



Minutes of Members' meeting Friday 14 November 2008 at the Waterside Hotel, Inverness, 10.00 – 16.30

Present: Ian Brown (HITN Chair), Dave Smith (Right Lines Productions/Arts in Motion), Jackie Goode (Goode for a Giggle/Board Member), Euan Martin (Right Lines Productions/Board Member), John Durnin (Pitlochry Festival Theatre), Henri Edwards (Red Shoes Theatre), Nick Fearn (Dogdaze Theatre Company/Moray Council), Karrie Marshall and Chris King (Zenwing Puppets), Hamish MacDonald (Dogstar Theatre Company), Chris Lee, Ali Ross and Dave Martin (Wildbird), Jenny Hardie (An t-Sireadh Eu-comasach), Clare Waddington (Charioteer Theatre), Frank McConnell (Plan B) pm, Muriel Ann MacLeod (HITN Development Officer / Theatre Hebrides), Stuart Brownlee (HITN Marketing & Information Co-ordinator).

Apologies: Dolina MacLennan (HITN Board Member), Sandy Anderson (HITN Board Member), John McGeogh (Arts in Motion), John Cairns (Grey Coast Theatre Company), George Gunn (Grey Coast Theatre Company), Sadie Dixon-Spain (The Walking Theatre Company), Alasdair Satchel (Perhilion Theatre Company/Mull Theatre), Colin Marr (Eden Court Theatre), Robert Livingston (HI~Arts).

Welcome and Introductions

Euan Martin (HITN Board Member) – welcomed everyone to the Waterside Hotel and outlined the agenda for the day.

2. Network Members' Update

Wildbird – Looking to take 'Fall of the Peacock Throne' to Southwark Playhouse in London, March 5th to 28th 2009. 'Animal Behaviour', is a fantastic live sound and visual experience from Dave Martin and Graeme Roger. Featuring a mix of original electro drum and bass, dance and trance tracks with stunning projected visuals. It has been in production for 3 years and had has been performed at many venues during that time including Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival 2008. Taking 'Baby Rave' to the next level with 'Baby Beat', a full-on rave for under 4's, next Baby Beat is at Elgin Town Hall on 14th

February 2009. Also working on a project with MAMacL. Ali Ross and Dave Martin working on an installation at Acharacle Primary School for Feisean nan Gaidheal. [see www.wildbird.org.uk].

Theatre Hebrides – Touring 'Kinloch Somewhere', an acerbic black comedy which examines current notions of celebrity culture, and our preoccupation with "success", from February 2009. Planning to tour 'Na Daoine', a new play that looks at the social and political issues around the formation of the Free Church in the Western Isles in the 1840's, towards the end of 2009. 'Lostbost' Gaelic Television Comedy drama pilot episode was shown on BBCAlba, the new Gaelic satellite channel, on 14 October 2008. There are plans to produce another five episodes in 2009. Ongoing projects: community outreach work; VideoHeb; new Journal 'Jabble' produced. [see www.theatrehebrides.com].

Pitlochry Festival Theatre – Season finished in October, good performances of David Grieg's 'Outlying Islands' and Tom Stoppard's 'Arcadia'. Now into winter season, with winter 08/spring 09 brochure available. Received funding from Homecoming Scotland for a new musical adaptation of 'Whisky Galore'. Entire 2009 season is 'homecoming' themed. [see www.pitlochry.org.uk].

Dogstar – 'Tailor of Inverness' is going into the second phase of touring. It received a great response at this year's Edinburgh Fringe: winner of 2008 Scotsman Fringe First Award; The Stage Award for Best Solo Performer; and Holden Street Theatre Award, Adelaide Festival. Appearing at Celtic Connections in January 2009, then on tour until end February 2009, finishing at Eden Court's One Touch Theatre; then a three-week run at the Holden Street Theatre, Adelaide followed by a three week tour of Ireland and London. Currently have zero production funding. Do have a commission for a production of James Robertson's 'Testament of Gideon Mack'. [see www.dogstartheatre.co.uk].

An t-Sireadh Eu-comasach – Now in new premises, and will have self-catering. Have landed five shows and will revive one show – so hopeful for 2009 season.

Arts in Motion – Currently working on visual arts project with schools (murals, printed boards). Highland 2007 legacy application being re-looked at. Completed 'Young Voices' film work overview of the work of the Cultural Co-ordinators in the Highlands. Working on an Edinburgh Theatre Workshop collaboration, 'Marat/Sade'. Re-submitting Inspire application. Speaking with Highland Council about the planned Winter Festival, possible projections and installations. Annual Gleneagles show will go ahead. Working on 'Canned Laughter' which received HPF funding. Getting bookings for the 'Box it came in' and touring in March 2009. Applying to Board na Gaidhlig for funding to produce a Gaelic version of 'Box it came in'. [see www.artsinmotion.co.uk].

The Moray Council – Moray Theatre Companies have been holding fairly regular meetings to discuss collaboration and have re-submitted Inspire Fund application [note: unfortunately rejected February 2009]. Working with NTS Transform project in June 2009.

'Fleeto' project was successful (involving young people as the 'gang'). Homecoming 2009 theatre project 'William Shakespeare's round of golf with James I'.

Red Shoes Theatre Company – Busy in-house September and October – 'Lady Lane', the musical adaptation of Kesson's, A White Bird Passes written by Kenny and Fred MacDonald played to sell out audiences in Elgin's Town Hall and received good audiences in Inverness. Pantomime and winter festival work is underway, and have a raft of end of term shows. Working with NCH on a community drama project and looking to work with Moray College on a drama project in June 2009. Working with the local Rotary Club on a 'Make Dreams Real' fundraising song writing and recording project. Classes are really taking off on the music tuition side of the business. [see www.redshoestheatre.com].

Charioteer Theatre – Working with Piccolo Theatre in Milan (Piccolo Theatre was founder of the European Union of Theatre). Charioteer Theatre's aim is to establish an acting school in the North of Scotland, most likely Moray. Have held 14 theatre laboratories to date, with Italian and Russian teachers involved. 'Comedia dell'Arte' production as part of Highland 2007, and received some HPF funding to tour again in Aberdeenshire, Highland, Moray and Italy. Rehearsing 'Romeo and Juliet – are dead', and taking it to Milan in January 2009, then touring in Aberdeenshire and Highland schools through to March. [see www.charioteertheatre.co.uk].

Zenwing Puppets – 'Travellers Follies', a comedy tango puppet show has been developed and is ready to go out on tour in 2009. It was performed at Traquair Fair & Belladrum Festival in 2008. Working on the 'Story of Father Christmas' show which will tour to 15 venues, with performances at the Spectrum Centre, Inverness on the three days before Christmas. Zenwing have been awarded a grant by Puppet Animation Scotland to create a Puppetry Toolkit for working with people with dementia – this project will run through 2009. Have two weeks of workshops planned for Edinburgh, Aberdeenshire and Shetland in early 2009. Produced 'Creative Spaces' video for BBC Highland Lives – check out <http://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/player/?item=44533511>. Working on a project with the University of Bethlehem in 2009. [see www.zenwingpuppets.com].

Right Lines Productions - 'Accidental Death of an Accordionist' Mull Theatre production on Scottish tour following three weeks at the Edinburgh Festival (well received and good audiences). 'Whisky Kisses' draft script is currently with James Brining at Dundee Rep. No project money at moment to develop more shows. [see www.rightlines.net].

Goode for a Giggle – Has stopped doing Murder Mysteries (experience has shown that Highland hospitality is very poor in the hotels worked in). 'Illicit' is showing on an 'on & off' basis at the moment. Now a Humanist celebrant for funerals and training to take weddings. Also now self-employed as a wedding planner. Will be working with AiM at Gleneagles. Also working on 'Stars in your eyes' competition with kids; forum theatre; and on cultural differences issues. Ideas being developed in collaboration with Wildbird on

experiencing interactive theatre – for thrill seekers, a/v effects, but possibly with some performance insurance issues. [see www.hi-arts.co.uk/goodegiggle.htm].

HITN – (IB) reported on the successful 'Celebrating Simon' night at Eden Court's One Touch Theatre on 24 October 2008. The Simon MacKenzie Trust has now been set up with the intention of supporting young Gaelic performing artists. The intention is that the Trust will have an independent Chairperson and two representatives each from the Boards of HITN and PNE. (HMacD) proposed a vote of thanks to (DMacL) and PNE for their efforts in organizing such a successful event – this was unanimously supported.

(IB) – reported on a recent example of the fruitful outcomes of collaborative working as a result of Northern Connections, with Matthew Zajac working with Vasterbottensteatern and performing in Liverpool.

3. HITN Business Meeting

3.1 Minutes of meeting of 27 June 2008 – these were approved.

3.2 (IB) – reported that SAC had given an additional £5k to the Producers Fund as final payment prior to the Fund being withdrawn. A top-level meeting with SAC, HIE, Local Authorities is planned, with Hamish MacDonald as a member representative. DNA accounts still being worked on to finalise the actual outturn (c£3k still to be claimed from HIE and outstanding Gift Aid matters). AN informal approach to the HI-Arts Board is being made regarding waiving fee payments for 2008. Looking at alternative ways of funding HITN (e.g. Highland LEADER Programme). Seeking to diversify income streams.

3.3 (IB) – as of this meeting, members who have yet to pay their annual subscription will be reminded once more (by end November). Member consultation on a review of the Business Plan is proposed as a 'think tank' session before the end of 2008 [note: this meeting took place at Moniack Mhor on Wednesday 3 December, the results of which have been summarised as a review paper for the Board to consider at its next meeting on 6 February 2009].

3.4 (IB) – reported that Eden Court Theatre wish to speak with HITN about how they can help to profile Highland & Islands companies more [note: this meeting took place on 16 December 2008, the notes of which will be considered by the Board at their next meeting on 6 February 2009].

3.5 (MAMacL) – reported on her attendance at the recent PAN Forum held at Mull Theatre's new facility, where she was able to speak about HITN members work. She also reported that Mull Theatre were in a period of development and would not be touring in 2009. A brief update was given on the possible international projects, incubator, and Northern Connections (Irish partners keen to move ahead).

3.6 (IB) – reported on Barbara Bell's interim report on the proposed Degree course, which has moved on somewhat from the model originally being discussed. It would seem that

the proposal is now that the role of the HITN companies would not be as instrumental to the Degree course and that there would be less time/resource commitment from HITN companies. There may still be income opportunities for companies however. [note: following the members meeting (SB) had a 'phone conversation with Barbara Bell from NHC about the proposed drama degree course. It now appear that the UHI Registrar Office does not want this to progress in its proposed form as UHI have no regulations in place to enable it to work with an external institution (as in the Rose Bruford programme). What is apparently now being proposed is a possible 'joint' / 'half-degree' course in Drama, 'buddying up' with one other subject (currently being suggested are literature, history, business)].

4. AOCB

4.1 None

Date of Next Meeting – to be confirmed.

There was short 15 minute performance by Jackie Goode prior to lunch, which was very well received. Following lunch, Neil Murray and Neil Black gave a presentation on the collaboration and partnership work of NTS and then met with individual HITN company members to discuss the potential for collaboration.