



## **Minutes of Members' meeting Thursday 5 October 2006 at The Waterside Hotel, Inverness, 10.15 – 16.15**

Present: Ian Brown (HITN Chair), Euan Martin (Right Lines Productions), Dave Smith (Right Lines Productions/Arts in Motion), Karrie Marshall and Chris King (Zenwing Puppets), Jackie Goode (Goode for a Giggle), Hamish MacDonald (Dogstar Theatre Company), Frank McConnell (Dannsa/Plan B), George Gunn (Grey Coast Theatre Company), John Durnin (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), Janet Ward (Tosg Gaelic Theatre Company), Maggie Dunlop (HI-Arts), Muriel Ann MacLeod (HITN Development Officer / Theatre Hebrides), Stuart Brownlee (HITN Marketing & Information Co-ordinator), Robert Softley (Birds of Paradise Theatre Company) for afternoon workshop.

Apologies: Muriel Romanes (HITN Patron), Dolina MacLennan (HITN Board Member), Ann McKay (HITN Board Member), Sandy Anderson (HITN Board Member), John McGeoch (Board Member/Arts in Motion), Laura Pasetti & Clare Waddington (Charioteer Theatre Company), Tina McGeaver (Out of The Darkness Theatre Company), Claire Pencak (Tabula Rasa Dance Company), Matthew Zajac (Dogstar Theatre Company), Nick Fearne (Dogdaze Theatre Company), Alasdair Satchel (Perhilion Theatre Company), Sadie Dixon-Spain (The Walking Theatre Company), Sandra Robertson (Dannsa).

### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Ian Brown (Chairman of HITN) – welcomed all to Inverness.

### **2. Minutes of meeting of 2 June 2006**

Minutes of meeting of 2 June 2006 were approved (Karrie Marshall proposed, members agreed).

Matters arising:

Page 7 – Publicity/Promotions post: (SB) gave a brief update on recent discussions at HI~Arts about the possibility of making a business case to present to HIE Inverness & East Highland for a central administration unit providing basic admin and marketing support services for the performing arts sector within this LEC area. Discussions are at an early stage.

Page 13 – Action Checklist 4, charitable status: (MAMaCL) – Stronachs, HITN's solicitors are moving on this and the Business Plan has been re-written to be more community orientated, for benefit to the communities and good of the audiences to more accurately reflect the requirements of OSCR.

### **3. Network Members' Update**

**Arts in Motion** (DS) – Gleneagles Childrens Theatre Production Dec 2006; Film School Leader + Oct 2006; Virtual Storytelling Project – Lairg – Cork Oct 2006; Jesters Must Be Done – Development; Twrch Trych – Installation – Fort William 2007; State of The Art / Tricks of Delight 2 – Theatrical Installation; In receipt of Hi-Arts development grant for next Cartoon Theatre production “The Box it Came In”; Adaption of ‘The Perfect Spot’ with TOSG Gaelic version, touring 2006/7; H2007 equipment grant for a multi-media event, possible DNA link; SAC sponsored collaborative project with Capital E, children’s Performance Centre in Wellington, New Zealand. Film school next week at Evanton for 1 week. Building bigger improved toilets and kitchen. Held a successful August brainstorming meeting to look at the way forward for Arts in Motion as a company.

**Charioteer Theatre Company** – We will be performing at the Piccolo Theatre in Milan in Nov. 06 presenting ‘An Actor Prepares For Beckett’, a study based on ‘Happy Days’. An international conference for Drama schools is taking place there, and we will be representing the Scottish contingent! We have also been successful with our funding application for Highland 2007, and will be presenting Commedia del`Arte in and around Moray next year. So things seem to be looking up for us. We would love to connect up with other initiatives in our future planning and are determined to make the next meeting.

**Dannsa/Plan B** (FMcC) - Sandra sends her apologies. Dannsa 1<sup>st</sup> Harvest tour – great success. “Strathspey Away” – November festival (leaflets left for distribution). Dannsa tour February/March 07, with CNPA funding, to communities at the 4 corners of the National Park. Dannsa applied for flexible funding from SAC – turned down. SAC want to put money into choreography which did not match with Dannsa’s plans for DVDs production. Plan B now has 2 year flexible funding from SAC – 1<sup>st</sup> time in 20 odd years – working on 4 separate shows – Theme of parallel universes – 3 community based projects – 1 with young potential drug users – short/sharp performance pieces around Inverness streets. 1 with pregnant women. 1 with bipolar disorder/depression sufferers. 4<sup>th</sup> show is to be a professional touring show for 2008 – dance and song – for which will employ an administrator.

**DogDaze Theatre Company** – Recently shortlisted for an ‘Eco prize for Creativity’ for their production of ‘It’s a Wasteful Life’ and received a certificate of distinction.

**Dogstar** – (HMcD) – currently on tour with “The Heretics Tale”. Have secured a SAC project grant for a Henry Adam play for May/June 2007.

**Goode for a Giggle** – (JG) Illicit – successful August tour, including Belladrum, Lochaber LEC and Moray Expo. Working with CragRats, a Yorkshire Training company on equality and diversity training in Doncaster [www.cragrats.com](http://www.cragrats.com) . Performing a Murder Mystery Masked Ball at the Newton Hotel in Nairn on Friday 13 October for Highland Hospice.

**Grey Coast Theatre** (GG) - no luck with SAC. Starting in November, have the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the “Butchers Broom” project schools programme with Lybster and Dunbeath. The 1<sup>st</sup> part was last year with poetry. Working on songs this time – 4 songs, with Louise Allan of Theatre Modo and Andy Thorburn. “The Last tree in Dunnett” performance was held at Dunnett Village Hall as part of Caithness Arts Festival. Caithness Arts Festival week was a great success and organisers want H&I’s companies to perform at September 2007 event. Talking with the NTS about developing the Oedipus performance with a community cast. Involved with NHC drama school – this year 1 student will leave to attend RSAMD and 2 students going to QMUC. “Red Fish” project – a SAC commission for a music (Andy Thorburn) piece for 3 actors based on the premise that the North Sea is warming up and that fish are moving north - conceit of red fish landed at Scrabster, will we fish these to extinction as has happened with the Atlantic stocks? Currently applying for funding for a Community Theatre Co-ordinator post for the company. UHI proposal – see under AOB.

**HI~Arts** – (MD) – HIE has changed the Touring Grant process. It has been simplified to remove the need for copy invoices & receipts. There is money left in the touring grants fund, it was £40k. £25k for companies based in H&I’s & £15k for incoming work. c£10k is left from the funds and the money has to be used by March 07. HIE now also considering the costs of touring outwith the area for H&I’s companies carrying on an ambassadorial role.

**Pitlochry Festival Theatre** (JD) - From 01/04/07 will no longer be SAC core funded. The next Winter Season (from October 2006 to April 2007) is now fully booked, including a welcome first visit to PFT from Zenwing Puppets. The 2007 Summer Season is now programmed. Unfortunately, the rights to our previously reported Highland 2007 contribution, VICTORIA by David Greig, were withdrawn, so it has been replaced with PASSING PLACES by Stephen Greenhorn. The 2006 Season now has only two-and-a-half weeks left to run. Since the last Members` Meeting, the final two productions, THE GRAPES OF WRATH and HAMLET: THE ACTORS` CUT, have joined the repertoire. Also, during the winter season the “Winter Words Festival” will be held on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> January 2007. This is a Highland 2007 tie-in event hosting an “Any Questions” slot with John Swinney MSP and Richard Holloway, Chairman SAC on all things Highland Culture.

**Right Lines Productions** – (EM) - Highland Quest The main activity for Right Lines has been our involvement in the Highland Quest competition for a new Scottish Musical. We were fortunate to advance to the final held in Ullapool in July 2006 where our entry, Whisky Kisses, was extremely well received. Although not the outright winner, all the indications were that Whisky Kisses was highly regarded by the judges and only narrowly missed out on the top prize. The audience reaction and critical response suggested that there is a life for the show beyond the competition – and this has been borne out by Eden Court's enthusiasm to pursue funding for a full production in the not too distant future.

We have just heard that the Moray committee of H2007 has awarded Right Lines Productions some money to develop WK and workshop new material and we will be applying for additional funding to expand this event if possible.

Illicit After an initial run at the Spirit of Speyside Whisky Festival in May, our one-woman comedy show about business start-up, illicit whisky and perfume went out for a short re-tour in August. Starring HITN member Jackie Goode, Illicit is ideal for business start up clubs, seminars, or whisky-related events, but is also suitable for one half of a double bill show. Running at just under the hour, including some interactive mingling with the audience at the start, it may be a candidate for a Fringe show in 2007. We are in the process of producing an attractive DVD sampler of the show for promotional purposes.

From These Parts... We received development funding for this show from HIPF last year, but due to other commitments, it went onto the back burner. Fortunately, work has started again and we are aiming at developing a four-hander comedy show about incomers in the Highlands with a significant animation input.

Pride & Passion workshops We were asked to tender for a series of theatre workshops in connection with the Pride & Passion movement in the Scottish tourist industry. However, we concluded that this was not the direction we wanted to take the company at this point.

Other projects We are investigating the possibility of submitting material to Gaelic Media Services in connection with the new Gaelic TV channel. We would like to pitch our sit-com idea Glengirnìe, based on characters created in The Accidental Death of an Accordionist.

Our radio comedy series failed to secure funding from H2007, so we are now negotiating with BBC Scotland to see if a smaller project with a much-reduced budget would still be viable.

**The Walking Theatre Company** – Currently performing at the Cowal Walking & Arts Festival

**Theatre Hebrides** (MAMaCL) - Workshop projects in 2006/7 include: Video Heb 2006–2007 A video workshop programme for young people in Lewis restarting in Nov 2006. Acting workshops – Tuesday evenings in An Lanntair, Sept / Oct 2006 contemporary acting workshops with Muriel Ann Macleod and Rod Morison. Artsplay Hebrides: a 2-year workshop project in Western Isles nurseries from September 2006. Playwrights group -

Theatre Hebrides in collaboration with the Traverse Theatre are initiating a playwrights group meeting bi - monthly in An Lanntair.

Theatre projects being developed for 2007- 2008 include: Kinloch..... Somewhere.... is an acerbic black comedy which examines current notions of celebrity culture, images of contemporary Scotland in film and television and our preoccupation with "success". A one man show written by Eric John Macdonald. Spàrr (à Steòrnabhagh a Bhaile Ghobhainn) 2007 is a celebration of shipbuilding in Lewis and in Govan through theatre and film. Theatre Hebrides will work in collaboration with Fablevision to create this bi-lingual community play in Stornoway and Govan. The Sked Crew by Ian Stephen – a perspective on women's lives as gutters and packers in the Herring Industry in Britain at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This project will go into development with the National Theatre of Scotland in November in Glasgow with a view to production in 2007. Na Daoine (The Men) Playwrights Commission from award winning Gaelic writer Angus Peter Campbell which is being developed in collaboration with John Wright of Told by and Idiot (London). Na Doaine focuses on the social and political issues around the formation on the Free Church in the Western Isles in the 1840's.

Summer season of 2 x 50min plays. Old fisherman's co-op renovated sail loft – performance there and Highland games. c2000 people saw work over the summer. Using local writers. Company is growing a lot of associated local artists.

**TOSG** – (JW) Finished tour (1<sup>st</sup> adult production in 5/6 years) – well received but in some areas there was mixed response. 2 productions per year – back on track. 1 adult & 1 for children (in rehearsal within a couple of weeks) Working on a Gaelic angle version of the "Perfect Spot" with Dave Smith. From the 01/04/07 the Company will no longer be SAC core funded – no meaningful justification given other than 'don't get enough audiences!'

**Zenwing Puppets** – (CK & KM) – With assistance from the Hi~Arts Producer's Fund and HIE, Zenwing's summer tour was puppet show 'Vasalisa's Power'. This went to 15 theatre/ hall venues, plus some pre-tour shows. A range of new venues, including Eriskay where the cafe kept blowing out the electrics! Saw a total of over 800 audience members, and almost 300 workshop participants. We're sure these figures would be higher if marketing improved. Enjoyed the tour and feedback. Did workshop and 2 shows at Belladrum - good feedback. Have also had interest from Glasgow University, plus schools as a result of tour. Went to Meppel, Netherlands International Puppet Festival (our holiday). Saw a much higher standard of puppetry than we've ever seen in UK... really inspiring and exciting... made some contacts.

Currently working on a pilot project using puppets and mask for self-esteem/ emotional well-being issues – "Inside/Outside". Project (paid by Highland Health Board; Health & Happiness participants; and Artsplay Highland) will run through October and November. Also now in contact with health worker in USA/ Mexico doing similar work.

Meeting with dramaturge Lauren Mckie in October with view to her joining us for particular projects/ performances where possible.

Potential storage and rehearsal space looking likely at Arts-In-Motion shed, which will be fantastic. Hoping to source funding to buy the storage container.

Still looking into becoming a company limited by guarantee for health/ education work

Other projects being developed:

- Re-develop the Vasalisa show for 2007 with more Russian folk art and master puppeteer input. (Hoping to source development funding).
- The Trouble with ASBO's (for staff)
- Other business puppet programmes aiming for big drive in Jan 2007
- 'State of Emergency', a Skill-up shadow-puppet/ story workshop Feb 2007
- Historical puppet show for summer 2007

#### **4. Update on Network Company**

See Agenda Item 2.

#### **5. Reports**

##### **i) Board Meeting, 25 July 2006 – update on Action Checklist items**

- 5.6 (SB) to send membership form and seek £50 corporate membership fee from Promote YT. FST membership has been taken out.
- 6.1 CATS have indicated that they would be looking for a contribution of c50% from HITN towards the Pitlochry event (roughly £500 – e-mail from Robert Dawson Scott of 26 September 2006). HITN Board to consider.
- 8.2 The SAC has indicated the following: "We are unable to say at the moment whether Scottish Arts Council will be able to continue its support for the Highlands Producers Fund (HPF) and Highlands and Islands Theatre Network (HITN) from 2007/08. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, we are worked with an indicative budget for 2007/08 which Council will consider at its November 2006 meeting (until the budget is agreed we cannot definitely commit funds.) If the indicative budget is approved there will be a mechanism by which a successor to the Producers Fund *could* be funded. Secondly, the drama department intends to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of HPF and HITN, the results of which will be used to determine any future support. This is planned to take place in November 2006." (by e-mail from Jaine Lumsden (JL), 20 September 2006).

(MAMaL) - has been going round the Member Companies and a report will be sent to (JL) in due course along (an audit of company activities) with a note of Member's work catalogue. (SB) - It should also be noted that HITN membership is growing, with one new member company recently joined (The Walking Theatre Company) and another three considering a membership application (Artbeats, Red Shoes Theatre Company and Timemasters).

(MAMaL) – in response to questions from (GG) and (FMcC) about timing of all of this and SAC's understanding of the H&I's current situation: SAC needs to be able

to justify its ongoing funding of HITN, the HPF and HITN projects such as DNA. The dynamics of theatre in the H&I's has changed as a result of the formalisation and development of HITN. SAC have always been in the loop and had access to all information about HITN business. It is also important to note that the HIE funding remains in place with a very strong commitment by HIE towards the industry.

(GG) – it is important to recognise that there is a lot happening, but that it is all very fragile.

Addendum (IB) – HITN Board has a current vacancy following the resignation of Lara McDonald. The Board has the authority to adopt an interim member director to serve until the AGM. Any member representative can put themselves forward. (JG) – indicated a willingness to serve on the Board. (IB) - to put to next Board meeting for ratification on 12 October 2006.

Members should also note that as per the Company Memorandum and Articles of Association, the next Members' Meeting will be the first company AGM and will be held before the end of March 2007.

**ii) Festival of Theatre 2007: “Dràma Na h-Alba – Scotland’s Theatre Arts Festival and Forum” DNA/STAFF – project update on Action Checklist items**

(IB) - confirmed that eligible remount shows must have happened before October 2006 – submission dates and criteria to be agreed at the next FIG meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> November.

(GG) – must ensure that HITN does not become the ‘Fringe’. Believes it is a mistake to have a Fringe as part of this. (MAMaL) – agreed that DNA needs to build a strong programme.

(DS) – HITN should promote Arts in Motion, Evanton as a space. Fringe – in longer term this should also be funded.

(GG) - unhappy about EC/NTS contribution – DNA as an opening season event. (IB) – the EC opening season consists of Scottish Ballet, NTS, Highland Quest and DNA, The additional NTS show (over and above the collaborative work with a HITN member company) is already paid for and will be an additional element of the DNA programme.

(IB) - other venues are still being considered as a contingency to EC – these are Strathpeffer Pavilion, Spectrum Arts Centre and the Iron Works. c£100k has been raised – some with a health warning. £30k H2007, £44k HIE network (strong indication), THC £20k (estimation of value of in-kind support and future financial contribution), SAC £36k (application submitted to the Performing Arts Programme fund). We have a belief that DNA will attract more H&I's Theatre industry activity in the future.

(MAMaL) – HITN is applying to the “Go to See” fund to go to Sweden to see Macbeth. Swedish companies will source own funding plus anticipated VAU input.

**iii) The Northern Periphery collaborative project with Sweden – update**

This is an artist led process, with an expected further two meetings between now and June 2007 (Scotland and Sweden) and an application to the EU Northern Periphery Programme will be led by Sweden, with a potential third partner (either Ireland or Finland) for the development, production and performance of major show for rural area performances only.

**iv) Marketing and Information Co-ordination**

See Agenda Item 2.

**v) HITN Website, e-list group and e-bulletin – update**

(SB) – update, reminded members that they need to continue to provide update information about their companies, tours, etc. for inclusion on the HITN website.

**6. AOB**

(GG) – proposes a meeting in late October/early November with the UHI Dean of Faculty of Arts to discuss the setting up of a degree course Dept. of Performing Arts. Propose that HITN companies are the base for this, with each company joining up with their local UHI college to help deliver an HNC course – develop from grass roots and in 3 - 4 years have locally trained actors and other industry skills, looking to build a critical mass of students each year (c20 students per year would be viable?). (IB) – propose that the next members meeting hosts a workshop session to thrash out HITN companies relationship with UHI. This has 100% member backing.

**The location, venue, date, time and format of the next HITN Members' meeting will be notified in due course. It will be the AGM of the Company.**

## **ACTION CHECKLIST**

- 5i) 5.6 (SB) to send membership form and seek £50 corporate membership fee from Promote YT.**
  
- 5i) 6.1 CATS have indicated that they would be looking for a contribution of c50% from HITN towards the Pitlochry event (roughly £500 – e-mail from Robert Dawson Scott of 26 September 2006). HITN Board to consider.**
  
- 5i) 8.2 HITN Board to keep a watching brief on SAC position. (MAMaCL) to prepare evaluation report and work catalogue for submission to SAC.**  
  
**(JG) – attend the next Board meeting for ratification as interim Member Director on 12 October 2006.**  
  
**The next Members' Meeting will be the first company AGM and will be held before the end of March 2007.**
  
- 5ii) Arts in Motion, Evanton to be proposed to FIG as a space for DNA use.**
  
- 5iii) (MAMaCL) – to apply to “Go to See” fund for Swedish trip to see Macbeth.**
  
- 5iv) (SB) – to keep a watching brief on discussions related to administration / marketing support functions.**
  
- 5v) Members are reminded that they need to continue to provide update information about their companies, tours, etc. for inclusion on the HITN website.**
  
- 6. (GG) – to keep members informed on the proposal to arrange a meeting in late October/early November with the UHI Dean of Faculty of Arts to discuss the setting up of a degree course Dept. of Performing Arts.**

**[see following for pm session]**

**Afternoon Workshop - Guest Speaker Robert Softley**

Robert warmed us up by asking various questions concerning disabled people, e.g. “The Social Model of Disability” – with very varied answers.

The social model is the way in which society allows physical barriers to exist that restrict or prevent access

Also placing us in categories of “agree”, “disagree” and “middle” to certain statements about disability and ability so as to clarify the issues and our response to them in discussion.



Physical exercise (in pairs) exploring physical limitations and interdependence in a way that became unsustainable – which Robert explained - was all done standing up – didn't we think to do any of it either sitting or lying down, i.e. we tend to think in orthodox ways about our bodies, to take for granted one way of doing, where disabled people have a different viewpoint.



We then had to list favourite plays:

The Birthday Party  
The Steamie x 2  
Lear  
The Dream Play  
The Slab Boys  
Macbeth x 2  
Miss Julie  
Taming of the Shrew  
Mother Courage  
Waiting for Godot x 2  
Hedda Gabler  
Hamlet  
Importance of being Earnest  
Peter Pan  
The Crucible  
Jekyll & Hyde  
Midsummer's Nights Dream  
Our Town  
Abigail's Party  
Tutti Frutti

Split into 3 teams and Robert designated a play per team:

"The Steamie" (JG), (SB), (RB)  
"Lear" (GG), (CK), (MAMaL)  
"Macbeth" (IB), (DS), (MD), (CM)

Task: to list at least 5 characters from each of the plays and at least 2 of the characters had to be disabled and at least 2 characters being of black/ethnic origin. Then do a 5 – 10 min. sketch.

**"The Steamie"**

Dolly – (Polish – she was previously a doctor of Philosophy)  
Margaret – (agony aunt – but is suffering from depression – due to everyone's problems)  
Doreen – Young Asian (newly married, Hindu (not Muslim) plays jokes & is gullible)  
Mrs Culfeathers – (in a wheel chair – perception that she can't do what she used to do and needs looking after)  
Andy – the caretaker – Black - alcoholic (used to be a bus driver), hides his bottles in the dryers and had a predilection for dressing up in women's clothes.

**"King Lear"**

King Lear– Asian (and a manic depressive)

Daughters:

Cordelia – Asian  
Goneril – Afro Caribbean  
Regan – White Irish



Gloucester – Blind  
The Fool – Scottish – Tourette's Syndrome  
Edmund – Wheel chair  
King of France – Mobility issue

**“Macbeth”**

Macbeth – Black alcoholic  
Three Witches – 1 witch - Schizophrenic  
Lady Macbeth – Suffers from Depression  
Casting Director – In control



**Summary of session:**

What I learned

How easy it would be to employ a disabled actor.  
Think more about the meaning of working with other people.  
Need to understand potential of varieties of disability.  
That we should think in terms of individuals.

What didn't work?

Actually having to perform the piece.  
Some confusion for me about last exercise, regards casting..... having been on the track of beginning to dismantle the label of disability..... but certainly an interesting discussion about why we might cast particular people.

What worked?

The visual display of points of view in the agree/disagree. x 2  
Making us think about the “disabled” statement.  
Thinking about a play and putting in disabled/ethnic characteristics.  
The build up of tasks leading to deeper thinking about own conditioning/assumptions...  
Liked the agree/disagree process plus sense of safety re being no right or wrong.  
Making us think about assumptions about disability.  
Sessions were structured to lead to deeper understanding.  
All the exercises made me think.