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**“INVISIBLE DRAMATURGY” OBSERVED:
CONDUCTING DRAMAURGY WITHOUT DRAMATURGS
IN THE EVOLVING WORLD OF SCOTTISH PLAY CREATION**

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ABSTRACT

This research paper examines how contemporary Scottish theatres undertake the challenge of textual dramaturgy for production without the participation of a dramaturg, a process defined as “invisible dramaturgy”.

After researching the history of recent play development in Scotland, case studies of six scripts being shepherded by very different companies were undertaken. Each company had unique reasons for absenting a dramaturg from their process. Each had unique solutions.

Interviews with participants were undertaken, textual material was examined and in one case rehearsals were observed. Each study provides a description of the play, how the script was developed, the reasoning behind the choices made and an analysis of the process including key insights drawn from each case.

Although dramaturgy is considered essential by Scottish theatre companies, they demonstrate that its practice is adaptable to the needs and circumstance of the production and its artists while still looking to define itself as a practice.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 “INVISIBLE DRAMATURGY” IN CONTEMPORARY SCOTTISH THEATRE

I arrived at the University of Glasgow at the beginning of 2022 with the intention of undertaking a study of Scottish textual production dramaturgy. In other words, the dramaturgical development of a devised text immediately before the staged premiere production of the same.

However, when I arrived the Scottish theatre community was in an atypical state. In the wake of the Covid pandemic, theatres were still in a state of recovery. Companies were rousing themselves from a long involuntary hibernation. Lacking two years of box office revenue, many organizations found themselves in financial distress even with private and public support. Plans and seasons had been disrupted and cancelled. Audiences (and some theatre artists) needed to be wooed back. Standard practices had to be reevaluated and adjusted.

Though not the worst of times, it was by no means the best of times.

Regardless, I went forward to make a study of new play production from a variety of companies: small and large, established and independent, conventional and innovative. With no agenda other than observation and comparison, I began my research. However, as it unfolded my studies soon demonstrated a notable pattern.

Every company I examined developed their new plays without the involvement of a dramaturg. or a formal system of dramaturgy. And yet all the companies expressed a deep insistence that dramaturgy was essential to their process. In some cases, this lack was the result of decisions based on budgets, time, and resources. In others a casual form of dramaturgical exploration already existed within the practices of the artists. But many made the artistic choice to explicitly exclude a dramaturg.

In my experience as a theatre writer in Canada, when a new play is intended for production, a dramaturg is regularly employed to be part of the process. Though not a universal component of play development, it is so widely accepted that some Canadian companies employ staff dramaturgs whose mandate to provide guidance, advice, and observational insights to the playwright. Sometimes this might be an experienced writer providing support and mentorship for a novice. But more often than not

they are asked to provide an objective counterpoint to the subjective view of the creator. Though only gaining a foothold in the Canadian theatre community in the 1990's, the role of a production dramaturg is now considered standard practice. I talked to eight professional theatre companies in the city of Edmonton where I am based. All present seasons and regularly produce new work. Two employed staff dramaturgs, while four employed dramaturgs on a project-to-project basis as standard practice. One company centred around the work of a single playwright habitually employs dramaturgs when producing the work of another writer while another engaged dramaturgs based on the perceived needs of the script. ¹ The theatre community's investment in formal dramaturgy is typical of Canada's other theatre centres.

However, in the entirety of the Scottish nation only one company employs a full-time dramaturg, while others will sometimes hire on a project-to-project basis it is hardly a standard practice. This is a significant difference.

Of course, single comprehensive definition for dramaturgy is altogether elusive. As an adjunct to the liveliest of artforms, an artform which encourages reinvention and reinterpretation, it is hardly surprising that dramaturgy means different things to different creators. G.E. Lessing originated the idea as a means of providing literary rigour to theatrical practice in 17th Century Hamburg. Bertolt Brecht transformed the concept into one focused on theatrical creation and presentation rather than just literary context. Dramaturgical theory has been applied in the fields of choreography and architecture. In 1959 sociologist Erving Goffman used dramaturgical theory as a tool to interpret human behaviour. ²

¹ Staff dramaturgs are employed by the Citadel Theatre and Workshop West. Shadow Theatre, Northern Light Theatre, Punctuate Theatre and Catalyst Theatre hired dramaturgs on a project-to-project basis as a matter of standard practice. Teatro la Quindicina is founded on the work of playwright Stewart Lemoine, but when developing work by other writers will occasionally hire a dramaturg as required. Only Theatre Network had no standard practice regarding dramaturgs although they have employed them in the past. All companies regularly produce new work, most often at least one every season.

² Stone, Margaret. 12 March 2022. 'Dramaturgy in Sociology' *Study.com*
 <<https://study.com/learn/lesson/dramaturgy-sociology-analysis-theory-approach.html>> [accessed 6 October 2023]

Dramaturgical theory has since continued evolved into a variety of applications and interpretations.

The dramaturgy at the heart of this study is purely theatrical and largely defined by Scottish theatre companies as they developed of a new script for performance. I will be applying one of the many definitions of dramaturgy offered by Mary Luckhurst in her seminal work *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (2006)

Dramaturgy relates to the internal structures of a play text and is concerned with the arrangement of formal elements by the playwright – plot, construction of narrative, character, time frame and stage action.³

Although the substance and concept of dramaturgy has been the subject of debate in Germany and continental Europe for centuries, the idea was a late arrival in the Anglophone world only taking root in the mid-20th century. While German theatres today are expected to employ staff dramaturgs, in the Americas and UK it is rare to have a dramaturg on staff and if one is desired to aid in play development will be on a project-to-project basis. As a result, dramaturgy of an individual play text will often prove to be idiosyncratic and characteristic of the company’s own philosophies. Given the relatively recent arrival of dramaturgical ideas in Anglophone theatres it is not surprising that they, while accepting the notion of a development process designed to aid the playwright and their text, eschew the rigid structures characteristic of German dramaturgy in favour of their own interpretations. In early 2022 I observed companies responding to the need for developing their texts in unique ways that foregoes any specialized individual or embedded system. This practice of refining the text without the use of a dramaturg or a formal process can be called “invisible dramaturgy”.

Invisible dramaturgy is a term coined by Mary Luckhurst.⁴ She used the term to describe the process of play development in Nineteenth Century British Theatre. At the time dramaturgy had conceptually existed for about two hundred years and had evolved on the Continent into broadly practiced sets of

³ Luckhurst, Mary. 2006 *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (New York, Cambridge University Press) p. 10

⁴ Ibid p.2

philosophy and practice supported financially and culturally by national institutions. However, in English speaking world, theatre was largely regarded as a commercial enterprise with less concern for academic philosophy and high art. Preparing a script for production naturally led readers, managers, actors, writers and other company members to refine and improve the text as best they can. However, in Nineteenth Century Britain this was considered to be an inherent part of preparing a play, not a separate enterprise with its own practices and ideas. Unrecognized, it was thus invisible.

However invisible dramaturgy is not simply a creature of the past. Lacking in formalized methodology Or structure and commonly without anyone designated a dramaturg, it is still practiced in modern British drama. My research would seem to indicate that it is the most widely employed form of play development in Scottish theatres though its character is as idiosyncratic and unique as the companies and plays they serve.

1.2 SUBJECT MATTER

American academic Robert Scanlan has split dramaturgy into two distinct domains: institutional dramaturgy (or literary management) and production dramaturgy.⁵

Institutional dramaturgs are permanent members of the staff of the theatre company. They are employed beyond single projects and seasons. In fact, they would be unable to perform their duties without being employed for the long term.

Institutional dramaturgs are responsible for curating scripts, tracking developments in drama outside the company, advising on season creation and canon, supporting play creation, maintaining relationships with playwrights, advising artistic directors, educating audiences, and assisting in implementing the company's vision. In short, the institutional dramaturg is the company's literary interface with both creators and patrons.

The subject of this study is production dramaturgy or more particularly: the process of preparing and refining a script into a play.⁶ Although this process will often include textual consultation with the playwright and their collaborators before entering the rehearsal hall, this study will largely focus on the work done immediately prior to opening; from the time a rehearsal script is delivered to its first performance.

The modern production dramaturg's role is often to act as the playwright's advocate, the text's touchstone, the director's collaborator, and the production's literary expert. Broadly speaking, the production dramaturg is an aid to the play text and its creator.

⁵ Scanlan, Robert. 2020 *Principles of Dramaturgy* (London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group) p. 8

⁶ To clarify terms, a script refers to the textual creation of the playwright(s) that will be used as the basis for the play's production. The play is the final product of the rehearsal process that is presented for an audience. The very existence of a play implies some form of collaborative effort from a company of theatre artists including the playwright.

In *Principles of Dramaturgy* (2020) Scanlan identifies three areas of responsibility for the production dramaturg:

1 Standard Production Dramaturgy, which accompanies the production of a finished, pre-existing play, whether a classic or a lesser play from the dramatic repertoire.

2 New Play Development, which shepherds and assists the premier presentation of a new script....

...3 Translation and/or Adaptation, which partakes of the dramaturgy of both, for a translation is both “pre-existing” and new. The development and field-testing of new translations from the international repertoire should be a constant original contribution of professional dramaturgs to theatre culture.⁷

I have observed in many Anglophone theatres that “Standard Production Dramaturgy” tends to be the province of the artistic director and manager although a dramaturg specialist may also be employed. Needless to say, the dramaturgy of an existing play may necessarily preclude the participation of the playwright and may at times shift the play away from their original intentions.

Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre employs a resident playwright not only to provide new work but dramaturg existing work. In 2022 Hannah Kalil offered a version of Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* which shifted the much of narrative’s focus from the King and Cardinal Wolsey to the supporting female characters. This was accomplished through not only through cuts and edits, but also by creating new dialogue. Rather than inventing new dialogue, out of respect for the creator, Kalil shaped new speeches for the women by lifting and repurposing passages of speech from other Shakespeare’s other plays. This reinvention of classic plays has a long history though it is rarely done with the respect to the originator as Kalil exhibited.

The most common employment of the contemporary dramaturg in Anglophone theatre seems to be New Play Development. This form of dramaturgy is designed to aid and empower the playwright. This

⁷ Scanlan, Robert. 2020 *Principles of Dramaturgy* (London and New York, Routledge Taylor & Francis Group) p. 8

is often accomplished through an individual provided by a playwriting organization or producing company and will concentrate on refining the text. The writer may also take the initiative seeking out someone whose opinions they value to review a script and provide insights. Although dramaturgy may be provided at any point of the writing process, it is usually provided after at least one draft of the script is completed.

Through meetings, discussions and exchanged letters, the dramaturg, sometimes in partnership with the director, will assist the playwright in fully expressing their vision through the script. This may happen prior to any theatrical commitment, before rehearsal, during preparation for presentation or all through the development for production. In some cases, dramaturgy may also occur after opening or the close of a run.

Translation and/or adaption have long been a part of Scottish theatre. During the 1970's Scotland embraced theatre from around the world. Resident playwright/dramaturgs adapted plays by Italian Dario Fo, German Bertholt Brecht and many others into the vernacular.⁸ The work of French-Canadian Michel Tremblay especially resonated with Scottish audiences and his rich body of work was produced at multiple theatre companies.⁹ Although the vogue in international theatre has cooled in favour of scripts by native playwrights, translations of foreign plays are not unfamiliar and remain the province of dramaturgs hired on project-based contracts.

⁸ Hutchison, David. *Glasgow and Its Citizens* Chapter Four *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace editors. 1996 (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press) p. 61

⁹ Ibid

2.0 DRAMATURGY IN BRITISH THEATRE

Since the creation of theatre in ancient times the desire to develop, refine and improve a play for production has existed. By establishing the rules of dramatic unities, the ancient Greek Poetics (335 BCE) was offering dramaturgical direction that would influence European drama into the modern era. The Indian Natya Satra (500 BC – 500 CE?) provided specific rules for performance and storytelling as well as measures for the quality of the work. However, for most of UK theatre history such formalized dramaturgy has been largely absent and ignored.

From Medieval mystery plays through the golden age of Renaissance dramatists and well into the twentieth century the understanding was that the script was a raw resource to be refined and exploited by the presenters. The rights to the play were sold outright to the producing company who then had the right to edit, cut and reshape the text without regard to issues such as authorial intent. Even as highly regarded writer as William Shakespeare has through the centuries seen his texts transformed, cut, edited and bowdlerized to match the sensibilities of the actors, empresarios and audience.

Public subsidy of German theatres allowed companies to employ institutional dramaturgs into their organizational structures to such an extent that the ideas and interpretations of the script by the academic dramaturg and the production director tended to be valued over the intentions of the playwright.¹⁰

However, the United Kingdom resisted specialized dramaturgy. It had theatre traditions that had yielded some of the finest plays the world has known so while continental Europe embraced the new ideas of dramaturgy, Britain felt no need to change. A formalized theatre institution crystalized around the actor-manager.¹⁰ Plays at the time were meant to showcase the talents of the star and so scripts were commonly reshaped to fit their skills and desires. Even David Garrick, whose vocal adoration of Shakespeare laid the foundation for Bardolatry, was not above cutting scenes, inserting lines and reshaping the work of his favourite playwright to fit running times, please audiences and show off his

¹⁰ Raab, Michael. 15 October 2021. 'In Lessing's Footsteps: dramaturgy in Germany and Britain' *Miranda* <https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/43245> [accessed 24 August 2023] p. 7

talents to their best effect.¹¹

For most of British theatre history what textual dramaturgy occurred was largely in the hands of the Literary Manager or company Reader. Employed by the company, it was their job to find promising scripts to the benefit of the theatre. They would read new scripts and cultivate relationships with the playwrights. This could mean offering advice and guidance to the writer but could also entail making their own edits to the text. However, the Manager was subordinate to the ambitions and ego of the actor-manager, so any dramaturgical guidance offered was largely to enhance the talents and reputation of the company's star rather than the playwrights' intentions.¹²

English theatrical practice dominated Britain into the twentieth century. It was therefore no surprise that when the National Theatre of England was established in 1963 its first artistic director was Laurence Olivier, considered one of the nation's leading performers. Nonetheless, the centuries long model of production was shaken by the employment of Kenneth Tynan as the first British professional dramaturg.¹³ Though officially designated a Literary Manager, Tynan attempted to apply the Lessing model of dramaturgy to British theatre with mixed results. His tenure was marked with confusion and criticism. However, the concept of a professional dramaturg found purchase.

There seem to be notable factors that supported the wider acceptance of dramaturgy in English speaking theatre during the 1960's.

The post war world was much more mobile and connected than before, so international theatre was more travelled, while theories and concepts could be more rapidly shared. Professional dramaturgs

¹¹ Schoch, Richard. 19 April 2016 "How One Actor Forever Changed the Way We See Shakespeare" *Voices Magazine* < <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/how-one-actor-forever-changed-way-we-see-shakespeare> > [accessed 1 October 2023]

¹² Raab, Michael. 15 October 2021. 'In Lessing's Footsteps: dramaturgy in Germany and Britain' *Miranda* <https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/43245> [accessed 24 August 2023]

¹³ Luckhurst, Mary. 2006 *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (New York, Cambridge University Press)

who acted on behalf of the text and the playwrights' intentions were well established on the Continent by this time and their theories found academic interest and global events such as the Edinburgh International Festival and the Fringe allowed a ready exchange of ideas from around the world.

In addition, the uniquely powerful work of Brecht's Berliner Ensemble garnered attention not only for his playwriting, but the methods and theories at the heart of them. Theatre creators from around the world studied his processes though English-speaking theatre mostly studied his productions rather than his theories and philosophy.¹⁴ This is likely one reason why the Anglophone vision of dramaturgy is concentrated on the playwright and inextricably woven into preparing a play for production. Brecht expanded the domain of the dramaturg out of the administrative office into the rehearsal hall where they were reconceived as a creative partner whose expertise in theatrical philosophy and history made them allowed them to contextualize and enhance play development *in situ*.¹⁵ Brechtian ideas such as Epic Theatre and *Verfremdungseffekt* were applied in interpreting and expressing text. Although still viewed as somewhat exotic in English speaking theatre, Brecht's proved there was value in production dramaturgy.

According to his dramaturgical exploration *Der Messingkauf* Brecht's vision of a dramaturg was that

...first, he is a writer and analyst of play texts with a thorough understanding of dramaturgical structures, second, a formidable theatre historian with encyclopedic knowledge of theatre history... and third an incisive, receptive and articulate communicator-critic.¹⁶

Furthermore, although English professional theatre remained largely ignorant of dramaturgical theories, they were the subject of study in academia. University graduates entering the profession carried with them studies of Lessing and Brecht and were willing to employ them.

¹⁴ Raab, Michael. 15 October 2021. 'In Lessing's Footsteps: dramaturgy in Germany and Britain' *Miranda* <https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/43245> [accessed 24 August 2023]

¹⁵ Luckhurst, Mary. 2006 *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (New York, Cambridge University Press)

¹⁶ From Bertolt Brecht's *Der Messingkauf* as quoted in Luckhurst, Mary. 2006 *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (New York, Cambridge University Press) p. 113

It is also worthwhile to consider the world of Anglophone theatre then. In the early twentieth century the celebrated names of English-speaking theatre still tended to be the stars and producers such as Henry Irving, Edmund Kean, Edwin Booth, Madam Vestris, Florenz Ziegfeld and the Barrymores. However, as the century unfolded more appreciation was given to playwrights. Through the 30's and 40's American writers such as Maxwell Anderson, Tennessee Williams, Eugene O'Neill and Arthur Miller were celebrated for their individual aesthetics and storytelling, sometimes serving as the main attraction to a production over the stars or director.

Similarly in England, the postwar rise of Harold Pinter, Joe Orton, John Osborne, Samuel Beckett and others established writers as commercial draws themselves. Building on a foundation of playwright appreciation laid by Oscar Wilde, W.S. Gilbert, George Bernard Shaw and others at the cusp of the centuries, the intentions of modern playwrights became just as valued (and in some cases more valued) than the director and the performers. As a result, investment in preserving and enhancing the playwright's vision gained value.

Still, it wasn't until the 1990's that production dramaturgy was widely accepted in British theatre.¹⁷ How this practice was understood and applied varied widely from company to company, director to director, playwright to playwright.

Today British theatres still employ staff Literary Managers, while only a handful retain full time dramaturgs. Production dramaturgs tend to be recruited on a project-to-project basis. Degrees in dramaturgy are offered at British universities and professional dramaturgical associations such as the LMDA (The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of America) have been founded. National playwriting organizations like the Dramatists' Guild of America, Playwrights Studio Scotland, the Playwrights Guild of Canada, the Writers Guild of Great Britain and more offer some form of dramaturgy to their members as a matter of course. With many theatres also investing in the creation of new work, dramaturgical development of text for production is an accepted, if still not standardized craft.

¹⁷ Luckhurst, Mary. 2006 *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (New York, Cambridge University Press)

3. DRAMATURGICAL TRANSFORMATION IN 21ST CENTURY SCOTLAND

In her essential volume *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (2006) Mary Luckhurst charts the progress of the craft from its conceptual birth with *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767) up to present day Britain. Luckhurst's studies tend to focus on developments in English theatre with only a passing reference to other regions of the UK. She misses out on much of the history of play development in Scotland, especially the transformative elements that emerged in the new century.¹⁸

To supplement Luckhurst's studies and provide context to my examination of current Scottish play development, a quick overview of the history of Scottish dramaturgy is worth considering.

¹⁸ To be fair, the evolving production dramaturgy of Scotland is often overshadowed in England and other countries in historic examinations of the craft. Even excellent texts such as Cathy Truner and Synne K. Behrndt's *Dramaturgy and Performance* (2008), Katalin Trencseny's *Dramaturgy in the Making* (2015) and her collection of essays in *New Dramaturgy* (2014) (edited with Bernadette Cochrane) pay scant attention to Scotland as an independent artistic entity.

3.1 A BRIEF HISTORY OF SCOTTISH PLAY DEVELOPMENT

Scotland is a land of storytellers with traditions stretching back centuries. Despite the discouragement of formal theatre from the Post-Reformation churches, folk traditions continued as it had for centuries in the form of travelling entertainers and storytellers.¹⁹ One can also see forms of improvisational theatre in festivals, fairs and ceilidh celebrations with their impromptu performances and reconfiguration of well-known tales.

Historically speaking, with few exceptions²⁰, there was very little in the way of text-based productions created in Scotland until the 18th century when a fascination with Highland history and legend took hold. Several Scottish literati tried their hands at dramatic writing. Rooted in the romance of the lost cause, most of these scripts were intended for publication rather than production, readers rather than actors. The lack of any preparatory process for the text's stage production is evident. Few of these scripts found distinction; but they laid the groundwork for playwriting to blossom in the 19th century.

By the middle of the 19th century more traditional forms of drama with scripts, actors and stages arose with touring folk artists being replaced with professional theatre troupes from London. Inevitably they presented stories and characters that marginalized the Scottish experience.²¹ Although they deeply desired to see their own stories theatricalized, it is little wonder that playwrights of Victorian Scotland aped the model of London theatres where artistic decisions were led by literary managers and leading actors. The English model of theatre creation was paramount. The success of Scottish play writing was often more measured by how well it was received in England rather than in Scotland.

¹⁹ Reid, Trish. 2013. *Theatre & Scotland*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) [Kindle edition]

²⁰ One of those exceptions was Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* first performed in 1552, a fully scripted play that draws on the traditions of medieval mystery plays.

²¹ McDonald, Jan. 2008. "Towards National Identities: Theatre in Scotland". *The Cambridge History of British Theatre* (Cambridge Histories Online. Cambridge University Press) p. 197

Many notable Scottish playwrights such as J. M. Barrie, Joanna Baillie, James Bridie and others rose to prominence. Because of the prevalent actor/manager model, these writers could only direct the dramaturgy of their plays by creating their own theatre companies as James Bridie did with Citizens Theatre late in his career. However, there is little evidence that play development was regarded as a separate theatre craft. In 1949 James Bridie wrote a pamphlet entitled *Dramaturgy in Scotland* using the term as a descriptor of a body of plays rather than of play development or theatrical academia suggesting that even though the term was known in Britain it was not understood the way Lessing intended.²²

1941 saw the founding of the influential Glasgow Unity Theatre. Founded with the explicit goal of presenting theatre by and for working class audiences although its repertoire included productions of existing plays, it was immediately invested in giving a theatrical voice to current social issues and fuel reform. The very nature of the company demanded new plays portraying the current societal failures. Electrifying relevant plays such as Ena Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep* (1948) and *The Gorbals Story* (1946) connected with huge enthusiastic audiences. A powerful engine of theatrical invention, nonetheless the company seems to have followed the standard models of British play development.

However Scottish theatrical dogma was challenged when both the Edinburgh International Festival and its upstart sister the Fringe debuted in 1947. The theatrical community was steadily exposed to a wide range of new theatrical ideas of style, content, imagery and methodology. This is not to say that Scotland did not already have artists aching to apply new ideas. It was this very desire that was one of original impulses of the Edinburgh Fringe. Glasgow Unity was one of the eight companies who challenged their lack of inclusion in the Edinburgh Festival, defiantly staging *The Gorbals Story* at what is now considered the first Fringe.

Through their interactions with artists from around the world both festivals challenged formerly inflexible notions and catalysed a new desire to explore and expand. Meanwhile the Fringe provided a stage for native artists to experiment with innovative, personal productions outside the hidebound theatre institutions. New approaches in play development, especially Brechtian dramaturgy, gained

²² Bridie, James. 1949 *Dramaturgy in Scotland* (Glasgow, Royal Philosophical Society of Glasgow)

notice and found expression in the form of devised work and reinvention of established play texts. In *Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre* (2006) Mary Luckhurst offers a detailed description of the specifics of the emergence of modern English dramaturgy but suffice it to say that dramaturgy as development practice did not truly arrive in the UK until the 1960's and took even longer before most theatre artists ceased to regard it as something both offputtingly foreign and redundant to the process of play creation. Although Kenneth Tynan's tenure as dramaturg at the National Theatre is rightly noted as a historic landmark in British theatre, less notice is taken of the fact that the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh was also employing dramaturgs from the time of its founding in 1963.²³

Terry Lane, the first Traverse artistic director, offered an inaugural season featuring eight British premieres and a world premiere: Stanley Evelin's *The Balachites*.²⁴ The next year, under the eye of new artistic director Jim Haynes, the Traverse produced four new plays including the titillatingly titled *You Will Come to Love Your Sperm Test* which clearly signalled a rejection of the sentimental plays of heroic Highland histories and tragic working-class portraits dominating Scottish plays up until then while embracing Music Hall revelry.

The Traverse's investment in new work was part of the transformation of theatre in mid-twentieth century Britain, the result of post-war optimism and more accessible post-secondary education.²⁴ Both these factors led to the acceptance of new artistic ideas with optimistic confidence. The Traverse Theatre became a fertile wellspring of theatrical premieres, the acknowledged challenger of tradition and reliable source of new Scottish plays.

The explosion of television and movie writing that started in the 1950's and expanded through the rest of the century also led to acceptance of the dramaturg as part of the play development apparatus. As Kellagher pointed out the role of the script editor was well established and accepted in the world of screenwriting, so writers who had the opportunity to work in the field accepted as simple fact the existence of an expert who would routinely review, discuss, and often rewrite a writer's scripts. The

²³ McMillan, Joyce and John Carnegie. 1988 *The Traverse Theatre Story 1963-1988* /by Joyce McMillan with a Chronology of Productions Mounted by the Traverse Theatre During Its First 25 Years Compiled by John Carnegie. (London, Methuen Drama)

²⁴ Ibid

comparable role of the dramaturg in theatre was no longer seen as something alien.²⁵

Despite earlier generations' suspicions of dramaturgy as something foreign and intrusive the growing interest in new work supported new mechanisms to serve play development. With the birth of the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company in 1965 another venue for the new native plays was established even if it only happened on occasion. Scottish companies resolved to tell more authentic Scottish stories. Theatres desired the invention of a dramatic Scottish canon which in turn required investment in the creation of more new plays.

In the early 1960's both the Citizens Theatre and the Lyceum Theatre expressly sought to establish themselves as a Scottish national theatre.²⁶ Both companies pursued a traditional model of a national theatre centred on a single building and locale as had been followed by England, France, Germany and Hungary. Although the Traverse and the Fringe offered new ideas in dramaturgy, it is clear that the leaders of this movement were rooted in traditional British forms of play development. Although the competition between Citizens and the Lyceum sparked new discussions of what form a Scottish national theatre should take, neither initiative was successful in achieving national theatre status.

Feeling empowered to break free of English influences and the stagnancy of historic romance 1960's and 70's proved to be a richly energetic period in Scottish theatre with new theatre companies emerging and inspired artists breaking through the obstacles of traditional form and content.²⁷

John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1972) proved a theatrical revelation by recontextualizing history and culture in a form that embraced the tradition of touring players with music, comedy, song and audience participation while disposing of London's monopoly on culture and story. *The Cheviot* practiced a dramaturgy born out of Brechtian creative collaboration rather than any formal process curated by a specialized individual. John McGrath was the production's playwright, but

²⁵ Interview with Rosie Kellagher 15 August 2022, Fed Café, Edinburgh

²⁶ Leach, Robert. "The Short, Astonishing History of the National Theatre of Scotland" *New Theatre Quarterly*, 05/2007, Volume 23, Issue 2, 171-183. Web. P. 172

²⁷ Reid, Trish. 2013. *Theatre & Scotland*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan) [Kindle edition]

all the company members contributed to the script. The cast was dispatched to do their own historic research. Their results were shared, and it was from this discussion that McGrath drew inspiration and crafted a script.²⁸ The script was further refined in rehearsal with all company members taking part. The show also folded in Music Hall traditions with its use of direct address, songs and audience interaction. The result was one of Scotland's most consequential plays. It pointed to an exciting new way to create theatre that introduced new ways of engaging with the audience while continuing the country's long fascination with its own history. Its effect on Scottish play creation was nothing less than electrifying.

Spurred by this success McGrath partnered with Elizabeth MacLennan, David MacLennan and other talented artists to create 7:84 (1971), a company determined to give voice to the disenfranchised and showcase social issues.²⁹ Later David MacLennan would establish the similarly issue oriented company and musically inclined Wildcat Stage Productions (1978) and the populist inspired A Play, a Pie and a Pint (2004). Companies such as TAG³⁰ (1967) and Borderline (1974) exerted enormous influence and sparked further explorations in play creation. Although scripted plays were part of their repertoire, these modern companies also explored new dramaturgies through collective creation, devised work and audience participation. They also reintroduced the ancient tradition of travelling performers by touring to towns and villages throughout the nation.

Native playwrights had always been determined to express a uniquely Scottish voice and finally freed from its ossified traditional approaches turned a critical lens to contemporary society. Scottish theatres not only commissioned new plays, but revived older plays and gave them fresh perspectives. Pioneering Scottish plays such as *Men Should Weep* (1982, 7:84) and Robert MacLennan's 1937 play *Jamie the Saxt* (1982, Scottish Theatre Company) were revitalized and found new life on modern stages. Even Lyndsay's *Ane Pleasant Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* received new re-inventions including a 1973 production at the Edinburgh Fringe.

²⁸ Mackenney, Linda 'The People's Story: 7:84 Scotland' *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* Stevenson, Randall and Gavin Wallace editors. 1996 (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press) p. 66

²⁹ Ibid p. 65

³⁰ Formerly Citizens' Theatre for Youth. TAG is an acronym for Theatre About Glasgow although its current program extends beyond the city.

The same period saw the creation of explosively distinct Scottish new plays such as Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit* (1976, Traverse), Tony Roper's *The Steamie* (1987, Wildcat) and John Byrne's influential *The Slab Boys* (1978, Traverse). The latter underwent eighteen drafts in the three years before its premiere at the Traverse which implies a sustained dedication to its dramaturgy.³¹

Other new plays of the time, such as Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987, Lyceum), explored Scottish history through contemporary lenses such as feminism, political power, class and sexuality. Many of these plays would grow into contemporary classics and began filling a growing Scottish dramatic catalogue.

A new global perspective led to Scottish theatres embracing an international repertoire in the 1980s. Multiple works by classic French dramatist Molière, Canadian Michel Tremblay and Italian Dario Fo were translated into contemporary settings and expressed in all the richness and variety of the nation's tongues whether it was standard English, regional dialects, Gaelic or others.³² During his time as resident playwright at the Citizens (1971-2003), Robert David MacDonald produced more than seventy translations from ten different languages.³³ New global perspectives can be found in plays such as David Greig's *Europe* (1994) and Stephen Greenhorn's *Passing Places* (1997). For much of the twentieth century Scottish Theatre artists obsessively fixed on London for affirmation, but now they indulged in a brave new world of theatre and found new inspirations and expressions.

New work was also being produced in innovative ways. At the Citizens the artistic triumvirate of director Giles Havergal, designer Philip Prowse and resident playwright/dramaturg MacDonald created a highly visual form of theatre inspired by Brechtian ideas.³⁴ For a time, this created a schism with native theatre writers whose more traditional approaches were eschewed by a company previously

³¹ Fleming, Morna "John Byrne's The Slab Boys" *Association for Scottish Literature*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JILKEC7732c&ab_channel=ASL> [accessed 1 September 2023]

³² Hutchison, David. 'Glasgow and Its Citizens' *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* Stevenson, Randall and Gavin Wallace editors. 1996 (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press) p. 61

³³ Ibid p.59

³⁴ Ibid p. 59

embraced Scottish history and realism. For a time, the MacDonald was the only writer of new work represented in the Citizens' seasons.³⁵ When the Tron Theatre opened in 1982 it gave opportunities for the staging of Scottish playwrights while at the same time producing writers from international repertoire including Americans Sam Shepard and David Mamet. Michel Tremblay's plays translated into Scottish vernacular found repeated success.³⁶

In 1990 when Glasgow was declared the latest European City of Culture it further expanded the sense of what was artistically possible in the country. It was generally felt that Scotland had now proven that it was as significant as any other major cultural centres. Speaking of the event thirty years later Bob Palmer, who played an organizational role, said

"It fired people's imaginations as to what Glasgow was capable of developing. You could continue working creatively in a place like Glasgow without having to go down to London."³⁷

The City of Culture led to an investment in cultural infrastructure that has supported the arts industry into the present. Millions of people from around the world came to Scotland to attend exhibitions, concerts and shows. Essential performance venues such as the Tramway and the Arches were established while older ones received renovations and upgrades. But just as importantly, a new

³⁵ Hutchison, David. 'Glasgow and Its Citizens' *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* Stevenson, Randall and Gavin Wallace editors. 1996 (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press) p. 60

³⁶ Findlay, Bill. 'Talking in Tongues: Scottish Translations 1970-1995' *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* Stevenson, Randall and Gavin Wallace editors. 1996 (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press) p. 189

³⁷ Haugh, Jack. 18 July 2020. 'Remembering Glasgow's year as European Capital of Culture 30 years on' *Glasgow Times* <<https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/18579610.remembering-glasgows-year-european-capital-culture-30-years/>> [accessed 13 August 2023]

confidence and sense of artistic vigour was born.³⁸

Glasgow is now home to more than 100 cultural organisations and five of Scotland's six internationally renowned national performing arts companies. Such has been its growth in the three decades since 1990, it was listed as the top cultural and creative centre in the UK in a report from the European Commission last year.³⁸

No doubt this newfound confidence energized the playwrights 1990s' as they pursued a deeply rooted desire to engage in a re-examination of accepted histories that marked the decade.³⁹

By the end of the twentieth century Scottish pride in its distinctiveness was further bolstered by the establishment of self-government allowing the country for the first time to exercise direct control over its budget and to directly fund its own art. First Minister Donald Dewar enthusiastically stated that the Scottish people “must celebrate our unique cultural and natural heritage.”⁴⁰ The new Scottish Executive recognised that theatre and the creative arts in general were offered great power in expressing the nation’s new cultural confidence.⁴²

³⁸ uncredited. 15 October 2020. ‘What impact has the 1990 City of Culture had on Glasgow - 30 years on?’ *The Scotsman* <<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/what-impact-has-the-1990-city-of-culture-had-on-glasgow-30-years-on-3000426>> [accessed 13 August 2023]

³⁹ Haugh, Jack. 18 July 2020. ‘Remembering Glasgow's year as European Capital of Culture 30 years on’ *Glasgow Times* <<https://www.glasgowtimes.co.uk/news/18579610.remembering-glasgows-year-european-capital-culture-30-years/>> [accessed 13 August 2023]

⁴⁰ Leach, Robert. “The Short, Astonishing History of the National Theatre of Scotland” *New Theatre Quarterly*, 05/2007, Volume 23, Issue 2 p. 172

⁴¹ speech delivered by Donald Dewar to the assembled Scottish parliament 16 June 1999

⁴² Reid, Trish. “From Scenes Like These Old Scotia’s Grandeur Springs’: The New National Theatre of Scotland.”. *Contemporary Theatre Review*. 17.2. (2007): 191-201. Web. P. 196

Never a primary interest of UK governance, Scottish arts would enter the twenty-first century with dedicated independent funding, policy and support. Immediate initiatives included incentives for commissions for new Scottish plays especially those that expressed a particular Scottish perspective and the establishment of a national theatre (see page 26). Supported and encouraged by public investment, systems of play development were nurtured in established theatres while dramaturgs with professional accreditation arose.⁴³

Entering the twenty-first century, Scottish theatres were determined to bring their own voices to the stage rather than relying on old reliable scripts and shows from the West End. Many Scottish theatre artists now accepted a specialized dramaturgy as a legitimate part of the playwriting process and some sort of refinement of a new text is considered desirable in preparing for any premiere.⁴⁴

But what exactly constituted dramaturgy remained difficult to define. What exactly constitutes dramaturgy? Is it always necessary? Was it a partnership limited to the playwright, director and dramaturg? Should the dramaturg be part of the rehearsal process? Is dramaturgy limited to the text? Does dramaturgy require a specialized dramaturg? What kind of education does a dramaturg require? In Scottish theatres, as in English language theatres around the world, opinions about dramaturgy vary from artist to artist, from writer to writer, from academic to academic. As a historically recent arrival in a centuries old theatre tradition many still regard dramaturgy as a puzzle piece still seeking a comfortable fit, though there is little doubt that it fits in somewhere.

At present only the National Theatre of Scotland employs a full-time dramaturg. The institutional duties of the Lessing model of dramaturgy have made little entry into theatre company staffs. Often if a dramaturg is hired it will be to assist a playwright on the creation of a script or helping guide the play from script to stage.

Though there is a robust interest in new plays, some of Scotland's greatest presenters of new work suffered setbacks. 7:48 closed in 2008 as did the Arches in 2015. Like the equally influential Wildcat

⁴³ Interview with Rosie Kellagher 15 August 2022, Fed Café, Edinburgh

⁴⁴ Interview with Lousie Stephens 6 February 2022, conducted over phone

before them in 1996, they folded not due to artistic failure or lack of audiences, but due to an abrupt end to financial support from major funders.⁴⁵

Despite those significant losses, a new era of dramaturgy and play development in Scotland was well underway. Starting in 2004 three new institutions emerged that each in its own way transformed the world of Scottish playwriting, offering new opportunities and dramaturgical resources while injecting fresh energy and new perspectives in the creation of Scottish plays.

⁴⁵ Interview with David Anderson, 12 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow

Playwrights' Studio Scotland

3.2 Playwrights' Studio of Scotland: A Playwright's Ally

Writing is widely regarded as a solitary exercise. However, there is no reason a playwright is required to make the journey completely bereft of assistance. A supply of resources, encouragement, and mentorship will supplement and support the playwright's journey and inevitably lead to a better script.

Starting in 2004 Playwrights' Studio Scotland has devoted its energies to providing those valuable offerings.

Growing out of Playwrights Scotland, a loose volunteer organization of writers designed to support one another, PSS was designed to offer substantive, practical resources to theatre writers. This required funding which in turn required a formal organization with a clear mandate and accountability. As stated in their first tri-annual report in 2007, the Studio's missions and objectives are:

“Delivering our mission to directly engage the people of Scotland with new playwriting, we will seek to –

- Improve access to plays;
- Identify new talent;
- Increase number of new plays produced;

Responding to our mission to raise the standard of plays for presentation to the public, we will-

- Develop quality of new plays;
- Develop skills and experience of playwrights;
- Make best use of existing skills, experience and contacts of the sector”⁴⁶

The Studio's services are offered to playwrights of every level of experience at every stage of their

⁴⁶ *Playwrights Studio Scotland Review April 2004-March 2007*

writing, they include (but are not limited to) mentorship programs for developing writers, script reading services to provide feedback and notes on nascent writing projects, a library of play, private workspaces, and public readings of plays in progress. The Studio also offers financial and practical support through a series of bursaries, resources for disabled playwrights, guidance for self-led projects and acts as a communications hub for the playwriting community. It regularly publishes a newsletter that keeps members apprised of the latest developments in playwriting as well as news of competitions and other opportunities to share their work. Services are offered in both English and Gaelic.

Unlike many play development agencies around the world, Playwrights Studio Scotland does not require a membership fee to make use of their resources. The only necessary qualifications are residence in Scotland and desire to create and explore.

PSS began with an ambitious and comprehensive approach to assisting its clients. Organized and led by people with playwriting experience themselves, the organization's vision is stubbornly focused on artists and their needs.

PSS is also an active seeker of new voices. They have organized playwriting workshops that have travelled to towns throughout Scotland encouraging the exploration of theatre writing with people who might not otherwise consider the artform.⁴⁷ Emerging playwrights are further encouraged by the Studio's sponsorship of playwriting competitions and long-term development programs.

The resources provided by the Studio are diverse and readily available. Prior to the Studio's emergence, dramaturgical support was largely only available through the limited and curated resources of theatre companies. Often writers were left to rely on their own ingenuity.

PSS provides a more egalitarian way of providing textual dramaturgy while also encouraging the expansion of the artform across the country. Its democratization of development meant that investment in play creation could occur before a theatre's commitment was certain. Dramaturgy could be offered from the earliest stages of script development.

⁴⁷ The *Inspire* workshops are two-hour sessions introducing and exploring basic concepts of playwriting. participation is limited to preproduction. If a script is adopted for production dramaturgy becomes the company's responsibility.

From its first year of operations Playwrights' Studio found its services not only in demand but also highly valued. At present it receives hundreds of requests for dramaturgical aid annually and there are no signs of that activity is slowing down.



THE
WORLD FAMOUS
A PLAY A PIE
AND
A PINT

3.3 A Play, a Pie and a Pint: Audacity and Opportunity

The same year Playwrights Studio Scotland began fuelling the creation of plays, a company exploded on the scene that would prove to possess an unprecedentedly voracious appetite for new work. Conceived on a small scale with a populist ethos, the little company in Glasgow's Oran Mor has proven itself to be radically transformative for play development landscape. A Play, a Pie and a Pint has thoroughly shaken the foundational ideas of how a play can be created and has done so with an almost piratical glee.

PPP was the brainchild of David MacLennan, a long-time theatre creator known for his unconventional and populist ideas. First with 7:84 and then as the artistic director of Wildcat Stage Productions, MacLennan championed a dramatic form that spoke directly to the audience in defiance of accepted theatre practices. Always a creative rebel, he found himself particularly frustrated with the established form of artistic funding especially after his company Wildcat Stage Productions was forced to dissolve when in 1996 it was unexpectedly denied vital financial from Creative Scotland.

As a result, he determined to build a kind of theatre that would not be dependent on outside funding and approval but would be able to survive by its own wits and box office, a populist theatre that would connect directly with its audience while providing opportunities for artists to pursue their own iconoclastic visions.

He had already been thinking about a new way theatre might relate with the public after a trip to Cuba. While there he

“passed a sugar field where the cutters were lying around with their sandwiches and their flasks, and there was a jazz band on a loader at the side of the field playing music. And it had a huge impact on me. And I thought how wonderful it is to see some artistic cultural experience happening in just a normal part of life, while you’re having a bite to eat.”⁴⁸

The possibilities inherent in lunch time entertainment further solidified for him when he and his frequent collaborator Dave Anderson partnered on a successful production presented at Bewley’s Café in Dublin in 2004.⁴⁹

With a vivid vision of a lunch time theatre program percolating in his mind, MacLennan ran into Colin Beattie, an old friend who worked with him at the Mayfest festival of political theatre. Beattie had purchased an enormous old church well situated in Glasgow’s West End. He was renovating the building into a multipurpose entertainment venue with a pub, restaurant, music space and other amenities. With possibility of a secure performance venue suddenly offered to him, MacLennan proposed the idea of a lunch time theatre series.⁵⁰ Beattie became an enthusiastic supporter of the venture and committed to supporting the venture for four to five years. When the church reincarnated as Oran Mor, *A Play a Pie and a Pint* debuted as well.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *New Writing in a Populist Context: A Play, a Pie and a Pint* by Nichols, *Deana Theatre History Studies*; Pleasant Hill Vol. 36, (2017): 266-285,360.

⁴⁹ Interview with David Anderson, 12 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Dave Anderson reports that MacLennan originally wanted to call the company *A Pie, a Pint and a Play* before being convinced to give the show top billing. Interview with David Anderson, 12 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow.

Lunch time theatre is nothing new. But MacLennan’s idea for content was radical. He firmly believed that if given a chance dozens of Scottish writers would leap at an opportunity to be produced professionally. There was also a deep pool of eager actors and directors to be drawn from. And so, he resolved to produce a new play every week of the season. Every seven days would see a newly written play with a new cast in a new production that would run for six days before being succeeded by another new play.

Some would call the idea audacious. Others would call it insane.

And yet right from the beginning playwrights eagerly responded. Dave Anderson reports that there has never been a shortage of plays to choose from.⁵² Directors and actors were similarly enthused.

The early years were challenging. The first venue in Oran Mor’s high-profile upper floor auditorium space proved an unworkable (“rubbish” in Dave Anderson’s words) venue due to echoing high ceilings and expansive windows, meaning the stage had to move to a more practical but less visible stage in the basement. Audiences were small and many theatre artists were sceptical. The company lost money for the first two years, but Colin Beattie underwrote the losses as an investment in future success.

By the third year PPP was breaking even. By the fourth it was turning a profit.

Today PPP regularly sells out performances and has developed a loyal audience base who come to see all the company’s productions, more than thirty a year. Throughout MacLennan’s tenure as Artistic Director, PPP steadfastly refused to apply for funding, thriving on only the revenue from the box-office.⁵³

⁵² Interview with David Anderson, 12 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow

⁵³ That policy has changed with new artistic leadership. PPP now receives funding from Creative Scotland and other sources theoretically allowing more financial security. It is likely given his experience at Wildcat, MacLennan would argue otherwise. Interview with Jemima Levick, 7 September 2022

PPP is a unique company with an open-minded approach to bringing new plays to the stage.

Unsurprisingly it has transformed the world of Scottish playwrights. The requirement for a huge volume of material changed the usual ratio between play supply and production demand. It upended the traditional economic model of playwriting. In most other cities there are a hugely limited number of opportunities to bring a new play to the stage. Playwrights are dependent on the largesse and approval of artistic directors. Many companies regard new work as a risky proposition and theatres willing to produce world premieres are often limit themselves to one a year. And because a new script development requires investment, many artistic directors view new work as too costly.

The only other option for a theatre writer is self-production which often means time and resources beyond those of an individual playwright. Even if produced, an independent production can struggle to find attention and audience.

For many years the Traverse Theatre was Scotland's leading producer of new work, but at the time they limited themselves to two or three premieres a year with the balance of the season made up of innovative reinterpretations and remounts. Because supply of new scripts hugely exceeded demand a writer might spend years waiting for even a reply from producers let alone an expression of any interest.

However, PPP's monstrous need massively multiplied the number of production opportunities. Certainly, being produced at Oran Mor necessitated that a playwright might have to scale back their expectations in terms of production values and running time,⁵⁴ but to many writers, the chance of a production is all the incentive they needed to seek out Maclennan's little stage in the basement.

Literally hundreds of playwrights found their work accepted and produced on the Oran Mor stage. Playwrights throughout the country and overseas have reaped the many benefits of having a play

⁵⁴ A production must fit on to the small stage at Oran Mor which places limits on cast size and production scale. The show must also be suitable for lunch hour meaning that it must run about 50-55 minutes.

professionally produced. For established playwrights PPP provides an opportunity to not only test out ideas destined for grander productions, but also finally find a home for plays that are too challenging for conventional companies. For rising stars the company offers production experience, a chance to develop, a possibility of being noticed and an entry on the cv.

Artists who have never had an opportunity to consider writing for the stage can test the theatrical waters of Oran Mor. Actors, directors, journalists, poets, and other individuals have all had a chance to test their skills. Because PPP's needs are so vast, they can offer a production to anyone who has a worthy script. It is difficult to imagine any other theatre company doing the same.

As the company grew and the audiences swelled, a royalty payment based on a percentage of the house became quite attractive. The company can all but guarantee a respectable audience will come see a playwright's work.

PPP's production model has levelled access to play development and has made dramatic presentation somewhat less precious. Their enthusiastic audiences are rewarded with fresh work born of their community. It is theatre that speaks in a variety of voices while empowering playwrights and encouraging them to create.

Playwriting is often a tough job. Disappointments are manifest. But PPP's merry-go-round of programming offers new chances and new hopes to writers of all kinds.

David Maclennan passed away in 2014, but his legacy endures and thrives; a populist theatre providing a rich and unending buffet of theatrical entertainment.

The PPP model of play development is more closely examined in Case Study 6 (page 80).



3.4 The National Theatre of Scotland: The Nation Finds Expression

The National Theatre of Scotland was a cultural dream that was lifetimes in the making. Although it was likely discussed long before, the desire for a national theatre was first expressed in 1822 coinciding with the royal visit of George IV.⁵⁵ However, there were no immediate answers to questions about funding, repertoire, and management. In addition, with the only existing examples based in signature buildings, there was ferocious debate whether to build in Glasgow or Edinburgh. Through the twentieth century there were several attempts to independently create a national theatre in both cities, but without concrete public support there was no means to declare any existing company the national one. Although the value of a national theatre was promoted and pursued by Scottish notables as James Bridie, Alfred Wareing and many other prominent members of the theatre community, a Scottish national theatre was not a pressing matter for the UK government. Even a funding commitment from the Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1949 could not move matters forward.⁵⁶

However, with devolution in 1999 an independent Scottish government prioritized cultural activities and agreed to establish a national theatre. In 2000 the Education, Culture and Sport Committee of the Scottish parliament urged

⁵⁴ Reid, Trish. "From Scenes Like These Old Scotia's Grandeur Springs': The New National Theatre of Scotland." Contemporary Theatre Review. 17.2. (2007): 191-201. Web.

⁵⁵ Ibid

...the establishment of a national theatre company to commission a national theatre season from artists and companies.⁵⁷

The exact nature of this national theatre was a matter of fierce debate. There were many who feared that it could fall into the trap of the English National Theatre and become “a building-based institution that would sap funding and energy from an already underfunded sector”.⁵⁸

In a rare but eminently practical move the government turned to the artists rather than consultants and bureaucrats for guidance. The Scottish Arts Council created a working group to explore options, reach conclusions and deliver recommendations which the government, to its credit, took to heart and acted upon.

In 2006 the dream of a Scottish National Theatre was finally fulfilled.

There was never any doubt that a Scottish national theatre’s mission would be largely focused dramatizing Scottish culture, but the final form of the National Theatre was surprisingly novel. Although nationally funded, the organization is run entirely by artists without political management or direction. Rather than investing in a landmark building, the theatre would be present in cities, towns and villages across the country (reflective in part of the long native tradition of touring shows).⁵⁹ It

⁵⁷ Education, Culture, Committee, and Sport, First Report (SP Paper 65, 2000) quoted in Leach, Robert. “The Short, Astonishing History of the National Theatre of Scotland” *New Theatre Quarterly*, 05/2007, Volume 23, Issue 2, 171-183. Web.

⁵⁸ McMillan, Joyce. *Scotsman* (27 January 2005) quoted in Reid, Trish. “From Scenes Like These Old Scotia’s Grandeur Springs’: The New National Theatre of Scotland.” *Contemporary Theatre Review*. 17.2. (2007): 191-201. Web.

⁵⁹ Although a dedication to site specific performance rather than in a theatre building is quite innovative for a major theatre let alone a national one, the concept was well established in the Scottish theatre community with companies such as Grid Iron, Vanishing Point, Theatre Cryptic and others regularly presenting productions in found locations.

would not only create productions, but also partner with other companies and established theatre producers.⁶⁰

As regards playwrights, the most pertinent sections of company's guiding document stated:

“• The National Theatre of Scotland will commission existing theatres and theatre companies, or bring together directors, writers, designers, and performers in new combinations to create productions that will play in theatres and other venues up and down the country.

• The National Theatre of Scotland will develop a quality repertoire originating in Scotland. This will include new work, existing work, and the drama of other countries and cultures to which a range of Scottish insights, language, and sensibility can be applied.”⁶¹

These statements made clear that the National Theatre would be required to invest in native theatre creators. With a substantial annual budget of several million pounds NTS immediately and aggressively pursued its mission and flurries of commissions were offered to playwrights all over the country.⁶²

Playwright Jo Clifford remembers the energetic period after the establishment of the NTS as time when it seemed every writer was getting a commission of some sort.⁶³ Compared with rocky and fitful development of the National Theatre in England, NTS's spirited and assured rise to respected prominence is a credit to the people who created the template but most especially to the dedicated artists who brought it to life.

⁶⁰ The Short, *Astonishing History of the National Theatre of Scotland* by Leach, Robert *New Theatre Quarterly*, 05/2007, Volume 23, Issue 2

⁶¹ The Short, *Astonishing History of the National Theatre of Scotland* by Leach, Robert *New Theatre Quarterly*, 05/2007, Volume 23, Issue 2

⁶² *Ibid*

⁶³ Interview with Jo Clifford 25 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

In the eighteen years of its existence NTS has found great success while also transforming the landscape for Scottish playwrights. The arrival of the landmark theatre created new opportunities for playwrights that went well beyond just another artistic director to mail a script to. NTS was willing to invest monetary resources into the community, inspiring new plays fit for the theatre (which could support productions of a scale unthinkable at any other company) and providing incentives for writers to continue to conceive grander work for the stage.

The theatre's mandate empowered local playwrights by placing value on their unique perspectives and personal stories. And perhaps just as important it provided a reliable, stable axis in the ever-evolving world of Scottish theatre.⁶⁴ It also had the resources to establish dramaturgical systems, hire production dramaturgs and unlike smaller companies invest in years long dramaturgy.

If nothing else, it affirmed that Scottish society valued its culture.

NTS finds new work in a variety of ways. They accept proposals, they partner with other company's projects, and they will propose projects to theatre artists.⁶⁵

With its mandate of promoting Scottish identity, it is not surprising that much of the new work created dramatizes Scottish history. The history and myths told by a culture to itself are some of the strongest foundations and signifiers of identity. These include new plays such as *The Black Watch*, *Burns* and the *James* plays as well as new productions of *MacBeth* and *Mary Stuart*. They have also supported the creation of plays with more contemporary settings such as *Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour* and plays with only a tangential connection to Scotland such as *The Wolves in the Walls* based on the children's novel by English writer Neil Gaiman. In short, the company's play vision, while favouring Scottish histories, is quite eclectic.

NTS is the only Scottish theatre company that employs a full-time dramaturg in the person of Rosie Kellagher. However, Kellagher is not the only person involved in dramaturgical work for the company.

⁶⁴ It is notable that in the years following the opening of the National Theatre celebrated companies 7:84 (2008) and the Arches (2015) both unexpectedly closed their doors despite ongoing success.

⁶⁵ Interview with Rosie Kellagher 27 January 2022, conducted over phone

Artistic Director Jackie Wylie is closely involved in all creative responsibilities and once a director is attached to a project, they will be the leading voice in production dramaturgy.⁶⁶

NTS does not bind itself to one approach or model to determine its dramaturgical support. Although textual dramaturgy may follow a prescribed route from readers to artistic management to the production designation, the character of production dramaturgy is determined by the specific needs of the play as determined by an artistic core made up of the staff dramaturg, the artistic director, the head of artistic development, the producer and others.

Kellagher reports

“There is a process to the extent that a play is read, or a proposal is read or a development process is watched and then a conversation is held with the artists involved to see what is the right way to proceed with the piece. So, it’s very much dependent on the piece itself and not the artists.”⁶⁷

Considering the company’s commitment to reflecting diversity of Scottish character, Kellagher believes that openness must be reflected in an adaptable theatrical practice to match the specific needs of individual productions.

However, NTS is not without its critics. As with any government institution there are complaints about bureaucracy and policy. With its mandate to represent and reflect the nation there are lively debates about what that ambition actually means and how it might be achieved. For example, Jo Clifford takes issue with the company’s programming choices.

“I think there is a whole dimension of being a national theatre that I don’t see reflected in their policy. They seem to me to be operating as any other theatre company only with more money... I think they should be considering how to build up a repertoire of

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⁶⁶ Interview with Rosie Kellagher 27 January 2022, conducted over phone

⁶⁷ Ibid

modern... Scottish plays that people would want to do.”⁶⁸

The arrival of the National Theatre of Scotland has created a bounty of opportunities for theatre artists across the nation especially playwrights. For artists devoted to the development of new work it has provided support for daring, ambitious work beyond the means of other companies. For Scottish writers it has established a steady, reliable patron.

⁶⁸ Interview with Jo Clifford 18 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

3.5 2022: Scottish Theatre After the Pandemic

The enforced closure of theatres from March 2020 to August 2021 was foundationally disruptive. The months before were filled with uncertainty as the spreading Covid-19 virus discouraged public gatherings and health advisories fluctuated. During lockdown seasons were suspended, development plans were disrupted, contracts were cancelled, and careers sidelined. Huge financial, social, and structural sacrifices were made by the entire theatre community. Reliable and important sources of revenue such as touring and teaching simply vanished. Even after restrictions were lifted, companies faced the immense challenges of returning to a stable production model, stretching depleted funds, and wooing back audiences.

During the closures some companies and playwrights simply went into hibernation, while others used the enforced break to their dramaturgical benefit. Many invested further time and resources into developing scripts, one of the few theatrical enterprises that could still be effectively undertaken during lockdown. Some started new play projects. Some devoted further time and resources to scripts already in development. Some already existing projects were reevaluated.

During this period Zinnie Harris' new play was moved from the Royal Court to the Royal Lyceum, writers Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonnell used a delayed premiere to delve deeper into their script, Moray's Right Lines Productions started work on four new scripts while Andy Arnold discovered a new play, provided guidance to its neophyte writer and oversaw its move into production readiness on the main stage. With all this unexpected time that could be dramaturgically applied, it is hardly surprising that many companies opened their post-Covid seasons with high profile new plays.

However, the pandemic deeply wounded British theatres. It is reported that 95% of UK companies were in worse financial shape after Covid than before.⁶⁹ Although the return of stage entertainment was widely welcomed, it is likely that for many theatre organizations it will be some time before coffers will be recovered enough to support risky and ambitious productions once again. And there many theatre producers who see new plays as both.

⁶⁹ Jones, Lora. 16 March 2021 'Theatres Ready to Fight After Year from Hell' *BBC News* <<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-56394404>> [accessed 1 October 2023]

As Alistair Smith wrote in *The Stage*:

The pandemic has been experienced differently by different people. Within theatre, there has been a clear divide between those in staff jobs (broadly protected by the furlough scheme) and the freelance sector, which has been decimated. For some, the pandemic meant their roles effectively ceased to exist or became an interminable exercise in rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic; for others – especially in non-building-based, community-focused companies – they have been busier than ever.⁷⁰

The journey to recovery has been complex. Every theatre organization and every theatre artist had their own singular experience during lockdown, and the nature of their return has been just as unique. The Edinburgh International Festival and the Fringe celebrated their 75th anniversaries by emerging from pandemic restrictions in their usual forms, albeit with fewer productions and reduced audiences.

Nobody expects audiences to immediately return to their pre-pandemic levels and revenue lost will never be recovered. The challenges imposed by the temporary emergency have not vanished but have transformed into institutional difficulties that will haunt companies for years to come. It will be some before Scottish theatre returns to a state approaching that before the pandemic and there are some artists who believe that such levels may never be recovered.

In the case studies contained included this study I shall be providing a brief description of how each play herein was affected was affected by the pandemic.

When restrictions were finally lifted Scottish theatre companies sprang out of the gate eager to be producing again. There were two notable exceptions. Glasgow's Citizens Theatre was understandably severely limited in its abilities to produce due to the agonizingly long reconstruction of its theatre building.

The other however was more mysterious and troubling.

⁷⁰ Smith, Alistair. 5 August 2021. 'Scottish theatres get the go-ahead at last, but it shows the patchiness of UK's recovery' *The Stage* www.thestage.co.uk/opinion/scottish-theatres-get-the-go-ahead-at-last-but-it-shows-the-patchiness-of-uks-recovery [accessed 9 August 2023]



3.6 The Traverse Theatre: Missing in Action in 2022?

Since its inception in 1963 the Traverse Theatre has established a world-renowned reputation as a creator and champion of new plays.

For decades it was viewed the sole creative outlet for Scottish theatre writers and the rare established company willing to take a risk on world premieres. It has been the launching pad for the careers of numerous Scottish playwrights including John Byrne, Gregory Burke, David Greig and Liz Lochhead. The Traverse Theatre's contributions to Scottish culture are monumental and its determination to produce plays by contemporary artists, even when risky and controversial, has been immeasurably successful.

However, in 2022 several theatre artists I encountered expressed worry over the current state of the company. There was a feeling that the Traverse Theatre might be suffering something of an identity crisis.

As the artistic director of the Citizens Theatre Dominic Hill described it:

“Whereas the Traverse was considered the place for new writing, I think now, maybe there is an upswing (in the production of new plays). Certainly the (Citizens Theatre) twenty years ago would never have done a new play and at least 50 percent of what we do now are new plays now. The Lyceum is now run by a playwright so there's an awful lot of new work, so I think... there is more new writing across the board. I wonder if there as much on the ground new... Because the Traverse doesn't produce as much as it used to. That sense of it being some sort of engine house for new writing, I'm not sure it's effect so much now.”⁷¹

⁷¹ Interview conducted at the Citizens Theatre offices, 12 April 2022

As Hill points out many other theatre companies are finding room for premieres in their seasons, thus diminishing the Traverse's unique identity. The arrival of the National Theatre, which was conceived a prominent producer of new plays, led to a huge number of playwrights across the country competing for and gaining commissions.

Further compromising the Traverse's identity was the sudden success of *A Play, a Pie and a Pint* who easily produced more premieres by more playwrights in a single year than the Traverse could offer in a decade. Where the Traverse was once the gatekeeper for local playwrights, PPP offered a bounty of production opportunities.

As a commercial house free of unions and standard contracts, PPP could set its own pay rates and schedules, while the Traverse was bound by professional rates, union hours and the burden of paying the annual costs of a brick-and-mortar theatre building with empty stages (something both the NTS and PPP have avoided⁷² which seems to have economically burdened the Traverse.

The corona virus pandemic presented a double blow to the Traverse's artistic plan. Like every other theatre in the world, they had to find the means to cope with a shuttered venue and cancelled shows, but they also had to contend with the suspension of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. The Traverse Theatre has always had an intimate relationship with the festival. In fact, part of the company's mission statement was that it would operate "with the hope of carrying on the spirit of Edinburgh's festivals."⁷³

The Traverse has always held a place of prominence at the festival deservedly winning a reputation for superior new plays with first class production values. With the Fringe suspended in 2020 and 2021, the Traverse lost the profile, momentum, and revenue those Fringe runs would have provided.

⁷² NTS is famously a "theatre without walls" presenting its productions in a variety of rented and found venues, PPP pays rent for the Oran Mor stage but is not responsible for the building's maintenance throughout the year. Traverse must pay building costs even if the theatre is in enforced idleness.

⁷³ McDonald, Gillian. 20 Nov 2016. 'How Edinburgh's Traverse Theatre is Bringing New Writing Talent to the World' *The Theatre Times*, <<https://thetheatretimes.com/edinburghs-traverse-theatre-bringing-new-writing-talent-world/>> [accessed 7 November, 2022]

It is significant to note that when theatres reopened in the first part of 2022, the Traverse produced no new productions or new plays of any kind, only serving a roadhouse for other companies and a second stage for PPP. In the same period the Royal Lyceum offered its sumptuous debut of *The Scent of Roses*, the Tron shepherded the highly successful *Moorcroft*, Tramway hosted the *Gathered Together Festival* (which included new work and works in progress) while A Play, a Pie and a Pint produced twenty premiere productions.

Novice playwrights Mikey Burnett and Joe McCann had received support and mentorship from the Traverse, but it was Dundee Rep who committed to producing their script. (see page 62) The Traverse would not stage any new plays of its own until the opening of the Fringe in August.

As veteran playwright Jo Clifford observed:

“The whole culture has changed. New plays are much more fashionable than they used to be, so you get places like the Lyceum putting on *Red Ellen*⁷⁴ for instance which used to be unheard of. So that puts places like the Traverse in real difficulty. Now, what’s the point of them?”⁷⁵

The landscape of play creation is changed significantly in the last two decades and the Traverse Theatre is clearly facing new challenges. The thought that it will abandon its role as a creator of exciting new work is absurd, but its long idleness and lack of production in early 2022 has troubling implications for a Scottish artistic community that has seen other highly regarded theatres suddenly shutter their doors.

However even a cursory examination the Traverse Theatre’s history reveals a company that has re-invented itself on a regular basis. Each new Artistic Director has brought their own unique vision for the company. Joyce MacMillan’s *The Traverse Theatre Story* portrays a company that has historically swung repeatedly from radical theatre to conservative programming, from an emphasis on devised

⁷⁴ *Red Ellen* was a biographical play based on the life of Ellen Wilkinson, a Scots social reformer and MP. Written by Caroline Bird, the play was a co-production between the Royal Lyceum Theatre (Edinburgh), Nottingham Playhouse Theatre and Northern Stage. The production opened its run in Nottingham before running in Edinburgh 4 May through May 21 2022.

⁷⁵ Interview with Jo Clifford 18 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

work to investment in texts, from traditional narratives to cutting edge contemporary criticism. Even if the current climate provides a challenge to the Traverse's perceived core identity, the company has proven itself to be able to adapt and persevere. Not every play presented by the company has been a new work or even a radical interpretation of a new work. The imprimatur of the Traverse name carries the promise of quality in and of itself. Amongst equals, it is a theatre company that is recognized by every corner of the nation.

If the Traverse's role as the only producer of new works is being challenged, this must objectively be considered a good thing for Scottish theatre in general. In a nation actively creating a new canon, more new plays reflecting Scottish history, culture and contemporary life is reflective of artistic maturity and confidence. More productions of new plays are grounds for celebration.

Although bruised by the pandemic and facing new challenges in an artistic environment that forces a re-tooling of its identity, the Traverse's long history of success and the dedication of its creative core leaves little doubt that the company is aware of its challenges. Although one may express worry, it seems foolish to be pessimistic about the company's future. A company built on the creation of innovative new work should be able to create an innovative new destiny.

4. CASE STUDIES OF INVISIBLE DRAMATURGY IN SCOTLAND

January to August 2022

4.1 CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Using the resources of the University of Glasgow Library in addition to the collections preserved in the Scottish Theatre Archives, I had been consulting several texts on the subject of dramaturgy with special attention given to the craft's initial intents, central philosophies and intentions. I also took time to review the history of Scottish play development with particular attention to production dramaturgy in the new century. This was a subject not well represented in the literature.

To fill this absence, I reached out to gather the experiences and opinions of practitioners with long careers in the field and region. With the aid of Playwrights Studio Scotland and other organizations I gathered contact information and requested interviews with Scottish theatre artists. Although many of my interview requests received no response, I spoke with several people with long experience including playwright/artistic director Dominic Hill, President of Playwrights Studio Scotland Louise Stephens, veteran playwright Jo Clifford, director/artistic director Andy Arnold, the National Theatre's staff dramaturg Rosie Kellagher and others.

The case studies represented in this document were notable Scottish premieres available in the beginning of 2022. Coming off the Covid-19 pandemic, for some companies the play represented was their first new production since 2020. At the time of the study Pitlochry was still months away from presenting their 2022 season, the Traverse would not be producing until the Fringe in August and the Citizens Theatre was still waiting on the completion of their venue renovation.

The criteria for choosing the plays represented in these case studies came down to four measures.

1. **PRODUCTION** In the wake of the Covid pandemic my choices were limited to companies actually producing new plays. Some organizations were either staging remounts during this period (NTS) or creatively dormant (Traverse, Citizens). The number of productions of any kind in early 2022 was less than usual making it an atypically shorter list of candidates.

2. **SCOTTISH CREATORS** The study was specifically focused on the Scottish experience and therefore every example had to showcase the work of native theatre artists especially playwrights.
3. **ACCESSABILITY** Prior to entering each of the case studies I contacted the companies and creators. Rather than relying on my own interpretations it was important to be allowed to gather insights about each productions' decisions, goals and process. Not every company I reached out to responded to my requests. All the plays represented in the case studies allowed me opportunities to connect with to all the writers, many of the directors, a number of actors and some artistic directors.
4. **VARIETY** I thought it valuable to examine as many different facets of the Scottish theatre community as possible. These six case studies represent four different geographies, three long-standing theatrical establishments, two independent producers and an ad hoc independent company.

In every case I attempted to speak to the playwrights. Although not all my interview requests found success, I interview all the writers of plays represented with exception of *The Bookies*' Mikey Burnett and Joe McCann. However, I was invited to observe these two individuals at work in a period of play development during a portion of the rehearsals and found time to casually converse with them.

I also attempted conversation with each case study's individual most responsible for directing the script's production dramaturgy. In most cases this was the playwright, but with inexperienced playwrights (such as Burnett and McCann as well as *Moorcroft*'s Eilidh Loan) important decisions were made by either the artistic director or the production director. I also spoke to actors involved in the development process to assess their own experiences and find perspective as to whether the stated dramaturgical goals were achieved. They also provided unique insights into play development. For example, as a veteran member of the Dundee repertory company with decades of experience, Irene McDougal's views were useful in framing the history of the institution's history with new work, while providing perspectives on Scottish theatre in general. I also attended performances of all plays represented in the case studies.

Each company had their own expectations about what dramaturgy would provide and different ways of pursuing it. Some of these differences were the result of available resources, but more often they were rooted in the philosophies of the artistic directors and production directors as well as the preferences of the playwrights.

All these case studies demonstrate a dedication to creating the best theatre possible. The fact the none of these companies included the services of a specialized dramaturg or a formal dramaturgical program does not in any way show a lack of regard for the concept of dramaturgy, but rather their determination to provide dramaturgy regardless.



Saskia Ashdown as Sally and Leah Byrne as Caitlin in Zinnie Harris' *The Scent of Roses*, The Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh, February 2022 (promotional photo)

4.2 Choosing Not to Have a Dramaturg

ROYAL LYCEUM THEATRE, Edinburgh

THE SCENT OF ROSES

written and directed by Zinnie Harris

Cast: Saskia Ashdown, Maureen Beatty, Leah Byrne, Peter Forbes, Neve MacIntosh

COMPANY HISTORY

One of Scotland's major theatre producers, the Royal Lyceum has a mainstage season featuring classic and contemporary plays. It regularly brings in productions from other companies. It employs a part time Literary Manager and readers to review play submissions.

THE PLAY

This is an elliptical play that demands second thoughts and considered analysis. Its follows five interrelated characters through six chronological scenes each built around a conversation where one

person seeks an understanding that the other either misunderstands or purposefully refuses to respond to. An inability to connect or comprehend is at the heart of each scene. Meanwhile the world crumbles around them.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Zinnie Harris is one of Scotland's most respected playwrights and is a theatre artist with decades of experience. *The Scent of Roses* was initially intended for production at the Royal Court Theatre, and it was due to be workshopped before being sidelined by the Covid pandemic. Feeling the play would receive more interest and a faster track at the Lyceum, Harris negotiated to have it transferred from the Royal Court to the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh where she was an artistic associate. As such she was empowered to direct her own dramaturgy. Upon transfer to the Lyceum, *The Scent of Roses* received immediate development resources and was scheduled to open in March of 2022.

DEVELOPMENT

By the playwright's own choice there was little formal dramaturgical investment in the play. By the time she has delivered a first draft, she had already been planning her play for years. It only took her a week to start and finish the final draft of the play. The Lyceum provided workshop time to read and test the script, while Ms. Harris also shared her pages with trusted colleagues to gather their opinions and insights.

Aside from writing the play Ms. Harris was also engaged to direct the play. Harris devotes a great deal of thought and planning into creating a script and prefers to leave the majority of the development time prior to production preparation. When she acts both as writer and director, she prefers to compartmentalize the roles trusting in the time already invested. Bringing the script into rehearsal, she treats it as a finished product with the only adjustments being line edits to improve the delivery and sense of the lines. No rewrites are contemplated. Harris believes "You can undermine the rehearsal process if you keep getting your pen out"⁷⁶ Harris' job when directing is to "find the truth of what the writer gave us."⁷⁷ Even if the writer is herself.

⁷⁶ Interview with Zinnie Harris, 4 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

⁷⁷ Ibid

Literary Manager Jackie Crichton attended the readings and observed a couple rehearsals, but Harris is a firm believer in keeping formal production dramaturgy out of the rehearsal hall, insisting “the workshop is a pre-rehearsal process, not a writing process.”⁷⁸

Actor Leah Byrne recalls that although there were transitory moments where Harris would respond as a playwright, she believes that Harris was enormously successful in separating her two roles.

“She was amazing at splitting her brain that way. If Zinnie the playwright came through it was for a moment or two to change a line or to ask if that felt right to say... It made everything so much easier. Playwright Zinnie was in the back of the brain, but director Zinnie was in the room and in the forefront.”⁷⁹

There was a three-week rehearsal period. Aside from testing an alternative scene, Harris refrained from revising the text. After a week of table work, where the script was read and analysed as a finished text, the cast was on their feet preparing for production.

Byrne’s character Caitlin is distinguished by her long rambling streams of dialogue that are both poetically descriptive and arcane in their meaning. As a result, once the play was up on its feet the substance and delivery of these sections required a great deal of attention. Byrne recalls a great deal of cutting of extraneous lines and examinations of the threads of meaning hidden in her barrage of words. But it was less dramaturgy and more the usual polishing of dialogue that occurs under a director’s supervision.

Harris considers this play a departure in her writing career. Usually, she prefers to use more action in storytelling rather than rely on long passages of dialogue. However, since she was creating a play about “what we say to each other”,⁸⁰ she believed the large amount of conversation was not only appropriate but necessary.

⁷⁸ Interview with Zinnie Harris, 4 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

⁷⁹ Interview with Leah Byrne 6 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

⁸⁰ Interview with Zinnie Harris, 4 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

Harris does not plan any further work on the play. She feels that unless there is another production opportunity, the theatre's publication of the play has essentially set it. She says she is more interested in "working in the now" and unless circumstances compel her to revisit the play her work is done.

ANALYSIS

Aside from a couple workshop readings, playwright/director Harris decided to forego any production dramaturgy on *The Scent of Roses*. Her decision to proceed without any play development in the rehearsal hall was an artistic one. Her practice of contemplating and planning her play projects for years before writing them, clearly gives her confidence that all the analysis, exploration and revision that are part of a usual dramaturgy process have already been completed before she sets pen to paper.

The only people she turned to for notes were colleagues of long acquaintance. These were people who could offer not only their own skills and experience, but also knew Harris' canon, style, and preferences.

Considering that it is generally believed that the relationship between director and dramaturg is a synergistic partnership, Harris' strategy of segregating the two roles is noteworthy. This is a personal strategy to reconcile two unique points of view in the production process.

Although aligned, the perspectives and duties of the playwright and the director can be fractious. The playwright must inhabit the world of their play, while the director must shape that world to connect with the outside world of the audience. When Harris directs one of her own plays, she is literally of two minds on the subject.

However, reviewer Hugh Simpson implicitly criticized Harris' dramaturgical methods when he wrote:

...the downside of having one person fulfil both creative roles (director and playwright) is that any faults in the script tend to be magnified.⁸¹

⁸¹ Simpson, Hugh. 19 March 2022. 'The Scent of Roses' *All Edinburgh Theatre.Com*

<<https://www.alledinburghtheatre.com/the-scent-of-roses-lyceum-2022-review/>> [accessed 12 August 2023]

The decision to lay aside the dramaturgical resources of the Lyceum was clearly based on the preferences of the writer/director buttressed by Harris' own authority within the theatre company.

However, the addition of a dramaturg to the process would likely have benefitted the play. Reception to the production was decidedly mixed with the most common criticism being that was opaque and difficult to understand.

Granted that a degree of misunderstanding and failure to communicate are essential to the themes of the play, if they impair the audience's connection to the action then they impair the effect of the drama. If a dramaturg had been employed it is possible the text's central challenge for the audience would have been addressed and possibly even mediated. Harris' script would have benefitted from an impartial dramaturgical eye.

Finally, it must be remarked that Harris' decision to largely quarantine her playwright persona from the rehearsal hall seems an opportunity lost. Rehearsals are a laboratory and the discoveries made in its crucible are not limited to performance. Dramaturgy in preparation for production yields enormous insights that can at very least improve a script. Although the deliberate division between her playwright role and director role is an understandable one made in pursuit of efficiency and clarity, it seems she may have set aside one of the most important tools in her writer's arsenal.

But in the end, any dramaturgy must be for the playwright's benefit, and it must consider their preferences. Harris has firm opinions about how production dramaturgy should be applied. The text's creative vision is hers alone and so must be the process that serves her vision.



back row: Ryan Hunter as Tubs, Jatinder Singh Randhawa as Mick, Santino Smith as Noodles, front row: Sean Conner as Paul, Kyle Gardiner as Sooty, Martin Quinn as Mince in *Moorcroft* by Eilidh Loan, The Tron Theatre, Glasgow, February 2022 (promotional photo)

4.3 A Particular Point of View

THE TRON THEATRE, Glasgow

MOORCROFT

written and directed by Eilidh Loan

Cast: Sean Connor, Martin Docherty, Kyle Gardiner, Ryan Hunter, Martin Quinn, Jatinder Singh Randhawa, Santino Smith

COMPANY HISTORY

Founded in 1978, the Tron Theatre has had a deep commitment to new theatre since its inception whether through reinterpretation of known texts or new play creation. It has served as a showcase for both international theatre and a platform for further productions of contemporary theatre. It is well known for producing highly theatrical work.

THE PLAY

In the mid-1980's Garry finds himself out of work and is inspired to organize a local football team. Although there are some hopes for money, it is primarily of means of developing pride and filling the time. The process of team building and training bonds the misfits, and they find that success on the playing field gives them newfound confidence and fulfilment. However, the golden days end unexpectedly and tragically haunt Garry to the present day.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

The *Moorcroft* script arrived at the Tron through in an unconventional route.

During the Covid lock down, artistic director Andy Arnold was determined to use the time productively by delving deeply into the acting community. He sent out a general call for audition tapes, stipulating that he was looking to review actors from the west of Scotland he had never seen before. Remarkably over 400 recorded audition pieces were received, and Arnold whittled the number down to 40 individuals who were called back for in person auditions.

One of those actors called was Eilidh Loan.

A young actor who already accumulated notable successes, Loan's audition immediately impressed Arnold. But he was also intrigued by the piece she performed. It was from a play that Loan herself had been working on for years.⁸² Arnold asked if he could have a look at the script and Loan sent him the latest draft of *Moorcroft*. He was immediately enamoured with the script's veracity and heart. The Tron Theatre quickly contracted the play and playwright for development into a studio production.

The enforced theatrical idleness of the Covid lockdown allowed time and resources to be invested in the development, although Arnold believed that the play "was already all there."⁸³

⁸² Loan reports that had intentionally been using the play as an audition piece in hopes of garnering interest from theatres, an effective entrepreneurial strategy that paid dividends. (Interview with Eilidh Loan, 29 November 2022, conducted over Zoom)

⁸³ Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

DEVELOPMENT

Moorcroft is a highly personal text. The script is based on her father's memories as a working-class lad in Glasgow during the 1980's and most especially his short time spent playing football with a team of close friends and acquaintances.

In 2018, she was dissatisfied with the scarcity of professional opportunities that were provided in acting school, so she determined to be proactive and create her own projects. One of her teachers had an idea. Loan recounted

“And my teacher was like “Why not write a show?” And I'm really dyslexic, so writing a play was always something like “Na”... But I put pen to paper and started to write this show.”⁸⁴

Loan worked in spurts drawing all the characters and incidents from stories her father told her.

The subject matter and tone of the piece was very different from the sort of theatre the Tron was known for, but Arnold was impressed by the script's authentic portrayal of working-class men in a very difficult economic time. He believed its portrait of survival and initiative seen through the lens of ramshackle football team was both innovative and appealing. But a new play by an untested writer, especially one very different from that usually presented on the Tron stage, was a risky proposition even if presented as a studio production outside the main season.

“I wasn't too sure about (*Moorcroft*). Seven young guys for the whole play, I wasn't sure it was right for us... (it was) a very naturalistic piece when we tend to do more other worldly, existential pieces.”⁸⁵

As far as providing production dramaturgy to the playwright, Arnold made two initial decisions. First, Johnny McKnight was enlisted as a textual resource. He was not intended to be a full-time dramaturg, as Arnold was convinced that Loan had already provided a producible script. McKnight was engaged

⁸⁴ Interview with Eilidh Loan, 29 November 2022, conducted over Zoom

⁸⁵ Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

to provide storytelling guidance. The job was (in Arnold's words) "more editing than rewriting."⁸⁶ Best known as the camp creative force behind the Tron's annual Christmas Pantomime, McKnight is hardly schooled in the world of football. So, Arnold was highly encouraged by McKnight's enthusiastic response upon reading the script. He not only pronounced it "brilliant" but declared that "(his) dad would come to see this".⁸⁷

Arnold's second artistic decision was to inject on more diversity in the cast. Loan's initial script featured seven white men. In the current theatrical climate, Arnold was convinced that there would be little opportunity for future productions unless there was a character of colour in the cast. Happily, when Loan consulted with her father, it turned out that he had had a teammate of mixed-race descent allowing her to introduce a new, but historically accurate individual to fill out the plot.

After those two directions, Arnold left the preproduction narrative development of the script with Loan. McKnight who helped trim down the plot, effectively reorder scenes and streamline the narrative.

Loan was largely left to make her own decisions. The feeling amongst her collaborators was that this was such a personal story with such a particular point of view that another perspective might dilute what made the story unique and appealing. And given Loan's deep compulsion to tell the story as truthfully as she received it from her father, they felt it best to stay out her way. She responded by producing numerous scenic rewrites and many new drafts of the script.

The Tron received money to hold a few reading workshops of *Moorcroft* after which Arnold was convinced that rather than a studio production, the play was best suited for the mainstage.

Although she had never directed a professional production before, Arnold engaged Loan as production director. Arnold would act as a mentor, but he had faith that with her clear and complete vision of the play the show was safe in her hands.

⁸⁶ Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

⁸⁷ Ibid

Arnold's mentorship ended up being little more than him dropping in on a few rehearsals and offering some notes. Loan's movement-based direction and familiarity with the *Moorcroft* world immediately brought the play to life. Although she was a novice director, just like Arnold, the cast was impressed by her dedication to telling the story. Her deep commitment was picked up and equally invested in by her team of performers.

Even as she directed the rehearsals, Loan was constantly working on the text driven to tell the story in a way that would do credit to her father. Often once done with her directing responsibilities, Loan would apply the lessons learned in the day's work and return the next day with new pages. After an unsatisfactory first preview, Loan produced a new play draft that cut a half hour of material for the second. This entirely undertaken through her own initiative. As Arnold reported

“I had never known someone so committed to a piece of writing... she would keep rewriting all the time on her own.”⁸⁸

ANALYSIS

The enormous trust and confidence invested in Eilidh Loan by the Tron's Artistic Director is not only impressive but atypical. It is very rare that a novice playwright is allowed to develop their play without being partnered with a more experienced dramaturg, let alone be attached as a director.

Ryan Hunter, who played the role of Tubs, was a long-time friend of Loan and had been involved in the development of the script from the beginning. He joined congenial readings of the text when they were both still acting students.⁸⁹ The playwright's personal investment in the story grew into years of solitary rewrites. Although there were some development resources provided, it's clear that the essential drive to develop the text was driven by Loan herself. In this light the decision to appoint Loan as the production's sole source of critical perspective not only makes sense but is really the only logical one.

⁸⁸ Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

⁸⁹ Interview with Ryan Hunter, 29 October 2022, conducted over phone

Although the time set for play development was relatively short, Loan was not above applying discovery and experimentation in her practice. The script that entered the rehearsal hall was not the script that exited it. The inevitable discoveries made once the script is placed in actor's mouth were taken up and folded into the script.

Director Loan envisioned a play that included a great deal of physicality. The characters would dance in pubs, train on the road, get in punch ups and of course play matches. This prominent physical performance required carefully managed choreography that also affected the storytelling.

The process of bringing *Moorcroft* to the audience was a challenging and intricate process, with Loan serving as the production's sole shepherd. As Loan says

“Not a lot of people would have had the bravery of what Andy had done for the show. In the bigger scheme of things, if it had been a different theatre, a different venue that play would have been taken off me and given to a director with credits and a cv behind them... I think the best thing that Andy has done is give me time and give me space and give me creative freedom... It was really awesome. It was amazing”⁹⁰

Although advance ticket sales on *Moorcroft* were slow, upon opening the positive word of mouth soon spread and the box office sales exploded. Many the audience members were of the working class, attracted not only by a story about their world but football as well. An audience survey reported that 55% of audience members had never attended a play at the Tron before and many had never been to any theatre before.⁹¹

In many ways *Moorcroft*'s production dramaturgy resembled that of *The Scent of Roses*. Both were scripts that were developed over a period of years through the personal efforts of the playwrights. Both relied on early contributions by friends and peers and were directed by the writers themselves. Both

⁹⁰ Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

⁹¹ Interview with Eilidh Loan conducted 29 November 2022 over Zoom

were produced by well-established theatres with ample dramaturgical resources but who decided against bringing a dramaturg or any formal process in the development. Both playwrights were operating outside their comfort zones with Loan working as a playwright/director for the first time and Harris delivering a dialogue driven story as opposed to her more action centred scripts. In practice, their production dramaturgies were quite different.

Upon entering the rehearsal hall, Harris chose to treat her text as a finished piece while Loan experimented with the text inviting contributions from her cast and rewriting until opening night. As a veteran playwright with decades of theatre history, Harris was assured that she knew her art well enough to judge the merits of her play. Loan entered the rehearsal hall prepared to accept any assistance offered. While Andy Arnold was quickly convinced of Loan's capacity to direct her story, she welcomed insights and ideas from her cast. Loan also valued Johnny McKnight's early contributions in sharing the basic construction of theatrical storytelling.

However, the intention behind shaping the audience experience also affected the two playwrights' narrative objectives. Loan was seeking to share a story with her audience. As result she entered rehearsals determined to connect with the audience in a clear and uncomplicated way.

Harris also wanted her audience to empathize with the experience of her characters, but rather than connect through a narrative she wanted the audience to feel the frustrations and confusions of their inability to effectively communicate. As a result, the dialogue was deliberately arcane and opaque. Rather than inviting the viewers into the world of her play, Harris was determined to confound connection thus keeping them at an objective distance.

To ensure the audience personally experienced the play's theme fractured communication, Harris refused the input of a dramaturg who might fail to understand her goals. Loan on the other hand invited the audience to sympathize for her team of misfits and sought ways to nurse the audience's subjective view. Harris intended the audience to observe her world from the outside. Loan wanted hers to empathize from the inside.

Although the inexperienced Loan probably would likely not have objected to the insertion of dramaturg into the rehearsal hall environment had Arnold insisted on it, the artistic director made a decision for the production that ultimately preserved and championed Loan's personal connection to

the story. Although some might question the reasoning behind Arnold's choice and argue in favour of providing support to an inexperienced artist, one cannot fail to recognize the success of that seminal decision. *Moorcroft*'s success as a work of art and piece of popular theatre is unquestionable.

Arnold's investment in Loan and *Moorcroft* can certainly be framed as a risk, but it also can be interpreted as an artist doing what artists are expected to do: embracing the new, following your instincts and committing to a vision you believe in.

As Arnold said:

"I just felt this thing about Eilidh. I knew she'd deliver."⁹²

Moorcroft will be remounted in 2023 and seems to be an ideal candidate for consideration by other theatres. Loan is considering further work on the script, applying lessons learned from the Tron run.

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⁹² Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow



Ewan Donald as Patrick, Irene MacDougall as Michelle in *The Bookies* by Mikey Burnett and Joe McCann, The Dundee Rep Ensemble, Dundee, May 2022 (promotional photo)

4.4 The Company as Dramaturg (*The Old Standard*)

DUNDEE REPERTORY THEATRE, Dundee

THE BOOKIES

by Mikey Burnett and Joe McCann, directed by Sally Reid,

Cast: Ewan Donald, Barrie Hunter, Irene McDougall, Benjamin Osugo

COMPANY HISTORY

The Dundee Repertory Theatre was established in 1939 and it is a city institution. It has been the much-loved producer of a wide range of theatre. Its commitment to the creation of new work has varied with the inclinations of its Artistic Directors. At present Andrew Panton serves as AD and he has increased the company's investment in new plays. Currently there is no formal production or institutional dramaturgical system in place.

As the name implies, Dundee Rep is repertory theatre with a regular company of actors, some who have been with the theatre for long periods of time. The advantages of a resident company include

stability for the artistic team, tailoring projects to the strengths of the artists and allowing the talent to grow and develop in a supportive atmosphere.

THE PLAY

Set in an Edinburgh bookmakers' shop, the plot of *The Bookies* revolves around Patrick, the shop's rough edged and cynical manager who views the entire business with a detached loathing. Pushed beyond endurance, he devises a plan to rob the shop safe. But what started as a risky venture turns into a possibly fatal gamble. And the house always wins.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Mikey Burnett and Joe McCann are novice playwrights who met at playwriting workshops in Edinburgh. They began collaborating in 2007. Having both worked in book making shops and being well acquainted with the business' exploitive practices, they began developing *The Bookies* as a television pilot. Although they received interest from The Comedy Unit ⁹³, it eventually passed on the project.

In 2021 Burnett and McCann revisited their idea, only this time reimagining it as a stage play. They reached out to Dundee Rep's Artistic Director Andrew Panton to pitch him the concept. Two weeks later he commissioned the script with an eye to immediate production. It would be the first professional theatrical production for both playwrights. Douglas Maxwell was engaged to provide occasional dramaturgical mentorship in the creation of the text with an opening in March 2022 booked.

The Covid pandemic played havoc with development plans and time set aside for script work was lost. Director Sally Reid had not directed a new play before and she realized that with a firm premiere date and a script that still needed further work, there was no choice but devote the first two weeks of rehearsal to textual and production dramaturgy. The challenge was to balance her two novice playwrights' inexperience with a need to produce work on the tight schedule. Prior to rehearsals she said

⁹³ The Comedy Unit is a Glasgow based production house that provides comic content for television, theatre, radio, and new media.

“I could sit just now with the play and right now score through everything that’s not needed, but I want them (the playwrights) to experience that themselves.”⁹⁴

DEVELOPMENT

Long time Dundee Rep member/actor Irene MacDougall told me that the theatre has felt no need to hire a full-time dramaturg. However, with the recent arrival of Artistic Director Andrew Panton the company has been doing more new work. Uncharacteristically the 2021/22 season featured two new plays.

But without a dramaturg on staff, MacDougall has found that a great deal of any new play’s dramaturgy was forced on the artistic team during rehearsal time. This was especially true with *The Bookies* since neither of the playwrights had theatrical experience.

Although she likes working on new plays, as an actor with her own challenges and obligations, McDougall says she sometimes feels resentful if the development process eats up too much of the rehearsal time as it compromises her acting work.⁹⁵ Like many theatres, the Dundee Rep budgets the exact same amount of rehearsal time to each of its productions, regardless of whether they require textual dramaturgy or not.

Reid received the latest draft of the script in September 2021 and in the months that followed she consulted with the playwrights as they further polished and developed the script. This lasted into November. A dramaturgical workshop was planned for January but was cancelled due to Covid restrictions by which time Maxwell’s tenure as textual aide came to an end. The only workshop done on the play prior to rehearsal in April was a one-day table read in February.

Reid had done what she could to clarify the main action with the playwrights and looked to further reduce red herrings, clarify character intentions, and attempt to make the action more specific, all directorial concerns. Consultations between the playwrights and director before rehearsals yielded four

⁹⁴ Interview with Sally Reid, 23 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

⁹⁵ Interview with Irene MacDougall, 14 June 2022, conducted over Zoom

or five new drafts after which Reid felt they should let things settle before taking the script into rehearsal where the deepest dive into the text would occur.

Reid reported that the writers were willing and determined. They were so open to notes to that they were constantly requesting them.

Reid started in theatre as an actor and has only recently moved into directing. She relies deeply on her training and experience as an actor. With a duo of highly motivated playwrights eager to rewrite and polish their script, she trusted that the first week of the four-week rehearsal period could be devoted to an intensive exploration of the script with the goal of having the text set before the end of week two. Although she would lead and moderate the process, everyone in the room was expected to contribute. Even I, an observer, was allowed to provide insights.

OBSERVATIONS

Director Reid and the Dundee Rep allowed me to observe two days of play development in the first week of the rehearsals. All work was undertaken in the company's rehearsal hall with Covid distancing protocols in place.

Monday concentrating on breaking the play into units and followed by a read through with the cast. The next day would start with reading and analysing the play unit by unit which led to further rewrites, rearranging of scenes, structural changes and textual cuts. I began my observations of the development process on Wednesday, the third day. By the time I arrived at the start of the day, Burnett and McCann had already delivered a new draft which the company had started reading the day before.

Wednesday started with the full company, including the two playwrights. Actors continued reading the play by units. At the end of each unit the director would pose questions about emotional intentions while analysing the beats. All the actors, whether they were part of that section or not, were allowed to take part in the discussion and pose their own questions to the writers through the director. The playwrights offered clarification where they could, but for the most part they took in what was discussed making notes with the intention of addressing any outstanding issues in immediate rewrites.

Although they were content to allow the lively questions and debates of the actors and director, it was clear that the playwrights would be the final arbiters of the text's substance. Equipped with a laptop McCann did script rewrites during the discussions, applying dramaturgy on the fly.

Before lunch the playwrights departed to consider the ideas and comments that arose out the unit reads. They promised that they would have another new draft of the script ready for reading after the break, speaking not only to the playwrights' determination but also their willingness to quickly incorporate the results of the rehearsal hall dramaturgy.

While the playwrights withdrew to a private area to work, the director led further discussion into the characters and their motivations. Thematic debate was also encouraged, especially an exploration of the central mountaineering metaphor.

After lunch a new draft of the play had been copied and distributed. Once again, the company returned to their tables to read the new script with director pausing the action after every scene to gauge response to rewrites and to discuss and dissect the action. This continued to the end of the day.

On Thursday both playwrights had worked through the notes from the previous day. Reid's plan was to finish the reading of Wednesday's draft after which the writers would work through lunch in response. The playwrights would then present yet another new draft of the play after lunch which would be read through in the afternoon.

In the absence of the playwrights, the company continued to work meticulously especially sorting through the logic of the plot with particular attention paid to what characters knew and didn't know from scene to scene. The playwrights and the company assumed that the nature of the characters had by this time been set and that it was the mechanics of the plot that required the most attention. It was painstaking work.

Everybody was impressed with the new draft. There have been major rewrites that changed elements of the plot, provided new beats for all the characters, and streamlined the action. Each draft was adding further character detail and complexity building on previous discussions and making substantial use of the company members' insights.

After lunch Burnett delivered a new draft of Act One. Since McCann was still working on a new draft of Act Two, Burnett would be the only playwright attending the afternoon session. The expectation was that the latest version of Act Two would be ready for reading the next day. This seems to be a regular feature of the playwrights' collaborative process. Reid shared that after discussing the original draft with the writers she discovered that Burnett had written the entirety of Act One while McCann had written Act Two completely by himself.⁹⁶

The new Act One was distributed and the process began again.

At the end of the day the reading of the new draft was still incomplete.

My observations were done.

As planned, the script was set at the end of the second week of rehearsal after which the company moved to the theatre to continue production work. By week three the playwrights were no longer attending rehearsals daily and the script was be considered set. The only dramaturgy left were edits and minor cuts to serve delivery and clarity.

ANALYSIS

The dramaturgical process undertaken by the company should feel very familiar to anyone who has worked at any length of time in textual production dramaturgy.

In Lessing's model of dramaturgy, the dramaturg is an individual co-creator explicitly separated from the acting company. Although he encouraged collaborative creation, Bertholt Brecht's dramaturgical vision also imagined a singular dramaturg. Due to a lack of time and resources, no single person is able to be responsible for script development at Dundee Rep. Developing *The Bookies* required the combined effort of the entire artistic team. All the artists had a significant contribution in the shaping, polishing, and presenting the play.

This not unusual. Relying on the members of company to provide dramaturgical development during

⁹⁶ Interview with Sally Reid, 23 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

the rehearsal period is a common response in a theatre without specialized resources. Even when engaged dramaturgs in Scotland tend to be hired on a project-by-project basis which restricts their ability to contribute to a play's development from inception to stage. As a result, valuable rehearsal time may be sacrificed to further developing the text. If a dramaturg cannot be involved in the process, the director invariably finds themselves falling into the roles of workshop leader, while the acting company finds themselves cast as textual consultants even if it means losing time for the actors to do their own work.

Reid credited the unique nature of Dundee Rep's theatre model with allowing the company to devote immediate attention to script work.

“I think there's something really special about working at the Rep (sic), because they are an ensemble... The actors have relationships, know how each other thinks, works... Because nobody's getting to know one another they all work together.”⁹⁷

Both playwrights were willing to devote enormous extra time to improve their script and take notes from all interested parties. They immediately accepted, integrated and responded to all notes and comments. This resulted in an intensive period of rewriting and editing, with reworked scenes and fresh drafts being sometimes produced in hours' time.

Director Reid became the de facto workshop leader, setting the pace, encouraging questions, and managing expectations. All members of the cast, whether participating in a particular scene or not, were encouraged to offer commentary and observations. In many cases possible solutions and alternate choices were offered for problematic sections of the text.

Generally, the commentary from the acting company was framed around the situations, motivations, and interpretations of their particular character's point of view, whereas the director's enquiries were general and took a broader view of the plot, themes, pacing and audience understanding. Notes from the company were invariably presented as questions to the playwrights. When the solution was a matter of clarification, the writers would quickly supply it. Matters that lacked a ready answer were discussed

⁹⁷ Interview with Sally Reid, 23 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

with the entire company, but the final solution was left to the writers. Sometimes no ready answer was found, and the playwrights would have to consider the question further in their own time.

It is important to note that although the director led the process and every member of the team participated, the playwrights were the final arbiters of changes to their script. They were the touchstones of interpretation and the engineers of solutions.

Dundee Rep had planned to invest in textual dramaturgy prior to rehearsal, but its plans were thrown into upheaval by the pandemic. In view of this it is hardly surprising that although the notices were positive, some reviews complained that the script seemed “underdeveloped”⁹⁸ or not fully realized.⁹⁹ Still, *The Bookies* was a success and is credited with bringing a new audience to the theatre. Thus it is hardly surprising that artistic director Panton is committed to continue producing more new plays. The 2022/2023 season promises three premiere productions.

Hopefully the dramaturgical plans originally intended for *The Bookies* can be fully employed for future premieres. Textual dramaturgy, especially with neophyte playwrights, is vital. The addition of a resident dramaturg would greatly aid the company in not only providing individual production dramaturgy, but also assuming institutional responsibilities of offering commissions, building relationships with the playwriting community and creating systems to shepherd new plays to their full potential.

The Bookies was a huge success and it is credited with bringing a new audience to the theatre. With such a success, it is hardly surprising Dundee Rep’s artistic director Andrew Panton is fully committed to continue producing more new plays. The 2022/2023 season promises three premiere productions.

⁹⁸ McQueen, Kitty. 9 May 2022 ‘The Bookies @ Dundee Rep’ *The Skinny* <<https://www.theskinny.co.uk/theatre/shows/reviews/the-bookies-dundee-rep>> [accessed 15 September 2023]

⁹⁹ Fisher, Mark. 9 May 2022 ‘The Bookies Review – A Collective Gamble Against Stacked Odds’ *The Guardian* <<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2022/may/09/the-bookies-review-dundee-rep-comedy>> [accessed 1 October 2023]



Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonnell in their *The Not So Ugly Duckling: A Play for Grown Ups*, *The Ducklings* at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, Edinburgh, August 2022 (promotional photo)

4.5 *The Never-ending Story*

THE DUCKLINGS, Edinburgh

THE NOT SO UGLY DUCKLING: A PLAY FOR GROWN UPS

by Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonnell, directed by Ian Cameron

Cast: Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonnell

COMPANY HISTORY

The Ducklings are an independent company purposely organized in 2019 by playwright/actors Jo Clifford and Maria MacDonnell and director Ian Cameron to create, produce and present their play *The Not So Ugly Duckling: A Play for Grown Ups*.

THE PLAY

Two older women retell Hans Christian Andersen’s “The Ugly Duckling”, but through a more knowing and personal lens. What was originally a story of transformation is itself changed into a tale of accepting one’s unique differences and discovering self-worth.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Before *The Ducklings* could present their planned premiere, the Covid-19 pandemic closed the theatres. They used the time provided by the pandemic to further develop the script and the production. They also found grants to support further workshopping. Clifford felt the postponed opening hugely benefitted the play allowing further exploration and refinement to the script.

DEVELOPMENT

Jo Clifford is an Edinburgh based playwright with a long and respected career. Her first produced play was presented at the Traverse Theatre in 1985. In the decades since she has written for every major Scottish theatre company and continues to be an energetic creator of plays for all permutations of the stage.

However, Clifford is highly sceptical about the value of the generally accepted model of production dramaturgy. As idea of the dramaturgy became more accepted in Scottish theatres during the 1990's, she found professional dramaturgs to be both unhelpful and obstructionist. Plays submitted to institutional dramaturgs and staff readers would find themselves entangled in laborious review and development. Even plays commissioned by the company could find themselves trapped in a cycle of workshops.

Clifford also found the practice of advertising the opening of plays before they were even written not only disingenuous, but contrary to the stated precepts of dramaturgy (although she admits a firm opening date was undoubtedly a great motivation for the playwright to write).

This is not to say that Clifford does not believe in play development or workshopping a play. She is a firm believer in working on text for as long as necessary. However, she feels that preproduction dramaturgy should only be part of the process of total play development. Because theatre companies only invest in dramaturgy before production, they fail to capitalize on the insights provided by live performance and after. As Clifford said:

“You learn so much from playing to an audience and generally you’re not able to incorporate that into the script.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Jo Clifford 9 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

In 2018 Clifford partnered with her friend and new neighbour Maria MacDonnell to create a new play. A successful actor in the 1980's, MacDonnell had taken long break from the profession to raise her five children. Now she was ready to return to the stage and so the two determined to create a new play with parts for both. After long walks where they would discuss potential themes and ideas, finally settling on a retelling of Hans Christian Andersen's classic fairy tale "The Ugly Duckling". Clifford and MacDonnell quickly decided that the retelling of the familiar tale would be done through the little explored perspective of older women like themselves. As regards assistance from established theatre companies Clifford felt "They'll never do it. We'll have to do it ourselves."¹⁰¹

By mid-2019 the two playwrights had felt confident enough about the state of the script to invite a director into the process. Ian Cameron was recruited to help Clifford and MacDonnell shape the play for production at the Scottish Storytelling Centre. The three of them created a company to manage the project. They christened it The Ducklings. Although they planned to premiere in 2020, the pandemic derailed their plans.

As restrictions began to be lifted in late 2021, the Ducklings presented preview performances to audiences around the area. Rewriting and polishing continued through this run, but in keeping with Clifford's belief that a writer should take lessons from the playing of the script, post show conversations with the audience were built into the development process. After every performance the audience was invited to stay to provide feedback. Sometimes they were asked specific questions from the performers, but just as often they were urged to share their unprompted opinions. These sessions provided clarity of what was and was not working in the storytelling, the dialogue, the themes, and even specific moments.

"One of the things I really liked about our (preview) run... was that at the end of every performance we were able to say, "What'd you think?" Enter into a conversation with us. And we learned so much from that."¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Interview with Jo Clifford 9 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

¹⁰² Ibid

Later Clifford and MacDonnell would discuss what the audience shared and made a point of incorporating at least one new idea into the following performance. Although receiving audience feedback during the development process is not a new idea, the Ducklings made an effort to make the maximum use of this resource.

What is extraordinary about the Ducklings' process is that even after the play had its premiere, they continued to invite the audience to provide notes after each show. Although time limits at the Edinburgh Fringe did not allow them to retain the audience at the festival, the Ducklings plan to continue to confer with audience in future productions. Rather than treating the viewers as passive observers, they hope to encourage an ongoing creative dialogue.

Rather than being set frozen like a fly in amber, Clifford and MacDonnell's script continues to evolve. Production dramaturgy is understood as a means of preparing a play to premiere and thus usually comes to an end once the performances begin. But in this case the production is also dramaturgy.

ANALYSIS

Jo Clifford is a playwright who has been creating for Scottish theatre for decades and has carved out an impressive career fuelled by her passion for writing and a clear-eyed understanding of what it takes to build a theatrical career.

Although she values the contributions of other parties in play development, she is frustrated that work on the script ends with opening night. Although writers like Zinnie Harris feel that the play is largely set in stone after its first production (and publication), Clifford feels that the play continues to grow during the run. That means valuable dramaturgical insights will be uncovered right up until closing night. These insights are not acknowledged, let alone employed, in standard dramaturgical models.

She says:

“It’s funny, isn’t it? You develop and you discover you need more development. But I think it’s rather wonderful actually, because it’s a recognition that plays do grow and they do change and you do discover more things about them as you go along and that’s very much part of the process. That’s the gorgeous thing about theatre, that it’s not something like a film which is a fixed thing. Once it’s in the can you can’t do

anything about it. But a play you can. And you can keep changing and keep learning.”¹⁰³

Clifford and MacDonnell’s desire to learn from both the experience of performance and the experience of the audience is unique. Clifford is convinced that this model of continual refinement has led to performers to keep the production fresh and alive. In fact, she thinks it might be the shape of theatre in the future.¹⁰⁴

Their goal is not so much a finished script but an evolving artistic creation. Considering that the play itself is about the quest to uncover an elusive personal identity, the Ducklings’ dedication to continue refining their creation is an instance where the artist’s methods mirror the story of their art.

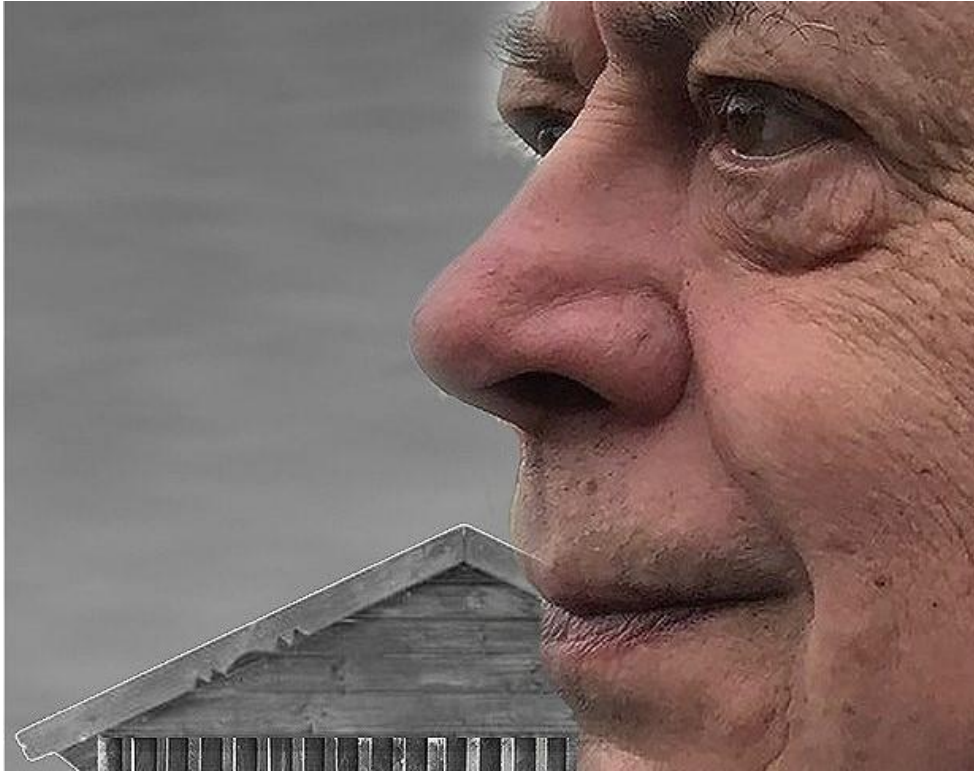
Considering her opinions about standard play development practice it is highly likely that if Clifford and her collaborators had been offered dramaturgical support at any point during the process it would have been refused. Even with extra time afforded by the pandemic’s closure of theatres, the Ducklings relied on their own resources and practice.

The development process of *The Not So Ugly Duckling* is continuing. However, as Toni Morrison once said “All art is knowing when to stop.” One of the goals of playwriting to create a text that can be shared and produced by other parties. That requires a finished product. If the dramaturgy never ends, at what point is the play finished? And until it is finished, does it ever become more than a personal project?

Eventually the development must come to an end. When that happens, it is hoped that the play will not only satisfy its creators but reflect the creators’ commitment to making it as best as it can be.

¹⁰³ Interview with Jo Clifford conducted 12 October 2022 over Zoom

¹⁰⁴ Ibid



Ron Emslie in Euan Martin's *Man Shed*, Right Lines Productions in association with Pleasance and Eden Court, Edinburgh, August 2022 (promotional photo)

4.6 Dramaturgy Through Collaboration

RIGHT LINES PRODUCTIONS, Moray

MAN SHED written by Euan Martin, directed by Dave Smith

Cast: Ron Emslie

COMPANY HISTORY

Drummers Dave Smith and Euan Martin were already acquainted with one another through work in ceilidh bands when Martin attended a play written by Smith. Martin himself had been working on a play of his own and impressed with what he saw turned to Smith for advice. This led to an ongoing collaboration.¹⁰⁵

Their interactive ceilidh play *The Accidental Death of an Accordionist* (2001) was a huge success and

¹⁰⁵ Martin, Euan. 2014. *Distilling Whisky Kisses* (Moray, Right Lines Productions) p. 19

afterward toured to community halls in small towns throughout Northern Scotland. This early success cemented their partnership in writing and producing. They also committed to the production of locally inspired plays had in otherwise largely theatre deprived communities in Scotland.

After the success of their third collaboration, *The Wedding* (2003) they formed Right Lines Productions. Since then, they have produced a new play every year (disregarding the pandemic years). For over twenty years they have toured village halls in rural areas, on islands and across the Highland region, often taking a detour for a run at the Edinburgh Fringe.

THE PLAY

Right Lines' play for 2022 was *Man Shed*. In this highly naturalistic play, we are invited into an old man's life and world. Retreating to his 'man shed', a shabby outbuilding where he can do his handiwork or just get away. The old man shares his growing sense of loneliness as he outlives all his loved ones. He attempts to find some purpose to his survival. Complicating matters, his memories shift and blend with the onset of dementia.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Right Lines' original plans for *Man Shed* were thrown into disarray by the Covid pandemic delaying its premiere until 2022. During lockdown, Smith and Martin used the time to write four new scripts now waiting their turn for production.

DEVELOPMENT

With limited resources and funding, script development at Right Lines Productions is wholly dependent on Martin and Smith's own resources and energy. Although living in communities some distance apart, the two playwrights communicate regularly. Ideas will be proposed by either of the two collaborators and further discussions will flesh them out. Martin considers himself the idea man and credits Smith with a unique comic touch. # Depending on the developing script, some research may also be conducted. The social issues that attract the pair often require further exploration.

Martin and Smith collaborate over Skype. The duo will start with a shared blank page and pass the writing duties back and forth. Dialogue comes quickly. Every beat in the plot is a mutual step in a shared journey. A rhythm of writing, reviewing, critiquing and creation is established. As the play

becomes clearer, sections of the play may be broken off to be written singularly, which upon mutual approval will be merged with the body of the play.

After a finished draft is produced, the script will be put aside for a month or so to allow the creators to develop objectivity. Then the script will be reviewed and revised together. The partners work toward having a finished and polished production script completed about a month before the start of rehearsals.

Right Lines habitually employs outside directors to build the productions. Although the script is considered largely dramaturgically set by the start of rehearsals, the writers will attend the first week of rehearsals to edit lines and fold discoveries into the text. *Man Shed* was in many ways a departure. Rather than their usual comic stylings the script embraced a more serious tone. Even more significant, it was the first Right Lines production to feature a single writing credit.

Euan Martin is a retired social worker who has some experience with mental health issues. After a visit to a local care home, he was intrigued by the dramatic possibilities in exploring a deteriorating mind. After Martin pitched the idea to his writing partner, they further developed the concept. They found themselves addressing several sobering issues such as male mental health, loneliness, bereavement, and survivor guilt.¹⁰⁶ Martin soon became the primary writer due to his professional background and unique understanding of the main character.

As Martin described the process

“It’s the first time we put one name on (the script). That’s not to say Dave wasn’t involved in the editing... We shared the script back and forth. It was a joint effort, but the main idea for the show was mine and I did most of the writing then we worked on it.”¹⁰⁷

It was determined quite early on that the play would be a one person show with as realistic a presentation as possible. The story would unfold in real time and in one location.

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Euan Martin November 2, 2022, conducted over Zoom

¹⁰⁷ Ibid

With Martin acting as a solo playwright, Smith naturally fell into a role analogous to that of a textual dramaturg. He became an active participant in shaping the plot and dialogue as well as a sounding board for ideas. The close partnership between Martin and Smith ensured that Martin had a creative collaborator deeply invested in his success. It was decided that rather than employing an outside director, Smith would be *Man Shed's* director.

Man Shed spent months in refinement. Ron Emslie, an actor with a history of success in Right Lines productions, was selected to play the central character. After a rehearsed reading performed by Emslie in 2019 plans were made to open the show in 2020, plans that were sidelined by the pandemic.

By the time pandemic restrictions were lifted, *Man Shed* had secured a place at the 2022 Edinburgh Fringe. This meant that edits were required to fit the script into a fifty-five-minute time slot. Martin relied on Smith's directorial and dramaturgical eye to make cuts.

Other decisions were made to accommodate the Fringe. They eliminated all scene transitions. They avoided lighting cues and any sound design. These were also practical choices, but they also had the effect of adding a real-life authenticity to the audience experience.

Another issue that had to be addressed was that Emslie lost his wife during the pandemic. Emslie's struggle with loss was very close to those of the character he was playing. Despite his long association with the play Martin and Smith were fully prepared to recast the role. However, Emslie recommitted to the show. He felt that his participation in the play might prove cathartic. Martin quotes him as saying

“If I don't do this, I'll just be sitting at home drinking. so it's probably better I go to Edinburgh do the show and then do my drinking.”¹⁰⁸

Emslie's experience added emotional insights into the role and brought an affecting authenticity to the performance that left many audience members in tears.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Euan Martin November 2, 2022, conducted over Zoom

Man Shed clearly demonstrates that, although a respectable twenty years old, the Right Lines partnership continues to grow and develop. Both in conception and presentation, *Man Shed* was a brave departure from the company's familiar milieu and promises more daring dramatic subjects in the future.

ANALYSIS

When G.E. Lessing first articulated the role of the dramaturg he conceived it as an equal creative partnership with the playwright and the director and Right Lines Productions is a partnership rooted in play creation. As in Lessing's ideal vision of a dramaturg's role, Smith and Martin are collaborators through every stage of creation. Even though the play was written by a single individual, the other provided textual dramaturg every step of the way.

In most play development models, the dramaturg's role presumes objectivity. Martin and Smith bring mutual investment into their process. Neither party can be said to be objective. Though written by Euan Martin, Dave Smith was involved every step of creation.¹⁰⁹ Martin and Smith's methods have created a singular model where dramaturgical insights are inserted at the moment of conception as each naturally shifts from the playwright/creator to the dramaturg/collaborator.

The practices of the Right Lines Production's process of play creation were not born of any academic theory but grew out the organic rhythms of their collaboration. They would probably scoff at the idea that there was anything notionally radical in their approach. But in a time where dramaturgy is often viewed as an added ingredient added into play creation, it is notable to observe that it can arise in the very instant when two enthusiastic and committed artists collaborate.

Smith and Martin have naturally found for themselves a process that achieves one of Lessing's primary goals, that dramaturgy should have a role from the earliest stages of play creation and right through to the first production of the play. For over twenty years, Dave Smith and Euan Martin have not only forged a fruitful partnership of playwrights, but an ongoing dramaturgical collaboration.

If there is a danger to Smith and Martin's practice it is one of familiarity and routine. Having worked the same way for so long, there is a possibility of falling into a rut and growing stale. Bringing an

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Dave Smith May 17, 2022, conducted over Zoom

outside dramaturg into the process could offer fresh perspectives and inspiration. So far, they are satisfied with their methods, and they continue to find fresh approaches and challenges. The *Man Shed* experience amply demonstrates not only they are willing to adapt their comfortable partnership to the needs of their play, but they are also ready to explore challenging new subjects.



Kristy Findlay as Miriam and Brian James O'Sullivan as Oscar in O'Sullivan's *Oscar*, A Play a Pie and a Pint, Glasgow, February 2022 (promotional photo)

4.7 Stealing Dramaturgy

A PLAY A PIE AND A PINT, Glasgow

OSCAR

Book and music by Brian James O'Sullivan, directed by Shilpa T-Hyland

Cast: Kirsty Findlay, Brian James O'Sullivan

COMPANY HISTORY

For an overview of the history of A Play, a Pie and a Pint see page 30.

THE PLAY

Oscar is a two handed fifty-minute musical. The title character is a successful commercial songwriter who has just lost his brother/writing partner. Volunteering to write a requiem for the memorial service,

Oscar secludes himself at a writers' retreat on a remote Scottish isle. There he meets the cottage's caretaker and manager Miriam, who still wrestles with the loss of her father and is now dealing with her mother's mental decline.

EFFECTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Although the pandemic forced the months long closure of the Oran Mor space PPP sprang back into action in September of 2021 with a season of twelve new plays.

DEVELOPMENT

A Play, a Pie and a Pint is a unique theatre company with a uniquely challenging production model. Although dedicated to presenting premieres of new plays, its weekly rotation of shows means there are scarce time and resources for production and almost nothing for any sort of dramaturgy.

Brian James O'Sullivan had already written a successful one woman musical for PPP when he was approached by artistic director Jemima Levick to write another new musical to open the company's season in February 2022. O'Sullivan eagerly accepted the assignment, but due to other professional commitments couldn't start actually writing the script until January.

In November he had settled upon a project featuring two actors and a grand piano. Working privately, he expanded the idea to encompass a protagonist seeking isolation to work on a project, but upon arriving in his refuge finding another person who would interfere with the creative process. In a matter of weeks, he had written an initial draft and then a second draft that then was sent to Levick.

Weeks before the start of rehearsals O'Sullivan met with his co-star Kirsty Findlay and his director Shilpa T-Hyland. This was time to further develop the play on their own outside the schedule and resources supplied by PPP. Although all the creative partners considered the need to dramaturge vitally important, pursued it on their own initiative; essentially donating their time and talent to the project.

A read through of the script was hosted at O'Sullivan's home where it was generally agreed that further work was needed. In the days that followed he continued rewriting the script while also writing the songs for the show; first lyrics and then tunes. Because Findlay was required to both sing and play piano in the show, she was kept constantly apprised of developments with the show's music.

Independent of PPP, O’Sullivan had two meetings with T-Hyland. The first meeting was devoted to a discussion of the script and where it needed further work. A new draft was produced for the second meeting. Dramaturgy was conducted in short bursts and on the fly.

PPP budgets only two weeks of rehearsal time to its productions. O’Sullivan describes the goal of the first week as “working on what needs working on”.¹¹⁰ The first two days are devoted to reading and analysing the script followed by a scene-by-scene exploration the next few days. There is a need to quickly address and solve any problems. This was the only time devoted to any dedicated dramaturgy.

The second week of rehearsal was more formally scheduled. As the first show of the season, the company was allowed to work in the performance space as there was no show then on stage. Usually, a PPP production would be able to explore the performance space working around the scheduled performances, hopefully doing a run through by Wednesday. Thursday is the Producers’ Run where the Oran Mor team including lighting designers, artistic directors and staff will have a chance to see the full play. Notes will follow.

It was a moment after the Producers’ Run that proved most enlightening for O’Sullivan.

“The biggest moment in the whole... development was after that run. I was sitting talking to Shilpa about what we’d done, and Jemima walked by and said “You’ve written a very charming rom-com”¹¹¹ And it was at that moment I realized that it (the play) was a rom-com. And that changed everything. Because I hadn’t noticed.”¹¹²

O’Sullivan realized he had stumbled into a genre he was familiar with and could approach the final days of rehearsal with a clear vision of the form allowing him to both play with the tropes of the genre while also subverting its expectations.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Brian James O’Sullivan 7 March 2022, Alchemy Café, Glasgow

¹¹¹ i.e. romantic comedy

¹¹² Interview with Brian James O’Sullivan 7 March 2022, Alchemy Café, Glasgow

The opening day of a PPP production is called “Shit a Brick Monday”. After a Sunday striking the previous play and installing the sets and lights for the incoming one, the company meets Monday at 9:30 for their first and only tech/dress. This will be the actors and director’s first time on their set. They have two and half hours to set cues and hopefully run through the play before retiring for the audience’s arrival at noon. At one o’clock a new play will have its world premiere.

Oscar proved to be a strong opening for the 2022 season. Audience response was positive and the ticket sales robust. After Oran Mor *Oscar* transferred for a brief run at the Traverse Theatre as part of their partnership with PPP.

ANALYSIS

A Play, a Pie and a Pint produces new plays in a manner that emphasizes speed and invention. It also requires a large measure of accommodation from the artists.

Although some plays arrive by means of the Playwrights Studio of Scotland and will as a result have received some dramaturgical attention, often the plays arrive at Oran Mor through the writers’ initiative. Sometimes the play arrives for rehearsal fully formed and can be treated as a set script. Other times, as in the case of *Oscar*, a draft is ready for ready for the actors on the first day of rehearsal but requires further, sometimes substantial, development. On occasion, the first day of rehearsal arrives with no finished script, only a set of ideas that need to be formed into a play largely from scratch.¹¹³

In O’Sullivan’s case the invitation to write another play for PPP came with a clearly established opening date in February. Even though he stipulated that he would not be able to start writing until January, O’Sullivan had months to develop the idea of the play if not the script itself.

Nonetheless the key dramaturgical insight provided the playwright was not found in work prior to entering the rehearsal hall or even in the rehearsal hall itself. Rather it was an offhand remark by one of the producers.

PPP provides resources for a two-week rehearsal period. This is the standard regardless of how ready

¹¹³ Interview with Brian James O’Sullivan 7 March 2022, Alchemy Café, Glasgow

the script is for production or the technical requirements of the play. It is a highly demanding process and it can be expected that some plays will hit the stage in a half-baked condition.

The creative team for *Oscar* addressed this problem by working outside the schedule and the rehearsal hall, essentially stealing time for production dramaturgy.

This is the central flaw in the PPP development model.

In the case of *Oscar*, the dramaturgy demanded by the play is not so much invisible as it is off the books. Like Sally Reid and her *Bookies* company, Brian James O'Sullivan and his team had to rely on their own instincts and talents to provide sufficient production and textual dramaturgy to make their script production ready. However, unlike Dundee Rep, the reliance on solitary resources of the artists is not the result of a pandemic induced disruption but standard practice.

The model pioneered by David Maclennan is explicitly populist, rejecting the established model of professional play development. It was designed to challenge assumptions. But it reveals an underlying tension between grass roots creation and professionalism. While anti-elitist practice may offer freedom, opportunity, and iconoclasm, it does so at the sacrifice of the resources, profile and contracted guarantees built into the professional model. For all the value that the opportunities and creative freedom offered, it presents a distorted vision of play production. Although PPP is an invaluable opportunity for first time playwrights, there is a likelihood that that neophyte writers may come away with misleading understanding of standard theatre practice.

If a dramaturg had been inserted at any point during the process, it is quite likely that *Oscar's* creation would have been less fraught. In fact, it is probable that what O'Sullivan credited as a key insight about his script (that it was in fact a romantic comedy) would have been recognized far earlier than a few days before opening allowing further time to effectively capitalize on the discovery.

There is great opportunity offered by A Play, a Pie and a Pint. As a testing ground, a laboratory and a launching pad for concepts, ideas and nascent scripts, it is second to none. But as the end point of play development, it fails to realize its projects effectively and fully. The severe limits placed on rehearsal time, development, and resources limit the writer's vision. And the weekly play schedule can lead to the creation of plays that may be perceived as disposable. It is notable that O'Sullivan only began

writing his script for Oran Mor mere weeks before the start of rehearsals. It is questionable he would have taken such a cavalier attitude to a play produced for any other theatre.

Any opportunity to develop a play and present it to an audience is valuable. The lessons learned are vital. There is no doubt many other theatre cities would envy what PPP provides on a regular basis. But its ultimate value is as a stage of play development rather than a destination in and of itself.

There is some irony in the fact that during and after the pandemic the Traverse Theatre, known for its substantive investment in play development, has supplemented their programming with productions from Oran Mor. Although it is admirable that plays having premiered in Glasgow are finding more audiences in Edinburgh, it is strange that a theatre which built an international reputation for its dedicated shepherding of new plays is subsidizing its programming from a company built on a Darwinian strategy of hard scrabble playwriting. The company that helped establish the value of dramaturgy in Scotland is filling its season with productions that have pointedly received scant dramaturgical support.

The staging of new plays will always require more time, effort, and investment to bring to production than an already produced script. The widespread hunger for Scottish plays from Scottish playwrights demands that companies respond to that desire. However, if these scripts are to reach their full potential and become contributors to the greater culture, it is necessary to fully invest in their development.

5. DRAMATURGY IN A DYNAMIC PLAYWRITING ENVIRONMENT

Every time a play premieres, dramaturgy has implicitly happened. But the form and substance of that dramaturgy can vary dramatically depending on the artists involved.

At present Scottish theatre has benefitted from remarkable growth, investment, and audience engagement. Companies in Scotland have prospered in the years since devolution and the production of new work has increased markedly. This upward arc was disrupted by the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, but with restrictions lifted artists have responded with pent up enthusiasm. 2022 would be a year in which theatres wooed back audiences while recovering from the many losses inflicted by their enforced down time. In such a dynamically creative environment, it is necessary that production dramaturgy must be similarly protean. But even with their vastly different methodologies, Scottish theatre artists have some obvious shared understandings about production dramaturgy and how it best serves the text.

1) When preparing for production some form of dramaturgy will necessarily emerge.

Whatever method was chosen, all of the companies represented in the case studies held a firm belief in the necessity of play development practice.

Even as Zinnie Harris segregated her textual process from her work as a director, she applied her own dramaturgy prior to rehearsals. The *Oscar* team took it upon themselves to make certain enough time there was time devoted to textual and musical exploration even if it required working outside the rehearsal time offered by PPP.

Most part Scottish companies seem to, at least theoretically, accept the role of the dramaturg in the rehearsal process. The sole exception I discovered was the Citizens Theatre whose artistic director who was disinclined to recognize a role for the dramaturg in the rehearsal hall despite being a strong believer in the value of textual dramaturg,

Considering the first formal dramaturgy arrived in Scotland in the mid-twentieth century, the current acceptance in of some form of play development is notable. But the role and place for a formal dramaturg in the spectrum of play development remains uncertain. Most production

dramaturgs are hired on a temporary basis. As the case studies demonstrate, many new plays are staged without any formal dramaturgy at all. The participation of a production dramaturg is clearly an option rather than a necessary component.

Production dramaturgy can be undertaken in many different forms. Ideally the choice of what play development will be a choice made based on the text's needs rather than an imposition due to lack of money, time and resources. The concept of the production dramaturg is now well established, even if the exact details of what that role may entail remains open to interpretation.

As opposed to production dramaturgy, the value of an institutional dramaturgy remains largely unexplored. The academic and literary aspects of the institutional dramaturg seem to remain an exotic idea without a clear place in the theatrical hierarchy.

2) Production dramaturgy serves the play by serving the playwright.

Dramaturgy is inextricably linked to the efforts of playwrights. The Scottish theatre community clearly centres its dramaturgical resources on the needs and vision of the writer. Even in a time sensitive dramaturgical practice, all notes, questions, and suggestions are directed to the playwrights' deliberation.

In the case of *Moorcroft*, the deferment of an objective dramaturg was made to preserve the unique, personal perspective of the playwright. The playwright herself firmly decided when the development of *The Scent of Roses* script would cease. And within the ongoing dramaturgy of *The Not So Ugly Duckling: A Play for Grown-Ups* the playwrighting team has practiced an ongoing dramaturgical discussion that suits their ideas and preferences.

Within the walls of a rehearsal hall the director may be the absolute authority in most creative decisions, but when it comes to the script the case studies indicate that they willingly defer decisions to the playwright.

3) Production dramaturgy is adaptable

NTS dramaturg Rosie Kellagher resists the idea that there is any standard model for play development leaving decisions as to its form and practice to the director and the playwright.¹¹⁴ Certainly, each of the case studies found their own unique ways of preparing the text for production.

The Tron Theatre threw out its standard play development model in order to preserve *Moorcroft's* unique appeal. Right Lines Productions have had applied the same partnered development practice for decades and yet they were able to adapt it when *Man Shed* broke the mould of prior play creation. And in the Darwinian world of PPP's rehearsal structure, the people behind *Oscar* had to scramble, innovate, and steal extra time to serve their production.

Dramaturgy in Scotland remains an amorphous idea, but that means that it can adapt and reinvent itself to a play's unique needs. Considering how successful this ability to reconfigure itself has proven, it is entirely likely that production dramaturgy in Scotland will continue to resist any attempt to standardize.

4) The entire artistic company are partners in production dramaturgy

In the 18th century Lessing saw the role of the dramaturg as a literary collaborator who would within the play development process serve as a partner with the playwright and director while also seated on the governing board. Decisions of production dramaturgy would be conducted within a closed circle with the dramaturg serving as sage counsel and collaborator.

Without a dramaturg in the room, all the studied productions had to rely on dramaturgical resources beyond a specialist. In bringing *The Bookies* to production all members of the company were enlisted to aid in its development. Due to the brief period he had to create and refine the script for *Oscar*, Brian James O'Sullivan's openness to insights from producers, actors and director may seem to be a case of necessity over choice. The Ducklings take this

¹¹⁴ Interview with Rosie Kellagher 27 January 2022, conducted over phone

idea to an extreme when they regularly offer audiences the opportunity to reshape the content of the play.

G.E. Lessing and other early theatrical writers imagined the role of the dramaturg to be independently imbedded in the concrete structures of management. In the twenty-first century Scottish theatre seems to take a more egalitarian, collective approach to dramaturgy.

5. Dramaturgy need not end with opening night

The methods adopted by the Ducklings are iconoclastic and extreme, but many of the playwrights represented in the case studies expressed interest in continuing to dramaturg their works after a production had been presented though not in such an intensive manner as conversing with audiences for the length of the run. After the one week run at Oran Mor, Brian James O’Sullivan has expressed interest to continue to work on *Oscar*. Even Zinnie Harris who ceases work once the script is published admitted to considering the possibility of further work on *The Scent of Roses* if the opportunity to revisit it arose.

Although the term production dramaturgy implies an end once the production is opened, the lessons learned from playing to an audience can be just as valuable, or indeed arguably more valuable, than an entirely rehearsal-based method.

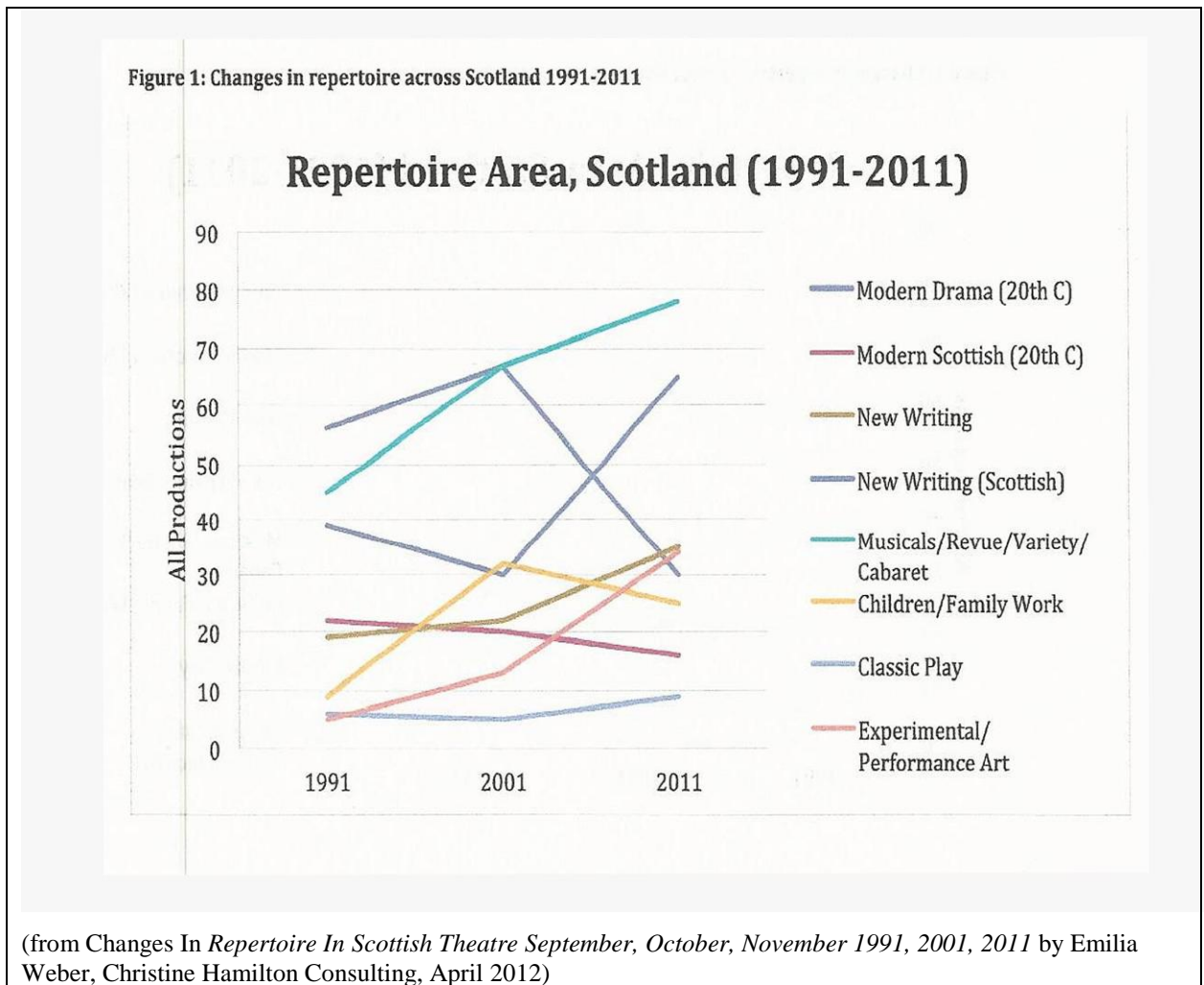
Publication complicates the matter. At major theatres like the Royal Lyceum the show program purchased during the run includes the play script. The script in that form may be sold by the theatre for years to come. The Traverse Theatre offers book sales through their box office for this very purpose. With the text frozen in type and distributed to the public, it is understandable that there is a sense of conclusion. There is a natural reluctance to diverge from the “official” version of the play.

However, there is substantive precedence for a playwright to continue work on their play well after its first production. Every artform demands a pursuit of an ever out-of-reach perfection. The choice of when that pursuit must end can only lie with the playwright themselves.

The observations here provided herein are hardly revolutionary. Although the Scottish case studies provide the source for these insights, I have also seen them widely practiced in Canada and the United States. It is likely that these ideas are reflected in dramaturgy throughout English speaking theatre. However, considering that production dramaturgy has only found wide acceptance in Anglophone theatre in the last thirty odd years, they provide foundational theses that can lead to further growth and exploration. The role of the dramaturg and how dramaturgy may be applied in course of transforming a raw text to a successful production continues to mature.

6. THE FUTURE OF SCOTTISH TEXT-BASED PRODUCTION DRAMATURGY

The production of new Scottish plays has been rising dramatically for decades. In 2012 Emilia Weber gathered data illustrating the number of theatre productions of various types in the years 1991, 2001 and 2011. The data demonstrated a rapid growth of new Scottish work between 2001 and 2011 supporting the observations of Dominic Hill, Rosie Kellagher, Irene McDougall and many others.



Three coincident events contribute to the sudden rise of new work the graph records starting in 2001: devolution in 1999, the establishment of the National Theatre in 2006 and the arrival of A Play, a Pie and a Pint with its voracious appetite for content that same year.

The first event provided unprecedented and stable support for new writers exploring themes appealing to native audiences, as well as a national theatre highly motivated in its desire to tell Scottish stories. The second quickly established systems for commissioning and producing new plays, the third introduced a company requiring a large supply of new scripts on an ongoing basis. The combined effect energized the playwriting community. But a continuing rise in the production of new work indicates a sustained interest in new Scottish playwriting by creators, producers and audiences.

The graph also demonstrates a precipitous drop in plays from the 20th century which can be interpreted as their replacement by more current plays from the 21st century (i.e. new plays or those of a more recent vintage).

Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic the Scottish theatre community was energetic and robust. Femi Folorunso of Creative Scotland reported that prior to the Covid outbreak there was observable growth in the production of new plays, many which were either devised work, workshop creations or applied other untraditional development methods. He also reported that emerging artists seem to be moving into small cast texts and away from the classic model of dramatic theatre.¹¹⁵

As the Scottish theatre community rises from its Covid coma, it seems clear that the enthusiasm for creation and the eclecticism of its play creation methods have been well established and continue to evolve. In her 2012 review of the Scottish theatre sector Christine Hamilton asserted

New work is the lifeblood of Scottish theatre – often, although not always this starts with playwright.¹¹⁶

If so, then effective dramaturgy is of vital importance. A devolved nation determined to explore and assert its unique culture demands a canon of plays that reflects on its past, confronts its present and envisions its future. It is a challenge that Scottish theatre artists are rising to meet. It is uncertain whether production dramaturgy is keeping pace.

¹¹⁵ 3 July 2023, via email

¹¹⁶ Hamilton, Christine. *Theatre Sector Review*, Creative Scotland (June 2012)

All plays, regardless of how they are created, require dramaturgical support. However as of 2022 only one theatre company employs a full-time dramaturg. It demonstrates a paradoxical situation in which dramaturgy is considered necessary for the creative process and yet is treated as an optional line item in the budget. If the nation's goal is to create high quality plays that will stand the test of time, this lack of a stable dramaturgical culture is concerning.

Although this study has focused on dramaturgy as a function of a play's textual development Lessing, Brecht, Trencsényi, Scanlan and others all view the dramaturg's role is much more extensive. The dramaturg's ability to act as a monitor of new work outside the employer theatre, to provide literary and historic context while helping shape a company's visions in partnership with the artistic leadership are impossible if they are employed on a project-to-project basis.

Creative Scotland is dedicated to the development of a robust Scottish canon of plays. Speaking as a representative of Creative Scotland, but the nature of their operating model means that Creative Scotland can only offer funding for textual dramaturgy when requested within the narrow temporal confines of formal application. Dramaturgy is only supported in the short term while the nation's vision of play creation requires a long view.

Scottish theatre is in the midst of an exciting period of exploration and growth. Its dedication to new work is unquestioned. Native theatre companies are investing in playwrights and presenting new plays even on stages that were loath to do so in the past.

In 2022 the future of new play production in Scotland looks exciting and bright. Playwright David Greig is charting the artistic direction of one of the country's most important theatres. Both Andrew Panton at Dundee Rep and Dominic Hill at Citizens have committed to producing more new work by native writers. The Edinburgh Fringe emerged from hibernation with 75th anniversary season that featured hundreds of new shows. Traverse Theatre is shaking off with its lethargy with more premieres in the plans while A Play a Pie and a Pint continues to offer the chance for dozens of plays to take flight.

In 2022 signs point to a future of new play production in Scotland that looks exciting and bright. Playwright David Greig is charting the artistic direction of one of the Royal Lyceum. Both Andrew Panton at Dundee Rep and Dominic Hill at Citizens have committed to producing more new work by

native writers. The Edinburgh Fringe emerged from hibernation with 75th anniversary season that featured hundreds of new shows. Traverse Theatre is shaking off with its lethargy with more premieres in the works. The Every year the National Theatre of Scotland continues to commission and produce unique new scripts, while A Play a Pie and a Pint continues to offer the chance for dozens of plays to test themselves.

But if these new opportunities are to reach their full potential and if Scottish playwrights are to thrive, they will require committed long-term dramaturgical support. If dramaturgs cannot be afforded, theatre companies should be encouraged to adopt their own personal models of effective dramaturgy. The singular dramaturgical partnership built into Right Lines Productions' creative process has proven successful for decades and while the Ducklings' unique approach is linked to a single project the shared understanding between the creative partners has allowed it to continue beyond the play's premiere.

Playwrights Studio Scotland nurtures plays in the early stages of development. Established companies such as NTS, the Lyceum and Citizen's Theatre have their own dramaturgical systems in place. Others are willing to shape to their models to best serve the preferences of the playwright or artistic director as with *Moorcroft* and *The Scent of Roses*.

The challenge will be finding ways to provide for smaller companies with stretched resources to provide sustained dramaturgy. *The Bookies* lost time for their dramaturgy due to the pandemic and *Oscar* received little owing to the production practices of PPP. Both companies had to make dramaturgical compromises to meet their premieres. As a result, the plays ran out of time devoted to textual development during the rehearsal period and did not the plays likely did not reach their full potential by opening night.

The artistic consultation that led to the creation of a singularly modern and effective model for its national theatre could similarly be applied to provide a national dramaturgical resource. Not everyone will choose to use it. All of the companies represented in the case studies created successful productions by engaging in a form of invisible dramaturgy. But most would have benefitted from a dramaturg's participation. Systems for limited textual dramaturgy already exist through PSS and programs offered by established theatre companies. The challenge to make textual dramaturgy a widely available resource rather than an accessory.

Sometimes dramaturgy is invisible, either through practice (*Man Shed, Oscar*), artistic choice (*The Scent of Roses, Moorcroft, The Not-So-Ugly Duckling*) or circumstance (*The Bookies*). Scottish artists tailor their dramaturgy to fit their individual needs and philosophies. However, if the nation is to succeed in creating a canon of new plays reflecting its multi-faceted character and history, then the discussion of its dramaturgy must be encouraged.

If Scottish playwriting is to reach the heights to which it aspires, the value of its dramaturgy must be not only prominent but visible.

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RECORDINGS

Interview with David Anderson, 12 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow

Interview with Andy Arnold, 14 March 2022, Rose & Grant's Deli Café, Glasgow

Interview with Leah Byrne 6 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Jackie Crichton 27 January 2022, conducted over phone

Interview with Jo Clifford 25 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Jo Clifford 18 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Jo Clifford 9 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Dominc Hill, 12 April 2022, Citizens Theatre offices, Glasgow

Interview with Ryan Hunter 29 October 2022, conducted over phone

Interview with Rosie Kellagher 27 January 2022, conducted over phone

Interview with Rosie Kellagher 15 August 2022, Fed Café, Edinburgh

Interview with Jemima Levick 7 September 2022, Oran Mor, Glasgow

Interview with Eilidh Loan, 29 November 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Irene MacDougall, 14 June 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Euan Martin May 25, 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Euan Martin November 2, 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Brian James O'Sullivan, 7 March 2022, Alchemy, Glasgow

Interview with Sally Reid, 23 March 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Dave Smith May 17, 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Santino Smith, 26 October 2022, conducted over Zoom

Interview with Lousie Stephens 6 February 2022, conducted over phone

Interview with Louise Stephens 1 June 2022, CCA, Glasgow

Interview with Zinnie Harris, 4 May 2022, conducted over Zoom

Live Art in Scotland: Festival Futures, public forum, Summerhill Edinburgh, recorded 30 May 2022

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW SUBJECTS REFERENCED

Dave Anderson (in person interview) An actor, playwright and musician based in Glasgow. With a career spanning decades, he was a member of 7:84 and an original member of Wildcat Stage Productions. Along with David Maclennan, he was one of the founders of A Play, a Pie and a Pint.

Andy Arnold (in person interview) Currently the artistic director of Glasgow's Tron Theatre, he has a long and accomplished directorial career and was also one of the major forces behind the Arches.

Leah Byrne (interview via Zoom) A young actor who played Caitlin in the premiere production of *The Scent of Roses* at the Royal Lyceum in Edinburgh.

Jackie Crichton (interview over phone) Literary manager at the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Edinburgh.

Jo Clifford (three conversations via Zoom) Edinburgh based veteran playwright and performer who has written over 100 plays and worked with many theatres over the course of her career. Cocreator of *The Not so Ugly Duckling: A Play for Grown Ups*.

Zinnie Harris (interview via Zoom) Highly respected playwright and television writer. Currently an artistic associate with Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum Theatre. Playwright/director of *The Scent of Roses*.

Dominc Hill (in person interview) Distinguished theatre and opera director who is currently artistic director for Citizens Theatre. He has previously served as artistic director for the Traverse and Dundee Rep.

Ryan Hunter (interview over phone) Scottish theatre actor who attended theatre school with Eilidh Loan and was part of the development of *Moorcroft* from its earliest days to its premiere. He played Tubs in the play's debut production at the Tron.

Rosie Kellagher (interviews over phone and in person) Writer, performer and academic who currently serves as staff dramaturg with National Theatre of Scotland.

Jemima Levick (in person interview) Theatre director who is currently the artistic director of Glasgow's *A Play, a Pie and a Pint*.

Eilidh Loan (interview via Zoom) Theatre and movie actor. The creator, writer and director of the hit play *Moorcroft* at the Tron which was based on stories her father told her.

Irene MacDougall (interview via Zoom) Long time company member with Dundee Rep. She was in the cast and participated in the dramaturgy of *The Bookies*.

Euan Martin (two interviews via Zoom) For over twenty years, along with Dave Smith, the co-founder, co-producer, and co-writer of Right Lines Productions. The writer of *Man Shed*.

Brian James O'Sullivan (in person interview) Glasgow based musician, performer and playwright who wrote, composed, and performed *Oscar* for *A Play, a Pie and a Pint* at Oran Mor.

Sally Reid (interview via Zoom) Performer/director who directed the premiere of *The Bookies* for Dundee Rep.

Dave Smith (interview via Zoom) For over twenty years, along with Euan Martin, the co-founder, co-producer and co-writer of Right Lines Productions. The director of *Man Shed*.

Santino Smith (interview via Zoom) Actor who served as movement coach and played the role of Noodles in the premiere production of *Moorcroft*.

Lousie Stephens (two interviews one over phone and one in person) Dramaturg and literary manager who currently serves as the Executive Director for Playwrights Studio Scotland.

APPENDIX 2: SCOTTISH THEATRES REFERENCED

7:84 (1971 - 2008) Taking its name from an economic report that stated that 7% of the UK's population owned 84% of the nation's wealth, Glasgow based 7:84 was founded by John McGrath, Elizabeth MacLennan and David MacLennan as a socialist political theatre company. McGrath was the writer of the culturally transformative *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. The company followed in the footsteps of that play by actively touring its message plays. The company shuttered after Creative Scotland suspended its funding under controversial circumstances. David MacLennan also founded Wildcat Stage Productions and then would go on to create *A Play, a Pie and a Pint*.

The Arches (1991 – 2015) A theatre, live music, bar and arts venue located in the Glasgow city centre under the viaduct arches under the Central train station. First established by Andy Arnold (the current artistic director of the Tron) it quickly became a showcase for young performers and playwrights and gained a reputation for innovative interpretations of classic works. The loss of its liquor license in 2015 which put it in a financially unsustainable position led to the establishment's closure.

Borderline Theatre (1974 – present) Based in Ayr, Borderline is Scotland's longest running touring theatre company. Taking theatre directly to people who might not otherwise be able to find it, the company offers a repertoire of new work, re-imaginings and revivals.

Citizens Theatre (1878 – present) Glasgow's most venerable company was founded by pioneer playwright James Bridie as a professional theatre venue for the Scottish people. Historically known for presenting classic or well-established scripts, it has in recent years made investment in developing new plays under the leadership of artistic director Dominic Hill. The company is currently idle as its Victorian era theatre building is undergoing a reconstruction begun in 2019. The new venue is planned to open in 2024.

Dundee Repertory Theatre aka Dundee Rep (1939 – present) Conceived as a collaborative venture between professional and amateur dramatists, Dundee Rep is one of the most successful and well-loved theatre companies outside the major cities. Employing a repertory company of artists, it stages a full season of plays every season while also hosting other companies and touring shows in its venues. Though not known for producing new work, its investment in premiere plays has increased in recent years and under artistic director Andrew Panton there is clearly a desire to feature more.

Glasgow Unity Theatre (1941-1951) This influential company was dedicated to using theatre as an instrument of social change. Conceived as presenting theatre for the working class performed by the working class, it was dedicated to communicating the brutal challenges of daily life while also offering socialist solutions. Explicitly invested in new play creation, it premiered some of the most important plays in Scottish history.

The National Theatre of Scotland (2006 – present) Based on an innovative and uniquely Scottish model the National Theatre is a publicly funded institution that produces or partners in production plays with a particular Scottish perspective. Famously lacking a theatre building of its own, NTS will present either in found spaces or theatres across the country. Founded with the vision of producing Scottish plays old and new, it is deeply invested in play creation and has produced numerous new works in its time. Jackie Wylie, the former artistic director of the Arches, is the organization's current AD which employs the country's only full-time dramaturg: Rosie Kellagher.

Oran Mor (2006 – present) see A Play, a Pie and a Pint.

A Play, a Pie and a Pint (2006 – present) Founded by David MacLennan and Dave Anderson, in season PPP has presents a production every week in Glasgow's popular entertainment venue Oran Mor. Operating as a purely independent producer it presents a world premiere from each Monday to Saturday. Offering opportunity and experience, the company has served as a showcase, a launching pad and a workshop for playwrights of all experience levels.

Pitlochry Festival Theatre (1951 - present) Every summer the Pitlochry Festival offers a six-play season in repertory housed in a special built theatre. The event draws thousands of tourists to Perthshire.

Right Lines Productions (2003 – present) Established by artistic collaborators Euan Martin and Dave Smith, the company has created, produced and toured a new play every year, only interrupted by the pandemic. An independent company it has no regular funding and relies on project grants and innovation to sustain their activities. Their plays tend to focus on contemporary issues and will tour communities throughout Northern Scotland often with an appearance at the Edinburgh Fringe.

The Royal Lyceum Theatre (1965 – present) Edinburgh’s Royal Lyceum Theatre building was built in 1883, but the current producing company was established in 1965. Boasting extravagant production values and a storied history, the company is best known for historic and contemporary drama. Under the artistic directorship of playwright David Greig, the company is leaning toward producing more new work.

TAG (1967 – present) Scotland’s longest active theatrical touring company began in 1967 as an outreach initiative by Citizens Theatre. Catering to young audiences, the company adopted the name TAG (for Theatre About Glasgow), but in recent times has expanded its program to present plays outside the city as well.

Tramway (1988-present) Located in the historic the former Coplawhill Glasgow Corporation Tramways depot, Tramway is one of Glasgow’s most important centres for visual and performing arts. Though not a producing organization it is a vitally important venue.

The Traverse Theatre (1962 - present) Renowned as Scotland’s dominating source of new plays, the Traverse has a very active play development program and habitually features premiere productions in its seasons. Since its founding it has been intimately associated with the Edinburgh Fringe and during the event will feature fully professional productions in its theatre building. Gareth Nicholls has been serving as interim artistic director since December 2018.

The Tron Theatre (1982 - present) Located in downtown Glasgow the Tron Theatre produces a full season of plays mostly featuring contemporary writers. They have a reputation for imaginative, intellectual productions. Under artistic director Andy Arnold, the theatre also offers professional development programs and workshops.

Wildcat Stage Productions (1978 – 1996) Founded by David MacLennan and Dave Anderson as an offshoot of 7:84, Glasgow’s Wildcat was a celebrated theatre and music producer that was best known for its touring productions. Remarkably prolific in play creation, it combined its sister company’s social conscience with a raucous populist aesthetic. The company was forced to close when it was suddenly denied necessary funding by the Scottish Arts Council.

APPENDIX 3: EMILIA WEBER'S DATA ON SCOTTISH THEATRE REPERTOIRE

Weber, Emilia. 2012 *Changes in Repertoire in Scottish Theatre September, October, November 1991, 2001, 2011* Review of Scottish Theatre for Creative Scotland, Christine Hamilton Consulting Limited, Glasgow

As part of Christine Hamilton's 2012 review of Scottish theatre undertaken for Creative Scotland, Emilia Weber gathered statistical data on the repertoire of Scottish theatres in 1991, 2001 and 2011. She tracked the number of productions in specific categories including new writing, new Scottish writing, experimental/performance art, modern drama, and others.

Although completed twelve years ago, Ms. Weber's work clearly demonstrates a dramatic growth in new play development that started with devolution and continues to accelerate into the first decade of the 21st century. The data is shared to illustrate the growth of new scripted and devised work not only generally across the nation but in specific regions as well.

Figure 4 Changes in repertoire by area 1991-2011

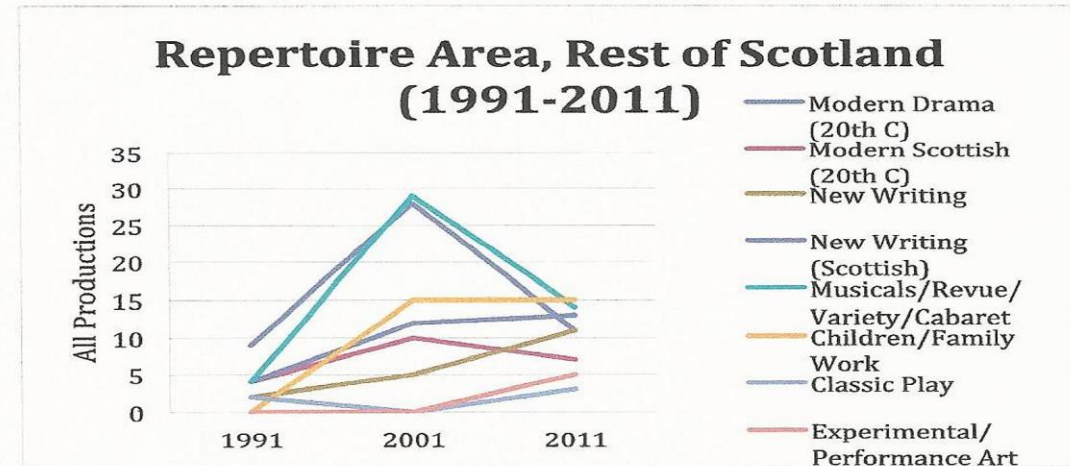
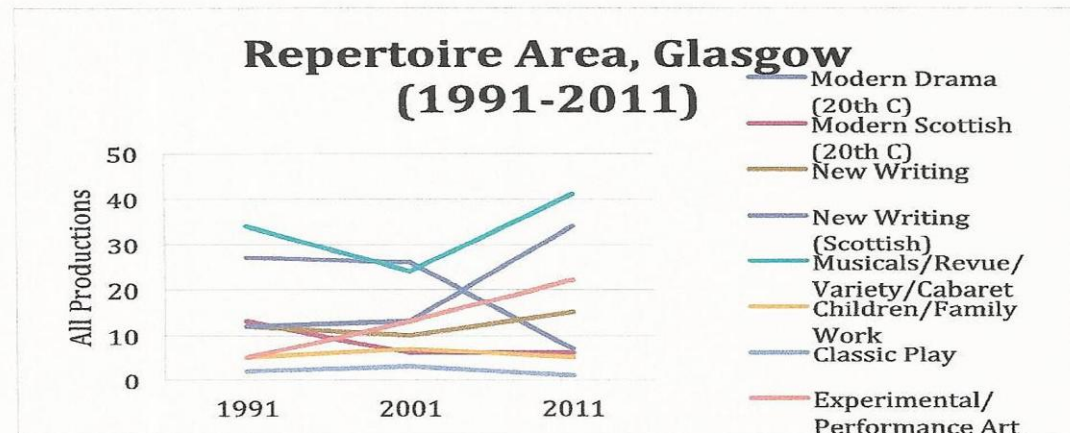
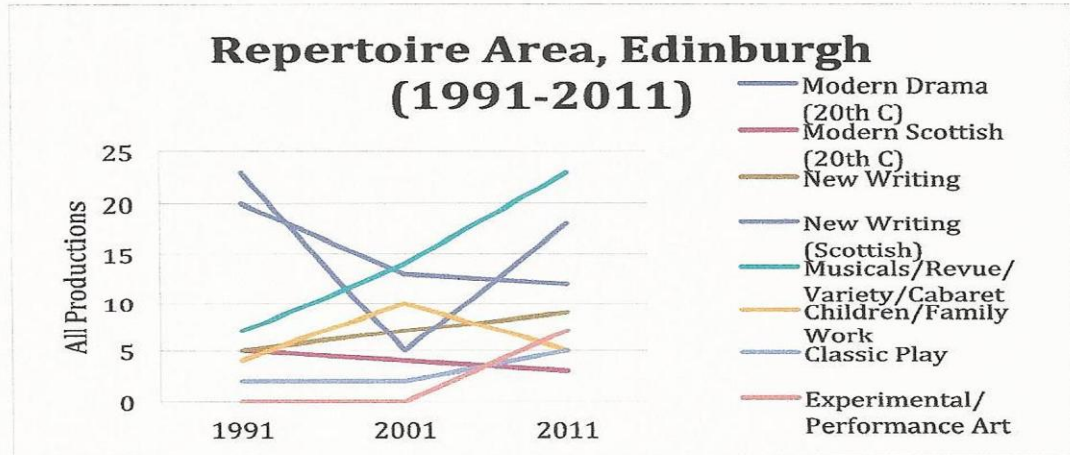


Figure 5 Repertoire by category across geographic areas 1991-2011

