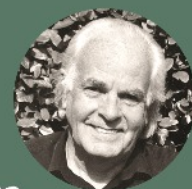


Summer 2024

scene



the magazine of
Scottish Community Drama



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SCENE No.176

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

Scottish Charity No. 021397

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Scene magazine

Copy date for next edition : 7th December

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

Largs Players' production of *'It's Behind You!'*,
winner of this year's Scottish Finals.

Photo by **Tony Flisch**



Chairman's chat

This year's extended festival season has now completely concluded, and it was marvellous to see the Scottish, Scottish Youth and the British Final so well attended. I am sure that all the competing teams felt very well supported by the large appreciative audiences and there was a super warm atmosphere at each of our finals.

It was a great honour to host the British Final in Scotland last month during which SCDA was complimented on the great sense of community spirit present. We should be extremely proud of that supportive spirit at our festivals and never take it for granted. Teams are much more likely to participate in our drama festivals where they feel valued and included.

I believe we can achieve so much more as an organisation by working collaboratively, both within our own association and with similar external partners. It's always beneficial to have fresh ideas on our committees so, as we approach AGM season, please consider coming on board to keep SCDA going from strength to strength.

Many of us are currently enjoying a well earned break prior to starting rehearsals for autumn productions. Please remember our Monologue competition is open until the end of August and it would be fabulous to see lots of new entries this year for both the writing and performance categories. The creativity in the last few years has been nothing short of inspirational so why not have a go yourself?

A reminder also that SCENE is your magazine so please send us your articles and news so we can let everyone know what you're doing! Enjoy what's left of the summer!

Carolyn

Welcome

to new Individual members

Vera Copland	Orkney / Northern
Lorraine Giles	Orkney / Northern
Susan Stewart	Borders / Eastern
Josh Douglas	Stirling / Eastern
Clare Rudd	Stirling / Eastern
Elizabeth Stevens	Stirling / Eastern
Susan Fraser	Stirling / Eastern
Kerrie van De Coterlet	Stirling / Eastern
Ruri Gordon	Moray Firth / Highland
Jackie Westerman	Argyll Kintyre / Western
Ian Thomas	HQ

to new Club members

EKO	Glasgow / Western
Sunflower Productions	Inverclyde / Western
Largs Youth Club	Ayrshire / Western
Drumchapel Amateur Panto Group	Glasgow / Western
Curtains up	Perthshire / Northern
Aberfeldy Youth	Perthshire / Northern
Move Orkney Studio	Orkney / Northern
Kaimhill Adult D C	Aberdeen / Northern
Compagnia Artistica Gaudeamus	Aberdeen / Northern

to new Life member

Verna Ward	Aberdeen / Northern
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Thanks to our Patrons for their continued support.

Scene

We are sorry that this is the first Scene magazine since Autumn 2023. This has been because it has become extremely difficult to get clubs and Individuals to send in copy and photos. We didn't have enough copy or festival information to produce a Spring issue with the usual festival diary.

With our new media team producing regular information on facebook, along with the monthly newsletter, Scene has rather been forgotten. We would like to continue with regular issues but we need volunteers to provide more interesting articles and willing to act as regional reporters. If you are interested in helping out, or have views on how Scene could be improved, please contact scene@drama.scot.

The Executive will be looking at the future of the magazine and where it sits in amongst the various ways that the Association communicates with our members and the wider public.

Script library

With the end of our lease at Summerhall, we are delighted to report that our 4-month hunt for a new home for the script library has reached a successful conclusion. We have agreed terms to occupy an office in Stirling.

The modern office space is being offered to us, rent-free, by a company that works with charities and the owners of empty office buildings. SCDA will pay a share of lighting and heating costs and we believe it provides an excellent space at an affordable price for this amazing resource. Volunteers have already packaged up the 25,000 scripts at Summerhall, ready for removal. The accessible location, just off the M9, and large space available has stirred hopes of re-establishing the library over the coming months, with extended opening hours and a far more spacious layout.

Moving the library from Edinburgh marks the end of an era, and we will be forever grateful to Douglas Currie, Susan Hampson (nee Wales) and Alison McCallum for their tireless work over many years, ably supported by a handful of others.

How to use radio mics

September 2022, the Stranraer Drama Club Committee asked me to find someone to come and give advice on the effective use of radio mics. This is a field that has become essential to us as we stage two shows a year that involve the use of this equipment.

I approached Carole the SCDA National Drama Advisor and she recommended Neal Clark who was also one of the youth summer school tutors. This was followed up with a 'Zoom Meeting' between Neal and myself, to chat about our requirements. Unfortunately, because of our commitments around Christmas and the New Year (Panto and SCDA One Act Festival) there was a bit of delay before the workshop. We were finally able to find a date that suited everyone - Sunday 23rd April 2023.

On the Monday prior to Neal's visit, we had another 'Zoom Meeting' to go over what we wished him to do. I suggested that we break into two different sessions: the first morning we would deal with the more technical side of sound, look at our equipment and make suggestions for improvement. The afternoon session we would talk about what the less technically interested members wanted from sound within our Club.

The day before the workshop, we set up our sound equipment into the 'show set-up'. This meant that Neal

could see what we used and how. Neal arrived the evening before and we put him into a hotel. That enabled three of our Committee to have dinner with him and discuss the workshop in person as well as a lot of Club banter.

The day arrived and a small number of 'sound people' met with Neal and myself. I explained a problem we had encountered with a batch of new radio mics that we had purchased late in 2022. We were experiencing 'drop out' for no explained reason. With our assistance, he then dismantled the set-up from the case that they were in. He reassembled them in a neat fashion showing us the best way to do this. When he tested the system he discovered an issue and a fault. The issue was that we must make sure that radio transmitters are not hidden under layers of clothes as this can disrupt the signal. He also discovered that one of the wireless receivers was faulty (fortunately this is still within warranty). He gave us various hints and suggestions on a lot of things such as the types of tape to use in fixing mics to the face. Everybody felt it had been a very useful morning.

In the afternoon we had asked Club members, especially producers, to come along to understand the problems that need to be solved with every production. We had a

good turnout and Neal explained that he had gone into this profession having come through an SCDA Club so he had a good understanding of community drama. He explained why we need to have a Soundman backstage for all productions when we use microphones. He then invited questions and after a hesitant start it soon developed into a really good Q&A session.

We cleared all our equipment out of the theatre and back into our Club Rooms before dropping Neal at the station for his train back home.

We all feel this has been a very useful day's event and something other Clubs would find useful. Unfortunately, many in amateur drama do not see or understand what goes on backstage. One thing Neal said was he felt that every actor should spend some time working backstage so that they can start to understand what is required to put a show on the stage and I completely agree with that sentiment.

Eric Wesencraft
Stranraer Drama Club



What does Carole really do?

As I travel around visiting clubs to deliver workshops, attend festivals or speak at the AGM, I meet people who often ask me the same question 'What is your actual job'? On the face of it that seems like a very reasonable question but not always easy to answer as my job is so varied. Here is an attempt to demystify things.

My priority is to support you from an artistic perspective. The main way that I do that is to deliver in person workshops locally upon request from a member club. Some clubs would like to host a workshop but don't always know what to ask for so I have a menu of typical generic workshops available on the website that can be requested, and I will try to get as much information as I can when I get a booking to tailor these to the specific needs of a club. I have quite a few regulars who request return visits each year so I start to get a good feel for what will be most useful and with many of these clubs I feel like a honorary member. I tend to stay with a host rather than in a hotel or b&b so we get lots of time to talk about the passion we share - live theatre. I do everything I can to keep costs as low as possible and welcome new requests - if you are a small club how about advertising to non-members you never know, you might recruit some new people. You could also team up with a nearby club to run something jointly?

When I am not on the road one of the things I do is create content for the website in the form of Guides. The subjects range from use of weapons on stage to how to choose a play. I try to provide some simple tips as well as links to other resources that you might find useful. I have also recently created a new section for youth with lots of ideas for games and exercises and if

you don't have a youth section it still might be worth checking them out for some rehearsal tips. All of these resources are free to members and I would welcome your suggestions on subjects to cover. If there is something you are struggling with the chances are someone else is too.

With limited time available it just isn't possible to visit every club in Scotland and I am always looking for ways to provide accessible ways for you to have access to help. One of these services is supporting directors with live productions. You can send me your questions or challenges and request a call back or online meeting with me. You can even invite me into your rehearsal room in person or virtually and we can meet afterwards to problem solve together. I am not saying that I have the answers to every problem, but it can be useful having someone to talk things through with who is not directly involved with the production. I am your cheerleader and your coach rolled into one.



Sometimes I will create and produce national project such as the youth summer school 2023 which was created based on feedback from members. We will be offering something similar for adults towards the end of 2024.

Finally, I use every opportunity I can to advocate for community drama on a national level linking in with

organisations such as Culture Counts and Creative Lives who carry out lobbying to ensure that your voice is heard. I will usually post things on social media or the e-newsletter asking for opinions or directing you to ways that you can get involved in this. I keep abreast of changes to legislation that may impact you and make sure that you have the information you need to work safely so that you can enjoy your creative endeavours - this saves you having to research things yourself. I am also on a mission to bust the jargon and tackle the bureaucracy that is such a barrier to understanding what we all need to do.

You will see there is an absence of reference to the one-act Play festival in my job description. My usual involvement in the festival is as an appreciative member of the audience and if any individual club asks me for advice, I am more than happy to help, but my role is to provide year round support for all SCDA members and it is one of the key benefits of joining SCDA.

So, that's an attempt to explain what I actually do. It's never a dull moment and I love my job but it would be even better if more people used my services. It's such a shame when a member of SCDA will tell me retrospectively about something they were struggling with but they never thought to get in touch with me at the time. My advice to you is just drop me an email - if I don't know the answer I will do my best to find someone who can help you.

It's 13 years since I joined SCDA and I love being your National Drama Advisor, let's make this the year that we connect and I'll do my best to help you in any way.

Carole Williams
nda@drama.scot

Edinburgh Graduate Theatre Group (EGTG), will celebrate 70 years of producing theatre in 2024. They plan a bumper season of theatrical productions, drama workshops, and more.

EGTG was first started in 1954 by alumni of the Edinburgh University Dramatic Society, and has gone on to become one of Edinburgh's most respected amateur theatre companies, presenting a versatile catalogue of challenging contemporary work through to crowd-pleasing classics. In 2024 the group will celebrate its 70th anniversary with the staging of six plays and an exciting calendar of events to run throughout the year.

EGTG kicks off its season at the SCDA One Act Festival with Martin Foreman's ***Taiwan***, directed by Claire Morand. It's a question of survival. Welcome to Scotland in the near future, where all that could go wrong has gone wrong. As society collapses around them, two women confront each other in a remote country house. How far will each of them go to survive? *Taiwan* will receive its UK premiere at the Edinburgh district's SCDA One Act Festival at the Church Hill Theatre in February 2024.

Later in the spring, EGTG presents the contemporary provocative drama ***The Fastest Clock in the Universe*** by Philip Ridley, directed by Abbye Eva (*Pool (no Water)*). Party preparations are underway for Cougar's thirteenth 18th birthday. Everything is meticulously planned; there's a very exclusive guest list, a delicious cake and a very sharp knife. Ridley's multi-award-winning play caused a sensation when it premiered at Hampstead Theatre in 1992. A



drama about ageing, love and delusion, this is a tense show set in a dilapidated room above an abandoned factory that happens to be filled with avian antiques.

EGTG will present two plays at the Edinburgh Fringe 2024, the first of which will be the oft-overlooked ***The Ruffian on the Stair*** by Joe Orton directed by EGTG newcomer Robert Wylie. First broadcast on BBC Radio in 1964, *The Ruffian on the Stair* is a one-act portrayal of a working class couple living in London, whose lives are intruded upon and disrupted by a mysterious young man who is seeking assistance to exact a very idiosyncratic revenge.

Also at the Fringe, EGTG will present the UK premiere of ***A Singular Deception***, written and directed by Hilary Spiers (*Bloody Wimmin', Shakers*). Developed in 2017 with support from Arts Council England, *A Singular Deception* tells the astonishing story of Margaret Ann Buckley, who masqueraded as Dr James Barry for nearly 50 years and rose to the highest medical rank in the British Army. A shocking flirt, skilled swordswoman and horsewoman, a social and medical reformer, who transformed the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, leprosy and mental illness, she was the first doctor to carry out a Caesarean where both mother and child survived. In this new work, Dr Barry and her faithful manservant Black John bring her extraordinary history to vivid life.

Following his writing credit earlier in the year, Martin Foreman (*The Satyricon, Hay Fever*) will direct ***Dangerous Corner*** by J.B. Priestley in the autumn. When the directors of a small publishing company together with family and guests relax after dinner, conversation turns to the suicide of one of their number a year ago. As the evening progresses and secrets are gradually revealed, one question must be answered: Why did Martin Caplan die?

To close the year, EGTG returns to its roots with a large ensemble play to celebrate the festive season. Written by cmfwood and co-directed by Hannah Bradley Croall and Claire Wood, ***baba is a sparkly frolic*** through the legend of Baba Yaga. Hidden deep within the forest in a hut atop a pair of moving chicken legs, Baba Yaga is a mysterious character from Slavic Folklore. At times fearsome and ferocious, at times a kindly old woman determined to aid heroes in their quest, *baba* explores the treatment and mistreatment of women throughout the ages.

Away from the stage EGTG will run a series of events celebrating 70 years of theatre in Edinburgh, including a series of devising workshops, an exhibition, and more.

Stay up to date with all of EGTG's platinum plans at theegtg.com and sign up to receive news updates.



Celebrating 90 dramatic

In 1933, Kennedy Stewart (or K.S. as he was known) came to Wick from the BBC and he seemed to have found us "Wickers" quite amusing. He felt that we lacked in all things cultural- no drama, no music, no art; so he decided to do something about it. K.S called a meeting and 'The Players' was born. The group went straight into rehearsals for their first production which is recorded as having been "a resounding failed attempt" with audiences leaving before the curtain coming down! It is regrettable that the name of this production was never recorded but from this failed attempt the group of newly born players began preparations for what would be their first official production-Arnold Ridley's *"The Ghost Train"*.

Over the early years, the club produced many plays and the players at the time had clearly improved their skills in theatre given that most events were well supported. In the 1950's pantomime was introduced to Caithness and a whole new dimension of theatre was opened up to The Players. Wick Bridge Street Church was in need of a new heating system, so the church members got together and performed the first panto Wick had ever seen... *"Cinderella"*. Following this success, a new group was formed- 'Wick Pantomime Society' who would go on to produce two or three pantomimes following their first attempt. Given that most of the Society's members were Players both organisations got together and agreed to merge together to create a new Wick Players, the club we know today. This was on the agreement that a pantomime would be staged every two years with a play or something alternative in between and this



arrangement has been in place ever since (well, except for the odd year or two!).

It's now 2024 and Wick Players are manifesting another fun-filled and successful year as we reflect on the club's 90th anniversary which was celebrated in 2023.

Throughout each year, Wick Players produce a variety of productions and the first event to kick off the year is always SCDA's One-Act Play Festival. Under the direction of club chairwoman, Jenny Szyfelbain, three of our talented actresses; Marney Bruce, Margaret Thomson and Jane Taylor took to the stage with a comedy sketch titled *"Spring Cleaning"*. The script for this play was discovered in our HQ at Moray Street Drama Centre and had clearly been adapted into our local dialect for the Caithness stage. It was originally thought that the script had been written by a late Wick Players stalwart, until an original copy of the script was brought to light.



years of Wick Players

It appeared that the play which was successful in reaching the Scottish Final had indeed been written by a well-known Scots author. We are proud as a club that such a small, comedic sketch progressed to compete at national level and this was down to the dedication and talent of the dedicated cast and production team

Festival time saw former club chairman and SCDA stalwart, Donald Farmer, presented with a gift and made Honorary President of SCDA's Highland Division. It's at this time we should mention Donald's love and commitment for drama and for his tireless efforts with SCDA and for his continued support with our entries in the festival.



From our trip to the Scottish Final in Stirling, we went straight into rehearsals with two one-act plays which would be performed as part of the programme for our town's annual Gala week; which consists of a week-long programme of entertaining events which is kicked off on a Saturday evening procession of locals on foot and lorries and trailers decorated extravagantly to a specific theme, relating to topical threads. Our evening of entertainment which included two plays, saw club secretary, Jayden Alexander, produce a short comedy '*Painless Extraction*' by Jean Taylor Smith, and making her directing debut was our vice-chairwoman, Frances Yellop, who took the reins on '*A Dog's Life*' by Pam Valentine. This play consisted of a whole new generation of Wick Players whose talents shone through on our local Assembly Rooms stage.

The end of summer saw us scheming the comeback of a pantomime, following a three

year gap due to COVID-19. Jenny Szyfelbain wanted something "out of the box" and Alan P. Frayn's adaption of '*The Snow Queen*' gave her just that. This production welcomed both new and old faces to the club, with most of our new junior players starring in their first pantomime. The four sell-out performances closed the end of an excellent year for Wick Players and have left club members with the bug for drama as we are now busy rehearsing and making preparations for this year's One-Act Play Festival. Our panto saw us welcome a new Musical Director to the table, John MacBeath. A well-respected teacher at Wick High School, John came to Wick Players being completely new to panto and his talents and compositions only added to the magic which was most enjoyed by our cast and crew and audiences.

A little bit about us...

We are a large and growing amateur dramatics club based in the coastal town of Wick in the far north of Scotland. We are a Registered Scottish Charity and Private Limited Company. The running of the club is overseen by a Board of Directors consisting of four office bearers and eight other committee members. We own our own premises, Moray Street Drama Centre, which we took ownership of in 2004 and it is here that we rehearse and practice everything am-dram. Each year we produce a number of productions ranging in genre, and our subsequent pantomimes are very much anticipated by our supportive community.

The club has been a member of the SCDA since the early 1950's and we always look forward to entering each year with the goal of growing our theatrical skills.

Find out more about us at wickplayers.com.





In the theatre, everything is possible. Everything you can imagine, think, or desire can become real; and even when the curtain falls, everything you have witnessed continues to live inside every single spectator and actor.

Today, we want to share with you the realisation of a dream where the Theatre is both the protagonist and the goal. This is the story of the Gaudeamus Artistic Company, a small charity based in Aberdeen, entirely run by volunteers, which is courageously making its way across Scottish stages. Our story begins in a curious way... in front of a plate of sushi, when the 2 founders, driven by a shared love for theatre, art, and culture, decide to create a space where the Italian community could gather and celebrate their rich heritage.

The first small but passionate group of Italians came together in May 2023 and the Artistic Company Gaudeamus was established...in a living room! This vision quickly resonated, attracting not only Italians but also Scottish volunteers who contributed to the growing and eclectic community that Gaudeamus has become. By August 2023, the company was officially recognised as a Registered Charity. Unique in Scotland, Gaudeamus is the only theatre company that stages Italian works and performs entirely in Italian, complete with live English subtitles. This innovative approach has been instrumental in reconnecting Italians in Scotland with their roots, language, and cultural heritage.

The primary goal of Gaudeamus is to foster a sense of community among Italians in Scotland and also aims to build bridges between the Italian and British communities. Through their performances and various cultural events, they showcase aspects of Italian culture that promotes inclusivity and cultural exchange, striving to deepen mutual understanding and appreciation between the two communities.

Although the Company had just been established, it bravely debuted at the end of November 2023 with "No Shakespeare," a one-act theatrical production wrote and directed by the Founder and Artistic Director Eva D'Amico, that paid homage to the giants of Italian theatre: Goldoni, Gianni, Rodari, and many more will come to life amid the

skirmishes of a charming theatre company....And thus, 'No Shakespeare!' a bit of healthy patriotism, but with a final tribute to the beautiful land that hosts us. This production was a testament to their artistic ambition and capability, in February 2024, with the support of the Aberdeen City Council Pilot Seed Funding Award and the Italian Consulate in Aberdeen, the company hosted a series of four workshops focused on theatre and language, welcoming participants from both Italian and non-Italian backgrounds.

In March 2024 Gaudeamus performed at the Perth Theatre and this opportunity further solidified their presence in the Scottish theatre community. The success of these endeavours has not gone unnoticed. The Italian Consulate General in Edinburgh and the Committee for Italians living Abroad (Com.It.Es) have both expressed their support and offered to help promote Gaudeamus's productions throughout Scotland.

Today, Gaudeamus boasts an entourage of more than 20 members. We are noisy, we gesture a lot (after all, we are children of the Commedia dell'Arte) and we are happy to share who we are with others.

The company has become a cultural and social cornerstone for the Italian community in Aberdeen, providing a vital link to their heritage and a platform for cultural expression. We plan to extend our activities to engage the Scottish-Italian communities in Perth, Edinburgh and Glasgow, through a touring production of "Il Povero Piero (Poor Piero)" by Achille Campanile, a renowned modern Italian playwright that will be on stage starting from February 2025.

There is something magical about sharing one's culture, being able to express oneself freely in one's own language. The journey of Gaudeamus from its humble beginnings to becoming a recognised theatre company is a testament to the power of passion and community spirit. We hope to continue to grow and share our mission of inclusivity, cultural exchange, and artistic excellence, paving the way for a brighter, more connected future. And...we will promise you to plan our next project in front of a plate of Haggis!

Dancing at Lughnasa . .

As the Kirkintilloch Players came to the end of their centenary year, it was time to search for a suitable play for their final adult production of the year. Audiences had already been treated to the broad comedy of *The Vicar of Dibley*, a joyful musical revue in *Music from the Movies*, the classic pantomime, *Cinderella*, with all the hilarity, sparkle and magic you would expect from arguably the best pantomime there is. Not to mention the festival teams who entertained audiences with *'Net-ting'*, based on the true life story of a fishing trawler disaster in the North of Scotland and the talented youth team who, at the time of writing, are preparing to represent the West of Scotland at the SCDA Scottish Youth Final with their thought provoking play, *'Girls Like That'*.

The Kirkintilloch Players pride themselves on staging a wide variety of productions in different styles and genres to appeal to the wider community and so it was a real challenge to find a worthy play for this most special of years for the club.



Lorna Campbell, who was also Club President at the time, stepped up to the challenge and, after much deliberation,

the play *'Dancing at Lughnasa'* by Brian Friel was chosen.

Although perhaps not widely known, the Olivier Award winning play is considered a modern classic and was recently staged by the National Theatre.



The play, which is loosely based on Brian Friel's own life, is set at Harvest time, 1936 in the fictional village of Ballybeg, Co. Donegal.

The play is centred round the five Mundy sisters who battle poverty to raise seven-year-old Michael and care for their brother, Fr Jack. They are visited by Michael's father, Gerry Evans, and we see their lives unfold in front of us as they deal with a world on the brink of change.

The play itself brought many challenges among which were the acquisition of realistic and consistent Donegal accents, a set design that would fit in our tiny theatre but bring to life a family home in 1930s' Donegal and a selection of props, appropriate to the time on a scale the club rarely attempts!

Luckily the club is blessed with hard working and talented individuals who worked tirelessly to bring this challenging play to life.

After months of rehearsal and numerous challenges, the Turret doors opened on 13th May for opening night. Cast and crew were thrilled with the responses they received over the week, indeed there was even the occasional standing ovation!

"Like a professional performance"

"Absolutely fabulous"

"Completely lost myself in that kitchen...catch it while you can"

"Outstanding"

"Superb performance"

"I shed a tear."

These were just some of the accolades given to the production and several audience members admitted to never having visited the Turret Theatre before- but were adamant this would not be their last visit.

The final bows came on the Saturday evening of the production and, despite the challenges, all involved with the production felt that a worthy centenary play had most certainly been staged. In the words of one club member it is a play that "will be remembered for a long time".

Hilary Lynas



2024 Scottish Finals

This was the first time the event has been held at the Beacon Arts Centre, situated on the banks of the Clyde, and our first time in Greenock since 2007, when it was at the Arts Guild. It's a super venue, with a large stage, good acoustics and a clear view from the audience.

Ahead of the opening play National Chair Carolyn Harrison welcomed us to a reassuringly busy theatre as we flipped through the programme – beautifully produced, as ever – to check on the delights ahead. It promised to be a highly diverse festival with adjudication in the experienced hands of Alasdair Hawthorn.

Thursday

First up was **'Henry the Tudor Dude'** by Kjartan Poskitt, performed by Birsay Drama Group – a cast and crew of over twenty having travelled down from Orkney, along with their supporters, for the occasion!

A sombre opening – a 'V' formation of characters slowly entering from the rear of the stage, lit only by stage candles – soon gave way to what became a riot of colour, song and dance as we were taken through the life and death of Henry VIII, while the rest of the cast made the most of the large stage. This was a 'good time' production for cast and audience alike!

This was followed by Dingwall Players' production of **'Escaped Alone'** by Caryl Churchill. A simple back garden – a couple of hedges and some grass – depicted the venue for afternoon tea with three old friends as they are joined by a passing neighbour. As the conversation progresses, we learn more about the demons haunting the three friends. This is a challenging script to perform.

The evening's plays came to an hilarious – yet poignant – end with local team The Largs Players, and **'It's Behind**



You!' by Alan McHugh. Norrie and Nicky are backstage towards the end of another panto season, and their relationship is being tested as one's star fades and the other's begins to shine. Requiring comic timing, pathos and nuance as the onstage Dame and her 'fall guy' slowly reveal their shared history in the cluttered and claustrophobic dressing room. Much applause greeted this play as the audience gave it their thumbs up – but what would the adjudicator make of it?



We didn't have to wait long to find out and it was soon over to Alasdair Hawthorn for our first chance to hear his view on the festival's plays.

Henry the Tudor Dude – Alasdair was reminded of the 'rap musical' *Hamilton*. The production was a great example of the 'C' in SCDA – a real team and community effort. While the musical numbers were fun, they could have been even more 'over the top'. He suggested that the magnificent throne was under-used; had it been stage centre, Henry could have remained on stage throughout. Costume was simple but effective. The sound and lighting cues were spot on. To sum up – great fun but why not go even bigger and have even more fun?

Escaped Alone – "A serious and thought-provoking piece that we'll all have an opinion on" opined Alasdair. Four strong performances gave us the mundanity of the day-to-day juxtaposed with their inner angst. The actors made sense of what was on the page – not an easy task! A difficult play, and the cast and directors certainly rose to the challenge.

It's Behind You! – 'Broad comedy with a sting in the tale' was Alasdair's simple description of the play. The key to the play was timing – and this had been impeccable; both actors seemed to know each other extremely well. Movement had been handled expertly despite the need to handle difficult dialogue at the same time. The poignancy of the serious speeches had not been lost among the humour and pace of the one-liners. A good start to the festival.

Robin Smith reports on the Scottish Final at Greenock's Beacon Arts Centre, with pictures by Tony Flisch

Friday

After a day of glorious spring sunshine, we reconvened at the theatre for three more plays, this time two-handers.

The evening kicked off with Leslie Amateur Drama Club and **'Swan Song'** by Vanessa Brooks. The play opened to reveal a simple but effective set. In this tenderly told love story, a 'will they/won't they' romance becomes more complicated with the intervention of Donald's cold, hard-nosed wife, Mimi. The audience is kept guessing through the highs and lows of their final day in the office together.

Then we had another tale of a couple finding love in later life, this time set in the garden of a care home, as the two residents chat on a bench. **'Love at Twilight'**, written by Bob Hammond and presented by Elgin-based LADS, sees Liz and Clive as they ponder on their new-found, late blossoming love. How will their relationship be seen by their families and the world in general? And do they really care? Short and sweet, this was a warm-hearted story for two mature actors.



Next up was the New Victory Players from Rutherglen, presenting the final play of the evening. **'Me and My Friend' (Act 2)** by Gillian Plowman is a two hander for two women, challenging for cast and audience alike. The curtains opened to reveal a cluttered flat, and – curiously – a stack of empty Coke cans, centre stage. As the action unfolds, we see the mood swings and relationship twists from love to antagonism, protectiveness to violence between two vulnerable characters. It's an intriguing storyline as their shared history of being 'failed' by the system is slowly hinted at, but never fully revealed.

Alasdair's comments on **Swan Song** – 'A relaxed, confident performance'. Simple staging, with a very effective window centre stage. During the opening



couple of minutes with no dialogue, Alasdair had noted at least four outbursts of laughter before anyone had spoken – a hallmark of confident acting. The cameo from 'Mimi' was well handled. The music was well-chosen and added to the mood. The tragic ending was handled sensitively and movingly.

Love at Twilight – A simple conversation between two older characters, and the experienced actors brought a wealth of skill to their parts. The director was 'brave and correct' to limit the movement from the bench to the minimum, as there was no need to move; stillness was key to the performance. Unfolding like a TV drama, the players made us care about what happened to them.

Me and My Friend (Act 2) – 'Strong performances of a strong and difficult piece were the hallmarks of this play'. As we learned who they were and how they were in the situation, he felt the two actors had clearly conveyed their tragic, sometimes chilling situation with great skill and understanding. He wondered what drew the team to such an off-beat and extremely challenging play but was glad that they had done so.

After that it was off to the café/bar for the annual Quiz, expertly hosted this year by Scott Fingland of 88 Theatre.

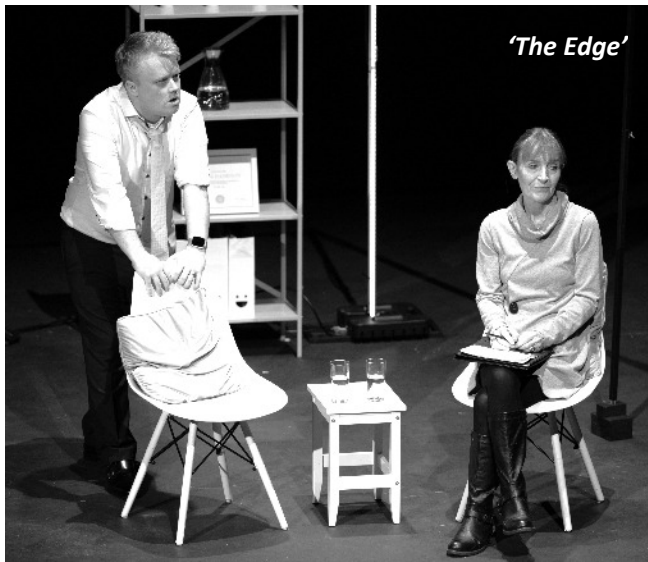


Scottish Final - contd.

Saturday

Our final evening at the Beacon Arts Centre, where the theatre was buzzing in anticipation. The last two plays could barely have been more different – a psychological thriller, followed by a touching elegy to those lost in the football stadium tragedies that seemed all too frequent last century.

Opening the evening was **'The Edge'** by Steve Carley, performed by Bon Accord Players from Aberdeen. The curtain went up to reveal a stunning set, with the walls and ceilings of two rooms delineated by thin strips of light. In the taut 3-hander that followed, we meet Marcus as he discovers he can see into the future. As his boss and his doctor both seek to benefit and/or learn from this, Marcus becomes increasingly concerned that his gift only allows him to see up to a fixed point in time. This was an unusual and intriguing tale with some innovative staging.



To complete the evening, Riverside Drama Club presented **'Murphy's Law'** by Harry Glass. A 'Scott Salver' winner from 1993 the story follows a young man and his dad sharing their common love of football, woven in with romantic interest provided by the Pies 'n' Bovril seller. Realistic football terracing placed the cursed crush barriers centre stage. The story unfolded with humour and pathos across the three acting areas to its inevitable tragic end.

The Edge – An intriguing script – Alasdair had wondered where it would go and how it would be presented. It had been delivered with the right amount of humour. Staging was not what he had expected. The jagged line between the two halves of the set was particularly effective. Performances were strong, and 'Marcus' was outstanding, with excellent support from the



other two players. Pacing was excellent. Overall, we had been led through an increasingly tense series of event with the tension peaking in the closing scene, exactly as it should.

Murphy's Law – 'A lovely piece of nostalgia theatre', both funny and moving. All three actors conveyed their characters with honesty and skill. Again, there had been volume issues, perhaps exacerbated by the sound effects (background noises of the crowd and so on). On a note of criticism, he felt the closing music played over the final monologue was too intrusive and should have been shortened and/or played at much lower volume. However, overall it was a lovely piece of theatre beautifully performed.

Presentation time

Finally it was time for the Platform Party and the presentation of prizes by Glenda Horton, a long-standing supporter of SCDA in Greenock and elsewhere.

Killin Drama Club took the Dunmore Trophy for Best Poster (*Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*), and the Scott Salver winner was Cameron Forbes, for his original play **'Two out of Three Falls'**. National Chair Carolyn Harrison handed over to Alasdair Hawthorn to sum up the festival and announce the winners.



In summing up Alasdair chose to pick out three individual performers whose presence here emphasised the sense of community in SCDA – Tracey Cumming of Leslie Drama Club, who was acting in her first ever play, Rhona Marcus from Birsay, just eight years old, and Glenda Anderson of LADS, believed to be in her eighties!

Then it was on to the Festival winners, listed below in the order they were announced:

Donald T Farmer Trophy - Best Theatrical Moment
Birsay Drama Group - *'Henry the Tudor Dude'* for the Anne of Cleves song

Glen McKemmie Trophy - Scottish Life And Character -
Riverside Drama Club - *'Murphy's Law'* by Harry Glass

Grampian Television Trophy - Best Stage Decor
Bon Accord Players - *'The Edge'* by Steve Carley

Connie Fisher Trophy - Highest Direction Marks
New Victory Players - *'Me & My Friend' (Act 2)* by Gillian Plowman

David Baxter Salver - Third Place
New Victory Players - *'Me & My Friend' (Act 2)* by Gillian Plowman

Jim Porteous Trophy - Second Place
LADS - *'Love at Twilight'* by Bob Hammond

Wheatley Tassie - First Place
Largs Players - *'It's Behind You!'* by Alan McHugh

Monologue competition 2023

The Monologue Competition returned in 2023. There may have been another drop in entry numbers but we still had two very worthy monologues emerge as winners. We may have had two very different monologues winning the competitions but the awards actually went to the same person. Robin Smith of Aberdour Players won both the Sandy Glass Trophy for Monologue performance and the Glenboig Trophy for Monologue Writing.

For the performance competition Robin won with his performance of an extract from *'The Small Things'* by Enda Walsh. The runner-up in the competition was Morag Barron of The Florians performing *'Get Up and Tie Your Fingers'* by Ann Coburn; whilst third place went to Simon Lyall with his performance of *'Bedside Matters'* which he also wrote. Despite the smaller numbers, the top monologues were still of a very high standard and

were an excellent showcase of the talented performers we have within the SCDA community.

For the writing competition, Robin won for his monologue *'To Whom it May Concern'* (which was performed by Cameron Forbes). The runner-up was one of our previous winners Jane Orr with *'A Knights Move'*, which she also performed; third place again went to Simon Lyall for his monologue *'Bedside Matters'*. It was again very close among the top monologues thanks to the very talented writers we have in the SCDA. Perhaps if you are struggling to come up with an idea for a monologue this year you could revisit some of our top monologues from the last few years. I'm sure the writers would be delighted to have their scripts performed again!

The competition is returning in 2024. It would be great to think we could have more entries. The challenges the monologue competition presents are so different from the ones that we are used to performing on stage. It gives everyone a chance to really test themselves as a performer and seen by a much larger audience, our playlists are always viewed thousands of times once they have been shared with our members. If you have always wanted to try writing something, then the monologue competition is also a great way to start this. We all have stories that we would like to tell and the competition can let that happen. It just takes one idea!

So what are you waiting for, there's bound to be a few rainy days over the summer so why not use them to get creative! The deadline for entries is the 31st of August. You can find full details on the website. If you have any questions email mono@drama.scot. We can't wait to see what you come up with this year!



Killin Komedy Festival

I was really looking forward to visiting the Killin Komedy Festival in May for some fun amongst friends. Despite having had their lighting desk stolen only twenty-four hours previously, the tech team were all set up and raring to go in time for Friday night thanks to some very handy helpers from Leslie ADC. The McLaren Hall was almost full when we arrived and there was an amazing buzz of anticipation as we settled down to our table.

Gordon Hibbert was the master of ceremonies for the weekend, welcoming everyone to Killin in his own unique style. Perth Drama Club kicked things off with a health and safety sketch informing everyone what to do in the event of a disaster, covering everything from a plague of locusts to an invasion of velociraptors! The visual acting out of each impending disaster added hugely to the comedy.

Diane White from Leslie ADC was up next with an excellent and highly amusing delivery of her monologue

'Back in the Saddle' about love lost and found. It was both funny and heartwarming and certainly resonated with members of the audience. Steve Rudd followed, looking particularly dapper, with his highly amusing song about every single tradesman in the book.

Members of Killin Drama Club then took to the big stage with some slick, punchy jokes wearing every possible item of colourful headwear from the club's wardrobe! Back on the small stage Margaret Kinnear from Leslie ADC performed *'Dear Diet Diary'*, the second monologue of the evening which was hilarious and certainly not the best advertisement for any well-known diet clubs!

If you don't believe that the Sound of Music could be performed by three people, then Perth DC proved that it was indeed possible, complete with a bearded Mother Superior! Their comedic parody



version of the entire movie included songs, dancing, costumes and even the seven Von Trapp children played by one actor.

Kerrie van de Coterlet and Clare Rudd from Killin DC appeared next in a very impressive, elevated commentary box showing what ridiculous conversations take place when commentators are left to entertain listeners while waiting for the rain to stop at the cricket test. Strawberries and cream will never be the same again!

We all wondered what on earth was going on when cups of peas were passed around the audience's tables, but it all made sense when Perth DC performed their country and western 'pea' song, packed with endless double entendres and had everyone laughing out loud.

Gordon and Glenda Mardon performed a very cleverly written sketch portraying domestic bliss at the kitchen table, using every letter in the alphabet. I think we were all wondering how they would fit the more challenging letters in, but they achieved it with their usual aplomb. Killin youth members Grace Campbell and Noa van de Coterlet expertly followed this with a very funny take on 'life and stuff' as teenagers communicating on their phones.



Gordon works the crowd

Carolyn Harrison reports on fun and games in the Trossachs

Killin DC performed an Irish farm sketch before the audience were treated to a hugely enjoyable performance of *'Master of the House'* by Martin Butler and Margaret Kinnear. Martin expertly worked the audience as he acted round the tables, and they were rewarded by an appreciative response from the audience. Clare Rudd also gave a very strong vocal performance with another musical number *'Diva's Lament'*.

off everything from massages to huge bags of firewood. Never one to shy away from fleecing the punters, that man really could sell sawdust to a saw mill! The audience were generous in their bidding with the knowledge that all funds were going to support SCDA. It was a hugely enjoyable evening, topped with an appearance of the northern lights for those who were up late enough to see it.

We were treated to a fantastic

exploits on inner city travel. Travelling by rail will never seem the same again!

Chris Gray and Adam from Leslie DC persuaded Gordon to join with them to deliver their highly comical version of *'Midsummer Night's Dream'* expertly played on the small stage. Andrew Murphy followed this with a funny version of the merits of a toupee.

The entertainment finished on a high with Clare Rudd using her beautiful singing voice to describe her favourite adventures in her car. There was a warning of adult content and it was then we realised the printing of it certainly wasn't a waste of time, but it had the audience in stitches!!

Andrew Murphy proved to be a great sport, being well and truly set up the week before his wedding with a Mr and Mrs quiz. Probably lucky for his bride to be, Clare, that she had to miss the evening, resulting in a substitute bride answering the questions instead but it only added to the comedy of the situation.

Once again Glenda provided a lovely buffet to end the evening and a fabulous weekend was had by all. An enormous thank you to Killin DC for being such amazing hosts and working tirelessly to raise funds for SCDA. Whether you are KKF regulars or not, you should all go along next year to join in the fun and soak up the atmosphere yourself!



The entertaining, varied programme of events on Friday concluded with Killin DC performing their version of *'Cinderella'* the pantomime. Amazing costumes, plenty visual humour and the usual panto gags resulted in an impressive end to the first night of the Komed Festival. In true KKF style the audience and participants were treated to a delicious supper buffet courtesy of Glenda.

There were countless raffle prizes to be drawn both nights and Gordon worked tirelessly the entire weekend, auctioning

reprise of *'Master of the House'* due to popular demand before Adam Gibson from Leslie DC gave us the vicar's obituary to Tom, Dick and Harry which had the audience in fits of laughter. Ewan Diamond then came out from behind the bar to deliver his song about his hilarious



play. reviews

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

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

These Four Walls by Louis Wharton

Winner Geoffrey Whitworth 2024

Cast: 4 female, 3 male

Running time: 50 minutes

'*These Four Walls*' is an intergenerational play about family, grief, and the places we choose to call home. Told via an intersecting narrative, we chart the history of one house, on one street, on one estate and the families who attempted to root themselves there. As national fortunes and personal circumstances change, so too do the demands placed upon the house; the sanctuary it offers, the memories they ask it to protect, and the shelter it provides. The shifts in time are handled smoothly and add to the appeal of the play. All-in all this cleverly conceived script is intelligent and engaging; notwithstanding the underlying theme of death, it makes a life-affirming play

Taiwan by Martin Foreman

Runner-up Geoffrey Whitworth 2024

Cast: 2 female, 2 male, 1 as appropriate

Running time: 45 mins

"It's a question of survival." In the near future as civilisation crumbles, two women of different generations, personalities and circumstances confront each other in the remote Scottish countryside. Tensions rise as first one woman's partner and then the other arrive, leading to a violent climax. Set in an almost dystopian future where political life has fractured and climate change has caused further misery this thoughtful text centres on the lives of just four people whose characters have been clearly drawn by the playwright.

Three Women, a Corpse and a Porter

by Louise Gethin & Dave Peak

Cast: 3 female, 1 male

Running time: 30 mins

The early nineteen nineties. The day of Terry's funeral. Hoping to receive bequests, his current and two former wives gather on a railway station platform to accompany his coffin to its final resting place under the supervision of a mysterious porter. Despite mild antagonism between the three wives, a picture of Terry's life with each of them is revealed as they wait for the hired steam train. It is soon clear that the porter has been tasked by Terry to ensure that the idiosyncratic nature of the will is carried out to the letter.

Felicity by Peter Grant

Cast: 6 female 3 male

Running time:

Felicity is a middle aged woman who has spent most of her life in psychiatric facilities. Although highly intelligent she suffers from paranoid schizophrenia. She is distrustful and suspicious of people and often hears 'voices'. Felicity also has multiple personality disorder and has two other, completely different personas, Stephany an extremely aggressive woman and Geraldine a flirtatious man-mad woman. Felicity's father blames her for the death of his wife, her mother and pays to ensure she remains in psychiatric care. During her time in the facility she has formed an alliance with Denny, a younger man with a high anxiety disorder. Fearful of everyone he has however become very close to Felicity. During the play, the possible causes of Felicity's mental issues are explored when she recounts episodes in her past. These include relationships with her Father and Mother, her Uncle Maurice and a traumatic Sunday School outing. This challenging script has much to commend.

Two out of Three Falls by Cameron Forbes

Scott Salver winner 2024

Cast: 8 female, 9 male

Running time: 35 mins

Wrestling is a real life turned up to 11! Kyle is obsessed with wrestling. It is something both he and his mother would watch together before she got ill. Kyle often finds himself daydreaming about wrestling. As his life gets more difficult Kyle uses wrestling to make sense of the world around him. A flexible fantasy drama for a high school cast.

Everyone's Dying to meet you

by Alan Richardson

Scott Salver winner 2023

Cast: 5 females, can be of any similar age or a mix of ages

Running time:

Familiar context for a play - graveyard setting, stories of ghosts, gates being locked spooky things happening. Well written and clearly structured narrative.. This has good opportunity for visual theatrical interest. Sue and her friends gather for one of their occasional picnics in unusual places, but is having an evening picnic in a cemetery such a good idea? You never know who you might disturb.

YOUTH FINAL - BATHGATE

When we began the process of rehearsing *'Girls Like That'*, it was an exciting yet daunting challenge for all of us.

Four of the six of us had been part of *'Teechers'* last year and were looking forward to another festival experience. For two of us, it was all new but, having heard about the festival, we were looking forward to what lay ahead.

The biggest challenge for all of us, directors included, was the fact that the script did not specify parts. It was quite literally pages of dialogue to be worked out and split up. We approached this by creating characters for ourselves - in many ways stereotypical high school characters- but this really helped us to work out who should say what and to block the play. It was amazing how it began to flow very naturally and become clear who should have what lines and how they should be delivered.

The play deals with issues that most teenagers face nowadays as well as looking back over history and, as we worked through the play, we felt we uncovered many different layers to it and showed- we hope- that even the most confident-seeming people can be vulnerable. We hope too that the play's message was clear to all who saw it- that being kind and respectful to one another is the only way.

The festivals themselves were so much fun to be part of. As the only youth team in Glasgow, our first "competition" came at Western in Dunlop. We were all nervous. We were proud of our play and what we had achieved with it and we hoped that the audience and adjudicator, Alasdair Hawthorn, would like it too. Thankfully, he did and we were delighted to win and to progress to the Scottish Youth Final in Bathgate. At both these rounds, we loved watching all the other plays and meeting other young people who also love drama.

One of the standout memories of that round was stopping in Stewarton for a chippy on the way home and the team cramming into the back of the van, sitting on the set to eat it!

At last year's Scottish Final in Nairn, the weather was tropi-

cal and we had a fantastic time enjoying our chippy on the beach and taking a dip in the Moray Firth. Bathgate, and the less than seasonal weather, didn't really afford us the same opportunities but we loved performing in the gorgeous art-deco Regal Theatre and we had many laughs travelling together, eating together and playing silly games to calm the nerves in the dressing room!

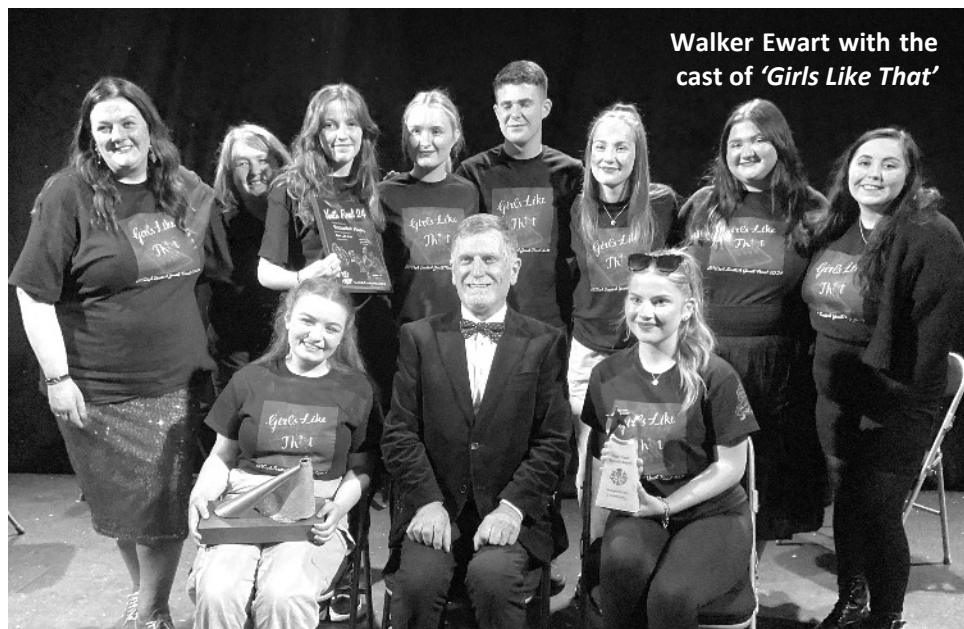
The plays were performed and as the adjudication and results approached, the nerves kicked in even more. When Walker Ewart announced that we had won the Colin Peter Award for Creativity and Imagination, we were thrilled- so much work had gone into the technical aspects of the play and it was wonderful to have that recognised. However, when we were announced as winners, the roof nearly came off the theatre! We, and our faithful fans who had travelled from Kirkintilloch, many wearing red as the team colour, were over the moon to be taking the Quidi Vidi Trophy back to the Turret. Those are moments that will stay with us for life.

It's hard to believe that just two years ago, none of us performing on stage had even really heard of the festival and were actually quite unsure of it! Now, we have well and truly caught the festival bug and we love being part of the wider drama community in Scotland.

We are so grateful to those who put in so much time and effort into organising the festivals. We are thrilled to come home with the trophies but the experiences we've had, the friendships we've made and the memories created will stay with us forever.

The Cast of *'Girls Like That'*

Kirkintilloch Players



Walker Ewart with the cast of *'Girls Like That'*

Scott Salver 2024

This season's selection of eight new scripts which our team of experienced assessors studied were provided by previous award winners, regular and first time entrants. The competition guidance notes and marking criteria have been fully revised and brought into line with the Geoffrey Whitworth and Play On Words events introducing a new Originality mark.

Delighted recipient of our Silver Salver this year is Cameron Forbes for *'Two Out of Three Falls'* presented by Beath High School at the Fife District Festival with a storyline that combines the fantasy world of wrestling and the reality of school bullying. An ambitious, original and well realised script offering ample acting opportunities for a large youth cast where difficult issues are explored with honesty, sensitivity and humour.

Another top contender was Martin Foreman's *'Taiwan'* premiered at Edinburgh District Festival by Edinburgh GRADS. A tense thriller with strong, controlled narrative, convincing characters and rhythmical dialogue.

Peter Grant's episodic *'Felicity'* for Kirkcaldy's Auld Kirk Players in Fife District covered many very complex and sensitive issues with competently written dialogue between characters leading to a menacing conclusion.

Banchory Drama Club's Drew Young penned *'Small Puffs of Smoke'* for their appearance at Aberdeen District Festival providing an assured piece of sentimental writing with touches of humour and poignancy.

From Moray Firth District came Michael White's *'Revenge Scam'* staged by Loch Ness Luvvies featuring stereotypical characters and physical comedy appropriate to the farcical genre and *'Divine Intervention'* by Caroline Nicol for The Florians of Inverness with a coherent, engaging storyline and sincere characterisations.

Dunoon Players brought Susan Locke's *'There's a Chair Under There'* to the stage at Inverclyde District Festival. Original plot with well written dialogue gradually becoming heavily dependent on audience participation for the recycling sequences.

Finally from Orkney District, Morgan Powell's *'Young Atlanteans'* for Stromness Academy Players offering opportunities for an imaginative director and youth cast in this timeshift, fast moving plot.

Cameron Forbes was presented with the Scott Salver at the Scottish Final in Greenock.

Stephen Lambert
Playwriting Convenor



Cameron Forbes receives
the Scott Salver from
Glenda Horton

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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. (UKCDFF)

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.



Louis Wharton

In 2024 there were 18 plays entered for the Geoffrey Whitworth competition nine were entered from Scotland, one from Wales and eight 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.

A very close runner up was *'Taiwan'* by Martin Foreman from Edinburgh. Colin said, "It is all a question of survival". That quote from this original script might well be its subtitle. Set in an almost dystopian future where political life has fractured and climate change has caused further misery this thoughtful text centres on the lives of just four people whose characters have been clearly drawn by the playwright.

With an arresting opening we are quickly drawn into the unusual but intriguing situation; the tension is gradually tightened with several strong emotional

climactic moments. The text has been shaped creatively and the sharp rhythmic dialogue adds to the intensity as the absorbing events develop.

There are just a few overwritten sections where some pruning would keep the text even tighter. The ending was slightly disappointing but there was much to admire in this compelling highly original script".

But, the winner and collecting the Geoffrey Whitworth trophy is Louis Wharton from Kidderminster with *'These Four Walls'* Colin said "This interesting new play has great originality in shape and style with the political, social and domestic themes all cleverly interwoven over three periods in recent decades. A further undercurrent raised throughout is that of the shadow of grief set among these same four walls.

The playwright brings out the mood of each time in deft and subtle ways.

Each period is quickly evoked, and we are easily drawn into the various situations pertaining. The dialogue is sharp and realistic which makes the well-contrasted characters, and their close relationships come alive with emotional truth.

The shifts in time are handled smoothly and add to the appeal of the play. All-in all this cleverly conceived script is intelligent and engaging; notwithstanding the underlying theme of death, it makes a life-affirming play".

A rehearsed reading of Louis's play was held at the British Final in Perth Theatre. Actors from various groups in Fife, Aberdeen and Aberfeldy performed on the Saturday morning in the Joan Knight Studio in front of various members of the competing teams attending the Final festival. After, Louis answered questions from the audience on his thoughts and how he came to write the play.



The reading team at Perth

Morna Barron reports on
a successful British Final

The British at

There was definitely a buzz around the Perth theatre foyer on Friday the 12th July 2024 after months of preparation at last the 89th British Final Festival was here. It was great meeting up with old friends from all three countries.

Carolyn Harrison, SCDA chair, welcomed everyone to the beautiful theatre saying we were in for a treat with four very different plays from each of the four associations.

First up was our own winner, Largs Players with a hilarious – yet poignant, *'It's behind You!'* by Alan McHugh. Norrie and Nicky are backstage after the end of another panto season and their relationship is being tested, as one star is fading the other beginning to shine. Once again, this duo had the audience in the palm of their hands, it had not lost anything from the performance at Scottish. The comic timing, pathos and slick dialogue had started off the festival with a bang.

Second performance was from Total Arts Community Theatre (TACT) with *'The Real & Imagined History of the Elephant Man'* by Tom Wright. The play imagines an alternative history of the person Joseph Merrick who became known as the 'Elephant Man'. A man fighting for his right to be and belong. Once again TACT produced a clever imaginative set, solving the problem of a rake stage and a set on casters with appropriately costumed actors holding the set pieces in place.

Well, what a start to the festival, but what was Dave Bennet the adjudicator to make of it all.

Dave thought Largs Players had produced a detailed set and they had gone to town on the costumes. The timing of the two characters were excellent. The character of Norrie was vocally driven and perhaps could have had a little more light and shade in the beginning but had good use of pause later. Nicky had excellent timing, good energy and was not frightened to hold a pause.

TACT's production was an original 90 minute show reduced to 17 separate scenes. Dave thought the group had tackled this play with great imagination and creativity. The costumes were of the period and the use of lighting and music added to the piece. This was an ensemble piece but he felt he had to single out Joseph in particular who used his physicality subtly to great effect. All in all this had been a great start to the festival.

The ceilidh in the Joan Knight studio after the performances proved a great success with all the teams and their friends dancing away till the wee small hours.

Saturday morning and the sun was still shining as we all head back to the theatre to the Joan Knight Studio for a civic reception hosted by Provost Xander McDade. The four teams introduced themselves and passed on gifts to each other in the traditional way. After coffee there was the playreading of the Geoffrey Whitworth winning play *'These Four Walls'* by Louis Wharton.



First up on the Saturday evening was the Players Theatre from Wales, with *'Albert'* by Richard Harris. A very funny short play where the three characters are all foreign and don't understand what each other are saying. It relies on reaction and lots of hilarious miming.

Last but by no means least was Theatre 3 Newtownabbey with *'Even Numbers'* by Tony Domaille. A thoughtful script exploring the mind of a serial killer Mary-Ann Twomey and what drove her to her heinous crimes.

Dave thought that the cast of *Albert* was a well-controlled production with high energy levels and good pace. Some lovely touches from the character Nico who gave a master class in physicality. This was three blended characters who gave a solid performance.

On lastly to *'Even Numbers'*. Dave was disappointed with the set, he felt it had not helped the characters restricting their movement.

Perth Theatre

He praised Mary-Ann's strong delivery, in particularly her last speech but he felt the other two characters needed more conversational reality.

He felt that it had been a good two nights with four very different difficult pieces.

Tension was once again high as we waited for the platform party to assemble and find out who would take home the Howard de Walden Trophy. The friendship quaich was handed over to Susan Pierce who invited us to the Garrick Theatre, Lichfield in 2025. Dave summed



up the festival saying what an honour and pleasure it had been to see such high quality productions. Once again TACT were declared winners and took home the trophy.

The evening ended with another good supper, where old and new friends agreed it had been a splendid festival and we all looked forward to meeting up again next year in Lichfield.

Pictures by **Tony Flisch**



YOUTH FINAL

Birsay Drama Club



Mill Youth Theatre



Kirkintilloch Players

Wick Junior Players

