May

In a departure from normal practice Friday morning kicked off with a reception for visiting teams and committee members hosted by Provost Douglas Dodds in Stirling Court Hotel. A significant event 500 miles further South had forced the shift from the normal Saturday slot! The Provost welcomed everyone to the historic city of Stirling and hoped that they would enjoy the local amenities as well as contributing to the Festival. In reply, National Chairman Carolyn thanked the Provost for his good wishes and

assured him that Stirling was one of our favourite venues. She informed him that although this was a competitive event there was a spirit of camaraderie which allowed the event to be a friendly affair unlike Stirling's

battles of old. **Bon Accord Players** opened Friday evening with *'The Zoo Story'*. A park scene in New York with a bench, a path slanting across between areas of grass and a boulder situated well down stage on the thrust outside the front tabs. There was a scattering of dry leaves across the stage. Peter, sitting on the bench smoking his pipe, was accosted by Jerry who became increasingly aggressive as the play unfolded. The play explores themes of isolation, loneliness and social disparity in a materialistic world. Next up were **Wick Players** with *'Spring Cleaning'* from the late Ian Matheson's collection. The set comprised living

room furniture and a flat centre stage with a fireplace dominated by a set of antlers. Maggie appeared, did some desultory dusting, helping herself to the contents of a decanter. Mrs Gardner entered asked her to leave as the maid Jessie was ill and could not help with the cleaning. However, Jessie appeared declaring ill health but once Maggie has finished her mock medical commentary illustrated with garden shears and references to antlers,



Wick Players
'Spring Cleaning'

Jessie made a quick recovery and rushed off. The spring cleaning could now continue. Third for the evening was **Bowhouse Drama** with *'The Sociable Plover'* by Tim Whitnall. Action was limited to a heavily camouflaged bird hide where Roy, an enthusiastic twitcher, lies in wait for an elusive Social Plover. For much of the action thunder rolled in the background with occasional flashes of lightning. He was joined by Dave untidily dressed and drinking whisky from a bottle. Roy tried to introduce him to the joys of ornithology, meanwhile a radio announcement informed that a dangerous criminal was nearby, the description seemed to fit Roy. The police arrive and Roy was shot just as Dave spotted the missing plover and dragged the dying Roy so that he could see it.

In her adjudication of *'The Zoo Story'* Jennifer Scott-Reid liked the silhouettes against the blue sky-cloth at the beginning and end. She emphasised the importance of shifts of power between the characters as Jerry's behaviour became increasingly irrational. This was beautifully done. Jerry's gradual encirclement of Peter and his continual references to animals hinted at his recent visit to the Zoo.



Bon Accord
'The Zoo Story'

Scottish Final contd.

Was Peter a caged animal? Perhaps the idea of encirclement and entrapment could have been given greater emphasis. Overall it was a very impressive performance with both actors demonstrating a clear understanding of their characters and creating an atmosphere of isolation and alienation. The setting for **'Spring Cleaning'** was very appropriate and the characters were appropriately dressed, and this allowed their characters to develop. They made effective use of a very large stage although the production would have benefited from a higher level of light. There was good effective ensemble playing. Lastly in **'The Sociable Plover'** she felt that they had established their characters well. They made it clear that both men were hiding secrets. It was essential to develop a sense of claustrophobia and they did this well but despite good characterisation the pace was allowed to drop at times. Also, the sound effects for the thunder and later were too intrusive and should have been faded down.

The post-show entertainment took the form of one of Tom Gibson's famous quizzes which was thoroughly and noisily appreciated. The winners were a group from Northern Division.

Saturday 6th May

The final evening kicked off with **Leslie ADC** in **'Close to Croydon'** by Gillian Plowman. The curtain opened to the sound of a horrific train crash before the lights came up on a couple in the wreckage. The relationship between the two characters ranged through confusion and fear to hostility until a mutual sympathy emerged with the man dying just as help arrived. The final play of the Festival, **'Happy Jack'** by John Godber, was presented by **88**

Theatre. The set was a simple one with a clothes horse and a hat stand upstage both holding a variety garments, and two wooden chairs down stage. From this simple setting the two actors wove the story of a Yorkshire miner Jack and his wife Liz, recreating the highs and lows of their marriage. The play featured a rapid succession of short scenes, visits to the cinema, holidays in Blackpool, birth and death and a hilarious bath scene.

Trophy winners
Bon Accord, Palace Players,
Kirkintilloch & 88 Theatre



In her adjudication of **'Close to Croydon'** Jennifer Scott-Reid was impressed by the set and the lighting which helped to create the sense of claustrophobia which was essential to the play. The cast handled this well giving sensitive and believable interpretations. In her adjudication of **'Happy Jack'** she praised the cast on the effortless way in which they switched from scene to scene without losing pace. Sound and light were very appropriate and enhanced the action. They played extremely well together

bringing out the highs and lows of a marriage. She congratulated them on their performance.

Following what must have been the longest raffle of recent years the audience settled back to await the final result. The day was Coronation Day after all, and everyone was keen to know who would win the crown of the One Act Festival. After the usual, and very well deserved thanks to all Margaret Allan was invited to present the awards.

First came the awards from outwith the Festival; The Dunmore Trophy for best poster went to St Serf's Drama Club for **'Wife After Death'** and The Scott Salver for the best original script went once more to Alan Richardson for **'Everybody's Dying To Meet You'**. Then it was on to the awards for the Final. The Grampian Television Trophy for stage presentation went to Palace Players for **A Sequence of Events**, The David Baxter Salver for third place and The Donald Farmer Trophy for best theatrical moment were won by Bon Accord Players for **'Zoo Story'**. The Jim Porteous Trophy for second place went to 88 Theatre for **'Happy Jack'** while Kirkintilloch Players not only won The Glen McKemmie Trophy for

Scottish Life and Character and The Connie Fisher Trophy for highest marks in direction but took the Wheatley Tassie for first place with **'The Beaches of St Valery'** and will go on to represent Scotland in the British Final in Belfast.

National Chairman Carolyn then wound up the Festival by inviting us to support Kikintilloch at the British Final in Belfast.

Iain McEwan
Photos by Tony Flisch

Rising from the Ashes

Like many other drama clubs in the UK the Stornoway Thespians were adversely affected by the pandemic. However in true theatrical style we decided that 'The Show Must Go On.'

Meetings resumed in January with our thriving youth group leading the way.

We decided to apply for charitable status for which we needed to change the club's name. We emailed members asking for suggestions and after a vote Phoenix Theatre was chosen. By September we were ready to apply and

two months later we were thrilled to hear that our application had been successful.

In June and December the juniors put on two productions for parents: our studio can seat thirty.

We have increased our membership partly by spending two days talking to students at the UHI Fresher's Fayre as well as placing an article in the local newspaper. When our studio is not required for rehearsals we offer a monthly club night where members can focus on different acting/design skills.

This year we decided to enter the SCDA one act festival. Our district round had to be cancelled so we went straight through to the divisional finals. To remind myself of the standard required at divisional finals I watched the performances in Nairn. It was a great festival but it left me, as director, feeling nervous.

However we had a great time in Thurso thanks to Alan Gerrard and his team who made us so welcome. Despite a minor technical hiccup with sound my actors did stunningly well and we were pleased with our performance. The audience were very supportive and complimentary although we knew it was what the adjudicator thought that really counted. We were fortunate to have the lovely Ben Humphries who gave us excellent feedback.

The marks of the top scoring clubs were very close and we just missed out on going through to the next round. I think we can be proud of coming third.

The plan now is for our youth group to stage a production in June, the seniors a pantomime in December and a return to the SCDA one act festival in 2024.

Onwards and Upwards !

Lily Hothersall
Phoenix Theatre



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Goodbye to old friends

Gilbert Price



Born in 1941 in Kirkcaldy and brought up in Perth, as a son of the Manse, Gilbert graduated at St Andrews University in Physics. His love of Africa was ignited following graduation when he moved to Tanzania to teach.

After marrying Anna in 1967, they moved to Africa to teach in Swaziland before moving to Aberfeldy in 1970 and immediately got involved in the Drama Club that Anna had been instrumental in re-starting.

He performed on stage for a number of productions, but his real calling was as a director, with his first production being the *'Happiest Days of Your Life'* in 1980. He was instrumental in Aberfeldy winning the first of many trophies when *'Dick Whittington'* won the Dore Jackson, which was awarded for a full-length Christmas production.

Gilbert loved the SCDA Festival, and always enjoyed meeting up with friends and rivals from all over Scotland. He spent many years on the Perthshire District committee, latterly as Honorary President and chaired the Northern Division for many years.

Entering the Festival for the first time in 1980, he guided Aberfeldy quite quickly to the Scottish Final in 1983 with *'What Every Woman Knows'* coming third. In all, Gilbert's leadership took Aberfeldy DC to eight Scottish Finals over a 40 year period, which is impressive, considering the number of great clubs that compete in the Northern Division.

When selecting a play to produce, Gilbert was heavily influenced by three themes. Firstly, he strongly believed in giving everyone who wanted to perform the chance to do so, and this was of greater importance than winning. Secondly, he loved Scot's prose and was always drawn to a strong Scottish play by the likes of Joe Corrie or George Mackay Brown. Finally, he was never intimidated by a writer, and instead enjoyed being stretched and stretching the cast. Gilbert's highlight with the Festival was winning the Wheatley Tassie with *'Ring Road'* and being placed as runners-up in the British Final in Belfast.

He was technically very gifted, and was the lighting guru for the Perthshire District Festival for many years and operated the tech for Anna when she toured Scotland with Splinter Productions.

The nurturing of young people was extremely important to Gilbert, and he was an enthusiastic supporter of the Youth Festival. Countless numbers of Drama Club members and Breadalbane Academy pupils have benefitted from being given the chance to act by him, with more than a few now working in the dramatic arts.

He was inventive with set design and despite never building anything to last much longer than a few performances, much of the scenery in the club is still being used decades later, much to his amusement.

If anyone spent some time in his company, it would become quickly obvious that he was a 'Lad o' Parts', being extremely interested in ornithology, nature and hill walking, collecting stamps and the history of Scotland.

Survived by Anna and three children: Calum, who has followed his father into teaching; Shonagh who is a professional actor and Gavin, who along with being a successful businessman, has enjoyed a career in football and is the manager of Elgin City FC. Gilbert will be greatly missed.

David Roy

Margaret Beaton



In December we lost another of our long serving members, Margaret Beaton of Forfar Dramatic Society.

Margaret joined Forfar Dramatic Society in 1964 and her last performance was in *Its Wonderful Life* in 2013. Throughout that period, she was active in all aspects of the Society's life and work serving as Society President from 1979-1981 and was appointed Honorary Life president in 2005. She also contributed behind the scenes as director prompt and stage crew.

Margaret was passionate about the theatre and a great supporter of the Scottish Community Drama Association, regularly attending all their festivals and encouraging Forfar to take an active role in the wider amateur theatre community. She was delighted to be part of Forfar's

production of *Sunset Song* which reached the Scottish Final in Inverness in 2000.

These are just facts, and they will never convey the breadth and depth of Margaret's contribution to both Forfar Dramatic Society and SCDA. She was a valued friend and colleague for over 50 years, and we were all privileged to have known her and shared in her passion for theatre.

Drew Barnett

David Muncey

It was with great sadness we heard of the death of David Muncey in December at the age of 83. He had been in indifferent health for some time.



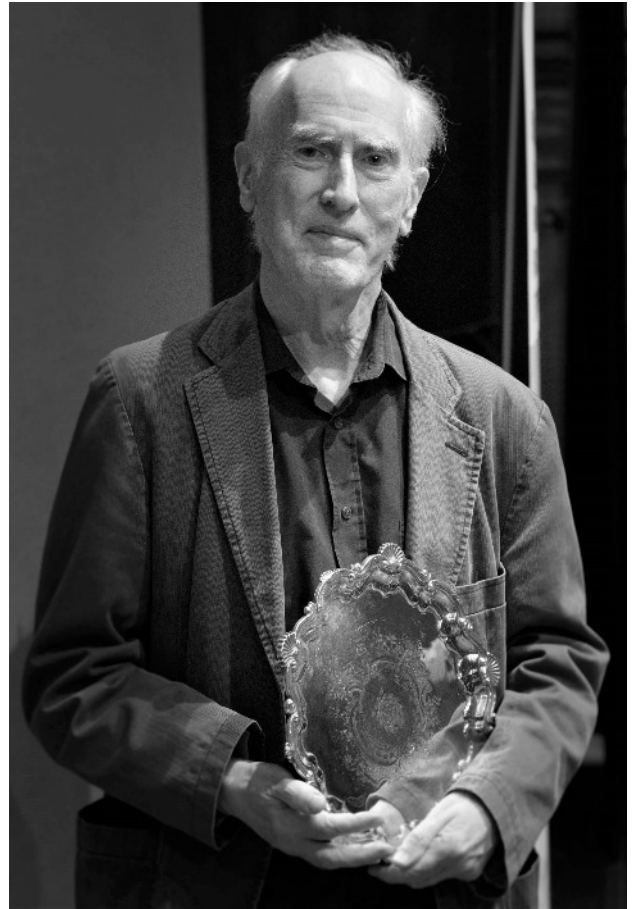
Born in Kent his early years were spent with the Battle of Britain raging overhead but he spent most of his life in Kirkcaldy. David was a giant of the Fife stage having been involved with Kirkcaldy Dramatic Society and Kirkcaldy Gilbert & Sullivan Society along with the Auld Kirk Players and as a past Chairman of Fife District SCDA.

David was a good actor, versatile to cope with both drama and comedy. He had an infectious enthusiasm and did a great deal to encourage youngsters and newcomers. He had a particularly good ability to rescue many an actor who had forgotten a line by 'feeding' him or her the right one!

As an administrator he was invariably tactful and reassuring, able to defuse difficult situations and able to do all with a smile on his face. He was a total gentleman and will be missed.

David Potter

Scott Salver Winner



The winner of this year's Scott Salver competition for the best original play in the One-Act Festival was Alan Richardson with *'Everybody's Dying to Meet You'* which was performed by St Kentigern's Youth in the Edinburgh District Festival.

Disappointingly, there were only five plays entered this year and we would encourage clubs to support new writing when choosing their plays for 2024.

MONOLOGUE

Our National Monologue Competition is returning for the third year. We have decided to continue with the same format as last year, having the winners of both competitions determined by professional judges.

Following a few changes last year we have kept the rules the same as they were. The only change is that the entry date is now the **31st of August**, giving you a little bit longer to find your best angle and perfect your pauses.

Our intention moving forward is that the end of August will become the closing date in perpetuity as we look to make the competition a part of the regular calendar. Once again we will be inviting the winners to perform or screen their monologues at our National AGM in November, where they will also be presented with the trophies. Good luck to everyone planning to enter, we can't wait to see what you come up with this year!

Lee Dunn

Frae Strichen to Hollywood

Paula Gibson interviews the playwright and author Mike Gibb.

Many of you will remember and maybe have been lucky enough to see Bill Bryden's epic WW1 production of *'The Big Picnic'* set in Harland and Wolff's Shed in Govan back in 1994, starring such theatrical luminaries as Jimmy Logan and Dave Anderson. It was there in the afternoon on Armistice Day that Mike Gibb got the inspiration to start writing... seriously. He had always written articles for magazines like the US review publication *'Showmusic'* but this community play was to be the catalyst for Mike's impressive portfolio. To date he has written 5 plays, 8 musicals and 15 books.

Mike has sourced his material from some of Scotland's most iconic events, people and locations. From tragedies, like the Tay bridge disaster and Piper Alpha, he is not scared to tackle some fairly meaty topics. Robert Burns' famous affair with Nancy McLehose inspired the musical



'Clarinda' and the fascinating life of Mary Slessor the highly acclaimed production *'Mother of All The People'*.

All of his productions have toured Scotland with both professional and community casts but the latter is Mike's go-to as a rule. He loves working with local talent. His favourite theatre, he tells me, is Dundee Rep and he recollects what he said was his most memorable night at that venue. On his way upstairs to the auditorium on the opening night of the Slessor play, he glanced out the window to see a stream of coaches parked outside packed with ladies from the WI from all over Angus and beyond! He was later invited to talk at their annual conference in the Caird Hall where he nervously stepped on stage and introduced himself with a 'Good morning', and 2000 voices said 'Good morning!' back, setting him quite at ease. All the money raised at the many tours and performances of *'Mother of all the People'* went straight to the Mary Slessor Foundation. Neither cast nor playwright taking a fee. A not insubstantial sum of £70,000 was raised. Quite an achievement!

He has had the good fortune to write with Diana Gabaldon of *'Outlander'* fame. He, in fact held the first rights and with the author presented the fully developed script and CD to Creative Scotland where it was turned down! Big mistake! He also worked closely with the late lamented and so, so talented Michael Mara. Sadly, Michael died before the piece was completed and therefore remains unfinished.

One of the plays that Mike is particularly proud of and would suit our SCDA groups perfectly is *'Doorways to Drumorty'* and thereby hangs a fascinating tale. The lady who wrote it achieved some notoriety both in Scotland and in the US.

Lorna Moon was a girl born and brought up in the Aberdeenshire village of Strichen who, by her early thirties was one of the most highly paid screenwriters in Hollywood. She went there after receiving a tongue-in-cheek invitation from Cecil B. DeMille responding to a scathing review she had given his latest movie! Lorna went on to write for many of the great stars of the day like Greta Garbo, Gloria Swanson and Lon Chaney Jnr.

She also wrote a series of short stories set in the imaginary North East Scotland village of Drumorty, a thinly disguised Strichen, published as a book titled *'Doorways in Drumorty'*. The book was warmly greeted everywhere, especially in America with one exception and ironically, Strichen!! Although Moon had changed all the names locals recognised themselves in the stories and were not best pleased, so much so that the book was banned in Strichen for 52 years. These north-east folk have long memories!



Mike was so impressed with Lorna's writing that he combined several of the stories into the stage play. Aberdeen based theatre company RedRag took it on a limited tour, culminating in a sell-out performance in Dundee Rep in 2010. They were so enthused by the acclaim the play received they staged a more extensive tour the following year, charming audiences the length and breadth of Scotland. The play is on the whole a comedy but has some very poignant and sad threads running through it.

In 2019 the Edinburgh based company, Awkward Stranger took it on a highly successful 20 date tour and with the financial help of the Doric Board and Cumbernauld Theatre, produced a film and an abridged version of the stage play available on DVD.

The 50-minute adaptation is now being made available to amateur companies. It contains 12 separate characters, (8F,4M), but is hugely flexible in its casting; for financial reasons the touring company had a cast of three but this engaging play would be ideal for a larger community cast.

If any amateur company would like to learn more about the play or would like a reading copy of the script or a DVD of the film version Mike would be more than happy to supply same.

As already mentioned, Mike has a huge number of publications on offer and given the we are not just about our one act festival, (although jewel in our theatrical crown it undoubtedly is), our members regularly produce full length plays, musical plays and musicals. I have seen both 'Mother of all the People', and the very sensitively written 'Five Pounds and Twa Bairns' about the Tay Bridge Disaster. Fabulous productions, both and come highly recommended.

An Aberdeen loon, Mike gave up his day job some 20 years ago to concentrate on writing plays full time. He is fascinated by stories old and new, the history of Scotland and his beloved Dunfermline FC.

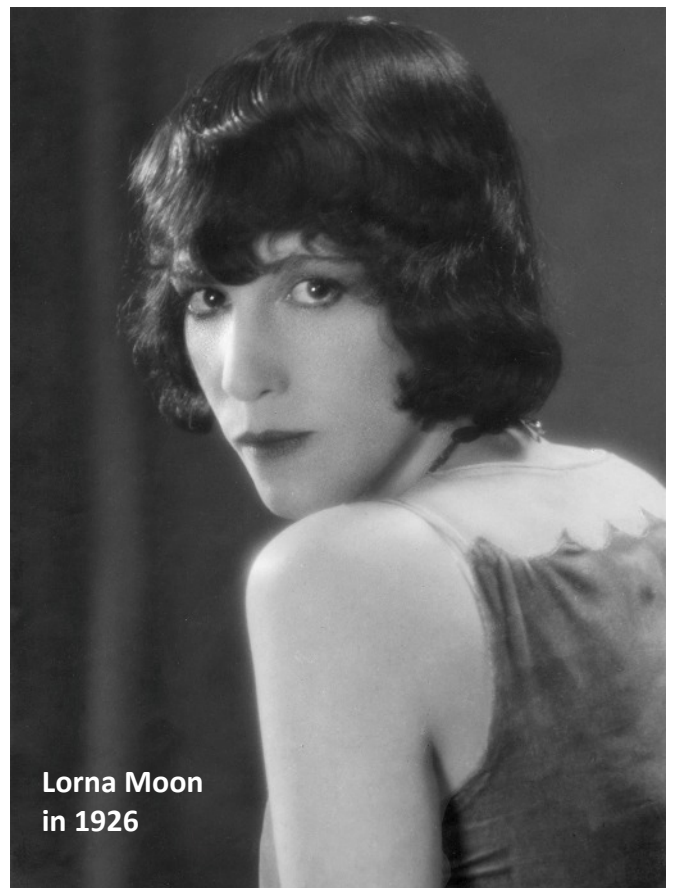
I asked Mike to sum up his sources and his life as a writer and any hints and tips for aspiring creatives.

'The secret is engagement with your audience. You have always got to have an affinity with your characters and to be able to identify with them. In my case my sources are always Scottish and interestingly for me I am more inclined to write about women, as evident in Clarinda, and the Slessor and Tay Bridge plays, where the focus is predominately on the incredible strength shown by the key characters.'

Final words from Mike; *'To some extent you have to make some of your own luck. You canna just sit there and wait for people to come to you. I have had a great life doing what I love most. I have been extraordinarily fortunate'*

If you would like to follow-up on script ideas, contact Mike at Hame Productions.

Mikegibb32@outlook.com or 07903 463163.



Leslie Town Hall - the project continues

Since the initial article in Scene in 2022, we finally got the keys for Leslie Town Hall on 28th October. A mere seven months after our offer was accepted! It was seven months of watching and waiting, planning...endless planning. The first order of business was to remove the pesky 'For Sale - Back on the Market' sign that had been confusing residents of Leslie for months. If we had a pound for every time someone asked us if the sale had fallen through, we could have the hall fully refurbished by now.

The first few weeks since having the keys were spent by Mark trying to corral tradespersons to help with restoring electricity and heating into the building. Some of the copper pipework had been stolen from the building, since it had been closed in 2016 along with other essential elements and some of the wiring had even confounded Barry, our friend and Electrician extraordinaire.

The front windows of the hall were lit in red in respect of Armistice Day in November and some members of the club attended the parade along the high street.

After what seemed like an age Leslie ADC were finally able to hold their first rehearsal for their next full-length play 'A Bunch of Amateurs' by Ian Hislop and Nick Newman, on the stage in Leslie Town Hall. We had no heating and had to make sure we'd all been to the toilet before we came to rehearsal, but it was a momentous occasion indeed. The play deals with an Amateur Drama Club trying to save their local theatre, coincidence? You be the judge!

The windows were also decorated with lit Christmas Trees and presents showing the gifts that would be shared with Leslie once the hall was open. The gifts of Theatre, Music, Dance, Drama, and Comedy to name but a few.



After Christmas, work continued on the hall, and meetings and rehearsals became warmer as heating was restored to the building. Sets for the 2023 SCDA One Act Play Festival began to be constructed and the luxury of being able to rehearse on a set before it's in performance was much appreciated by all three of the Leslie ADC casts. We were also very grateful to be able to hold a dress rehearsal of all three plays for our casts in one night the week before the Festival. Definitely a luxury we could get used to.

After a very successful Fife District Festival in which Leslie ADC received first and second place (along with a joint audience appreciation award, as the votes were a dead heat) an application was made to Fife Council for an Entertainments Licence to allow us to hire the hall to other companies and groups. A statutory notice had to be displayed at the Hall for a minimum of three weeks before the licence could be processed, and at the time of writing the Licence is still in process, although we are hopeful it will be granted soon.

The boarding was removed from the front and side windows in the early spring to allow the sun to flood into the building, and with the help of a handy scaffold tower the lovely red curtains at the windows have been rehung where they had come off their rails all of this adding to the much smarter appearance of the building going forward.

Diane White

1000 years of Scottish History in 60 minutes

Many of you will know of Bob Davidson, he's a 'weel kent face' in Perthshire District, and has written many plays over the years, including some who have won the Scott Salver, come runner up in the Scott Salver and Geoffrey Whitworth Competition and who have won through at various rounds of the Festival.

Anyone who knows Bob's plays are aware of his skill with the written and spoken word, how well he blends gentle humour with comedy but underwriting it all there are important, political and social themes. His plays are funny, thought provoking and poignant.

Always on the lookout for new plays to watch and evenings of entertainment I was immediately drawn to a poster shared by some of our SCDA clubs and members for an evening at Dalguise Village Hall, near Dunkeld, and a production entitled '1000 years in 60 minutes' which was further advertised as a musical history of Scotland. Well that was me, hooked, what better than an hour of Scottish History – once a geek always a geek!

So my Dad and I decide to head over. Word of advice, if you get the chance ot go to see this book ahead! We nearly didn't get in as the event was sold out but we managed to get the last two seats.



Bob Davidson

The show was, quite frankly, fab-u-lous! Each hilarious, and often poignant and thought-provoking song was linked together with chat and background from Bob.

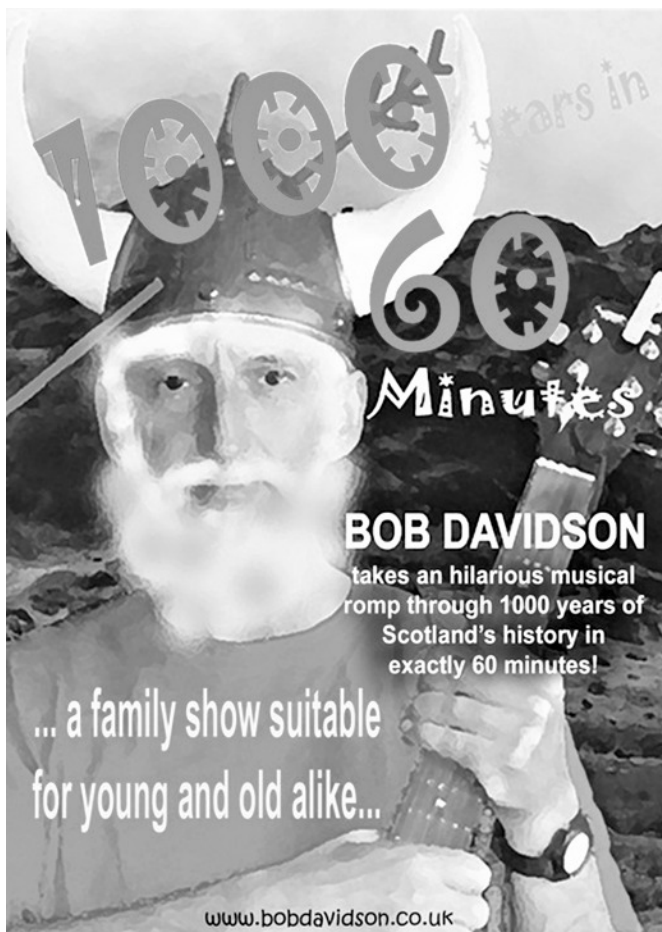
The music was fun, catchy and the lyrics clever, funny and extremely well-constructed. The level of the humour means that this show is suitable for all ages, something that can sometimes be hard to find, and in my mind, there is no better way to introduce kids to Scottish History than with something they find fun and entertaining.

We travelled from the Viking invaders, through the dark ages and into the royal realms of several noteworthy Scottish Royals, including Robert the Bruce and Queen Margaret. Through Civil Wars, the Highland Clearances and the devastation WW1 and WW2. The songs brought to the front the fact that humanity never seem to learn and keep repeating the same atrocities under different guises.

Before you knew it, we had all travelled 1000 years through history, listening to a very accomplished singer songwriter, and we ended up right back in the present with an encore telling us the story of a Perth Street Sweeper and his bottle of cola!

We left, with aching sides from laughing, tinged with sadness, but without doubt feeling we had just witnessed genius writing and performance from Bob Davidson! Get along as see it if ever you can but for those too far away, head to Bob's website www.bobdavidson.weebly.com where you can find out all about his plays but even better find the link to a recorded performance of '1000 years in 60 minutes' – well worth an hour of anyone's time.

Pam Howat





After all the stress and competition of the Scottish Final, it was great to head for Killin the following weekend for the simple fun of the annual Komey festival. Arriving at 7.15pm, the Maclaren Hall was simply buzzing with anticipation. The lovely, relaxed atmosphere made sure we were all going to have a wonderful evening.

Gordon Hibbert welcomed everyone with his usual style and flair. First on the programme was the Killin Drama Club youth section with *'Round the World with Class Six'* by Nick Warburton. The young cast set about their play with enthusiasm and gusto. This is their entry for the Youth Final in Nairn on 17th June, and we wish them well.

Next followed a sketch by Glenda Mardon and her daughter Myrica. A hilarious cooking sketch using all Scottish Town and village names.

Dollar Drama Club's contribution was next with a 45-minute monologue by David Anderson, *'I'm on a train'*. This brilliant actor had us all in stitches as on a long train journey to Edinburgh he tried to save his window cleaning business, stop a colleague jumping out of an eight-story building, try to stop his wife interfering and take phone call after phone call of impending doom! Arriving eventually in Edinburgh he finds his wife has now left him for his business partner and he has completely lost everything. Quite a tour de force was Mr Anderson!!

Perth Drama followed with the first of many little sketches. Catriona Prodger, Andrew Illsley, Megan Illsley, Neall Robertson, Indigo Goodwin, Modrieanne McCullie, Elizabeth Westall and Jaimie Rae gave us various hilarious situations. The one that sticks in the mind was various renditions of children's fairy tales. The tales were narrated, modernised and the characters mimed the events, *Red Riding Hood*, (where the wolf looked more like a badger), the *Emperor's New Clothes*, (he wasn't naked he was just adopting his own life style), *The Three Little Pigs*, (using eco housing of course) all played out with great fun.

Dollar drama did a very funny comedy sketch called *'Look Away Now'* with the National Committee's very own Stephen Lambert taking the central role along with John

Biggam and Linda Rice. The three were on a plane listening to Sandra Ballantine making the steward announcements. Full of sexual innuendo and silliness, Stephen's facial expression had the audience in tears.

In between sketches, Gordon auctioned off some lovely prizes, bottle of gin, tickets to Pitlochry Theatre, spa products and many more. There was also the usual raffle, all in aid of our very own SCDA. Glenda Mardon had provided a really lovely buffet which was a perfect ending to the evening, what a treat and there was another night to come.

Saturday was a beautifully sunny day and most of use just lazed around in the sun reading and drinking the odd beer. The first performance that evening was *'The 39 Steps'*, abridged version by Killin Drama Club. It opened with Glenda as Mr Memory and along with Claire Rudd got the show off to a good start. Of course, Richard Hannah was played by Gordon Hibbert and as usual took to the stage like a pro. There were lots of brilliant snippets in this production notably the death of Kerry Van de Coterlet, which was quite spectacular and Gordon getting himself out from under her quite remarkable! (You really had to be there!!) They even had a plane flying round the hall (courtesy of Martin Butler with a gobo). Some great touches with sheep, a train roof top chase and genuine slapstick comedy. Myrica Reid was the fifth member of this small but talented cast who all tackled the multiple characters with gusto.

Following that Moreen Lickrish, Deborah Douglas and Anne Marchant from Riverside Drama Club performed *'That Old Black Magic'* a short comedy where a drunk magician falls asleep in his magic box and ends up being sawn in half by his wife. Leslie Drama Club's Janet Phillip gave us a couple of good monologues and Catriona and Neal from Perth Drama were in search of a good joke!

Once again Glenda had produced a lovely supper and it was agreed by all that this once again had been a great weekend. Thanks have to go to Killin Drama Club's many members for making it such fun.

Morna Barron



Riverside Drama



Perth Drama



Killin



Killin Youth

Pictures by Josh Douglas



Perth Drama

One-Act Final in Stirling



Leslie ADC

'Close to Croydon'



88 Theatre

'Happy Jack'



Bowhouse Drama

'The Sociable Plover'



Photos by
Tony Flisch