Luvvies and rude mechanicals?

Amateur and Community Theatre in Scotland

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(A report based on research carried out with the assistance of Stephanie Knight, funded by the Scottish Arts Council and the University of Glasgow.)
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Preface and acknowledgements

The idea for this research came out of a conversation between Barclay Price, Director of Planning and Development at the Scottish Arts Council, and Jan McDonald Professor of Drama at the University of Glasgow, in which the lack of information about amateur arts activity in Scotland was mentioned. This led then to the subsequent decision to carry out the present research, with the following agreed objectives:

- To identify and describe the range of amateur and non-professional community theatrical activities presently existing within Scotland.
- To determine the size, age-range, socio-economic mix, and geographical distribution of participants in the above activities.
- To determine the means by which such activities are currently funded, eg the proportion of private and public support each receives, box-office income, subscriptions, merchandising activity etc.
- To determine the nature of expenditure regularly incurred by each organisation or group, eg hire of premises and venues, production costs, publicity and marketing costs, employment of professional advisers, etc.
- To consider the groups and associations identified, both communally and severally, as to the kind of financial or other support that would assist them in improving and extending their activities.
- To collate and interpret the findings from the research and identity significant issues and challenges.
- To propose ideas to meet such challenges and identify relevant organisations which might further the interests and activities of the sector.

It was also stated that the final report should contextualise current activity within some discussion of the previous history of, and debates concerning, amateur and community theatre in Scotland.

SAC and the University of Glasgow jointly funded the appointment of a Research Assistant for nine months, and thanks are due to them. My first stroke of luck in carrying out what was to prove a fairly tortuous project was to discover that Stephanie Knight, who had many years experience in community dance and theatre work and as a regional Arts Officer, was available to help. For the knowledge and commitment Stephanie has contributed, and for her patience in dealing with the various frustrations we inevitably faced, I am extremely grateful. Although I ended up writing the final report, its content, spirit and shape owe much to her. This is reflected in occasional variation between the
use of ‘we’ and ‘I’ in the report, which I trust readers will not find confusing: the plural refers to our processes and encounters as researchers, while I sometimes use the singular when stating an authorial view. (The research leading to the report took place between December 1999 and August 2000; the bulk of the report was written over August and September 2000.)

We are grateful to the many amateur and community theatre participants who have both entertained us in performances and found the time to talk to us and fill in questionnaires. Almost a hundred club secretaries and 250 participants responded to requests for information, without which it would have been impossible to achieve any of the objectives that had been set. Appendix 4 lists the many drama workers and groups who gave up their time to be interviewed; for this we are very grateful. We would also like to thank Morna Barron, Chairman of the Scottish Community Drama Association, for her advice and information, and for encouraging members of the SCDA to assist the research. Thanks also to Joanne Scott for assistance with tape transcriptions, and to Lalitha Rajan and Colin Cavers for constant support and advice.

Greg Giesekam
October 2000
Frank: But *The Importance* isn’t playing at the moment …

Rita: It is – I passed the church hall on the bus an’ there was a poster …

Frank (*aghast*): An amateur production? … Are you suggesting I miss a night at the pub to watch *The Importance* played by amateurs in a church hall?

Rita: Yeh. It doesn’t matter who’s doin’ it, does it? It’s the same play, isn’t it?

Frank: Possibly, Rita …

Rita: Well come on – hurry up – I’m dead excited. I’ve never seen a live play before.

Frank: And there’s no guarantee you’ll see a ‘live’ play tonight.

Rita: Why? Just cos they’re amateurs? Y’gorra give them a chance. They have to learn somewhere. An’ they might be good.

Frank (*doubtfully*): Yes …

From *Educating Rita* by Willy Russell, © 1985, Methuen Publishing Ltd (www.methuen.co.uk)

**INTRODUCTION**

What picture does ‘amateur theatre’ and ‘community theatre’ conjure in your mind? Are you one of the many who speak of ‘am-dram’ with a faint sneer, thinking of inappropriately-cast performers in dinner jackets stumbling through wobbly sets or self-congratulatory part-time ‘luvvies’, who in daily life are really accountants or librarians, pretending to be Hawaiian natives, while long-suffering relatives politely applaud? Does ‘community theatre’ evoke a slight whiff of social do-gooding? Do you imagine spotty teenagers venting inarticulate anger to an empty community hall or the local woolly hat brigade trying to whip up a bit of community spirit with some wicker lanterns and giant puppets, accompanied by a motley assembly banging makeshift percussion instruments? When your neighbour’s child asks you to buy a ticket for the upcoming production of *Annie* or *Memories of Springburn Railway Workers*, do you immediately find your diary is full or get ready to put on a polite smile and ‘make allowances’?

If so, you are probably not alone. While researching this report, we came across a great many enthusiastic people who commit considerable time and energy to their chosen activity and testify to the great pleasure they get from it and the sense of community which it seems to produce in those involved. We also came across plenty of people like
Frank, who gave a pitying look when the subject was mentioned, who sympathised over the imagined prospect of tedious evenings being spent at such events.

If the truth is told, over the past nine months we did endure a few tedious evenings watching poorly presented theatre: but only half of them were at amateur or community events, while the rest were in the subsidised professional theatre. Neither type has a monopoly over either good or bad theatre (whatever they are). We are also probably not alone in thinking this, since the total audience for amateur, youth and community theatre in Scotland last year, at well over a million people, easily exceeded the audience for professional theatre – and they can’t have all been shanghaied into going by the 40,000 or so people who are regularly involved in such activity.

As this report was being written the Scottish Executive published its report, *Creating our Future: Minding our Past, Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy*. It had been preceded by a number of other policy documents which fed into it and which are referred to in the following pages. These are all pervaded by ideas about cultural democracy which have emerged over the past 30 years, asserting the need for a broad understanding of the term ‘culture’ and the recognition of the beneficial role participation in cultural activities (rather than just attendance at cultural events) has for individuals and communities alike. There is frequent reference to the role voluntary organisations have to play and suggestions that, ‘We could, we must, eradicate false barriers and sterile debate between “high” and “low”, between amateur and professional. We must relish and celebrate our cultural diversity’ (Wishart, 1999: 23). The National Cultural Strategy (hereafter, NCS) itself highlights this area very quickly (5-6):

Culture is the product of many individual contributions and experiences: professional and amateur; performer and creator; audience and passer-by. Many bodies, public and private, voluntary and charitable have important roles to play. The national cultural strategy recognises these contributions and provides a framework within which they can be developed.

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See Ch.2 for how these figures were arrived at.

… Healthy participation rates in a range of voluntary arts activities demonstrate the commitment of individuals across Scotland to their communities. There is, however, scope to increase the number of participants and volunteers to ensure that the benefits are available to a wider range of communities.

It will be essential to ensure that the public support mechanisms for culture remain appropriate to the requirements of the 21st century, make the best use of available resources, and provide appropriate leadership. They must operate to empower and enable individuals to engage, to experience and to realise their potential.

If these aspirations are to be anything more than rhetoric, then there will need to be some frank recognition of the various prejudices which have built up around non-professional arts activity, along with considerable thought about what is understood by ‘community’ and how ‘public support mechanisms for culture’ become ‘appropriate to the requirements of the 21st century’. While the last quarter of a century did witness some changes in the way public support mechanisms (especially those of local authorities) responded to developing recognition of the significance of participation in arts activities, it has to be acknowledged that for the most part such mechanisms have usually focussed on supporting professional arts provision. With regard to SAC support for theatre, this has certainly been the case – although the advent of the National Lottery in the past five years has seen it begin to pay more attention to non-professional activities. The focus on professional work has its origins in debates which surrounded the early years of the Arts Council of Great Britain (ACGB), which will be touched on later in this report, since these debates have had a strong influence on the sorts of cultural divisions which the NCS aims to combat. The following comments from Robert Hutchison’s study of the ACGB may have been written 18 years ago, but much of the underlying sentiment is still pertinent today:

The weight of Arts Council subsidy and procedures has gone to maintain a professional exclusiveness. It is, for the most part, professionals who sit on Council panels and committees, it is professional organisations and professional artists that receive practically the whole of the subsidies distributed by the AC… This professional exclusiveness serves, and can be seen as an expression of, a particular view of men’s and women’s imaginative potential and their potential for disciplined respectful creative work, their potential as artists. It is partly because the boundary between amateur and professional work is often highly arbitrary, partly because some of the world’s most influential companies have
begun as amateurs, and partly because the arts are so demanding, are such hard taskmasters, that the questions of access and opportunity are so important.

Of course ‘amateur’ is often a synonym for self-indulgence, many amateur groups are more concerned with their social activities than with artistic achievement, and many are extremely, often justifiably, proud of their independence and would neither ask for, nor accept, any public money. But others are interested in improving their standards of work and would value professional help. Large numbers of people live for their artistic pursuits without wanting to have to live by them. (1982: 54)

The purpose of this report then is to contribute to the debate which must take place in the wake of the publication of the NCS. It aims to provide some of the factual information which will be necessary if the debate is to progress beyond mere swapping of slogans: to give some sense of who is doing what where in the fields of amateur and community theatre, to place current activity in the context of earlier developments, and to explore some of the attitudes, aspirations and backgrounds of participants in such activity. In doing so, it will explore how the demarcations which are often drawn between amateur and community theatre have come into being and what the effects of these have been; it will also suggest that in some, though not all, instances a blurring of boundaries between the two is occurring, and ask what the implications of this are for public policy towards these sectors. It will also identify areas in which some strategic support from public bodies might assist the NCS’s aim to ‘increase the numbers across all communities taking part in voluntary activities, including cultural activity’.

The report begins with a brief sketch of the earlier development of amateur theatre and community theatre in Scotland and some of the debates which have surrounded these activities and their relationships with professional theatre. The original intention was to follow this with a contextualising account of how public policy has impacted, or is likely to impact, on developments in both sectors in the immediate past and future: in particular, looking at policies of SAC and local authorities, and the potential impact of the Scottish Executive’s Social Inclusion Strategy. Since detailed consideration of such issues would excessively delay getting to the meat of the report, which is concerned with what people are actually doing on the ground, it was decided to place this discussion in an appendix. (While accounts of various activities do at times make reference to some of these policy
issues, they do not usually depend upon a detailed understanding of them.) The report, therefore, proceeds to develop a more detailed picture of the extent and nature of current activity in the amateur sector. It draws on a combination of production visits, discussions with various participants and analysis of questionnaires which were distributed to groups and group members. The following discussion of current community theatre attempts less of a comprehensive overview; instead it aims to give an indication of some of the range of activities which are going on under the broad rubric of community theatre, through more detailed accounts of particular projects. It draws more extensively on interviews with community theatre workers and policy makers, along with some discussion of productions or workshops we visited, discussions with some of the participants and analysis of questionnaire returns. It is succeeded by an account of youth theatre activity, which illustrates how this work straddles both amateur and community theatre. As with the previous two sections, it draws on interviews, discussion and questionnaire returns to investigate the attitudes and backgrounds of participants. The final section draws together some of the issues which have emerged through the course of the previous accounts and suggest ways in which they might be addressed in future.

In writing up research one is always conscious of what is being left out as much as what is being included. This is particularly true when the research has depended upon dozens of people who have given up precious time to talk at length about their work. Inevitably, in seeking to provide some structure to an account of very diverse material, I have been forced to compress and select in a way which has demanded the omission of material which might have been equally worthy of inclusion. In an attempt at times to get away from the monotony of one consistent account and voice, I have included many quotes from people we have met. Sometimes these are incorporated into the narrative, at other times anecdotes or arguments from these and other written sources are added in boxed off form, to allow them to develop their own momentum and create a sort of dialogue. In doing so I have been reminded of a device Alan Ayckbourn used in *The Norman Conquests* – where he wrote three plays, set in different rooms, all about the same weekend. Unfortunately, I am limited to writing only the one ‘play’, despite the fact that the interviews we have conducted have given us enough dialogue to write another couple.
Another play, of course, might be written out of the dialogue we hope this report stimulates between readers involved in amateur and community theatre: we hope that people involved on either side of what seems to be an increasingly artificial divide may recognise ways in which they can learn from, or contribute to, activities in the other sector.
BEGINNINGS

A. Early developments in amateur theatre in Scotland

This section does not attempt to provide a comprehensive history of amateur theatre in Scotland. A useful sketch of this can be found in David Hutchison’s book *The Modern Scottish Theatre* (1977), and a more detailed account of work within what she defines as a popular theatre tradition can be found in Linda Mackenney’s *The Activities of Popular Dramatists and Drama Groups in Scotland, 1900-1952* (2000), where conflicts between different wings of the amateur movement in the inter-war period are also discussed. Mary Rattray’s (1989) sociological analysis of the history and workings of one particular amateur group, the Dunaverty Players in Southend, also provides many useful insights into how the development of a small rural club has been affected by changing social circumstances in the post-war era, in a way which is also useful for an understanding of some of the activities of the wider movement. What follows attempts simply to identify some key facts about the early development of the amateur drama movement in Scotland and note issues which still have some significance for understanding the way in which amateur and community theatre provision is located today.

Hutchison notes that the modern amateur theatre movement began in the mid 19th century as ‘essentially a pursuit of the upper and middle classes’ but that it gradually spread to all social classes, in particular during the period of its inter-war boom. At this time many clubs still in existence today were founded, as dozens of amateur theatre companies were set up yearly. By the late 1930s there were about a thousand amateur societies in Scotland, many of them affiliated to the Scottish Community Drama Association which had been formed in 1926 – originally in order to choose a Scottish club to attend an
international festival of amateur theatre in New York. The SCDA established a tradition of annual One-Act Play Festivals, in which clubs competed with each other at District and Divisional levels, with the winning clubs going through to a national final. It also went on to develop a magazine for its membership – originally The Scottish Stage, now Scene, which in the 1930s was a lively site for debate about the future of Scottish drama. Over the years it has also developed play libraries and a range of other ways of supporting member groups through summer schools, workshops and an advisor who visits groups to give assistance in workshops. In addition to the one-act plays for which it is best known, the organisation also supported a festival for full-length plays, which still continues today, although with a much lower number of entrants than the One-Act Festivals.

While the SCDA membership consisted primarily of hundreds of small clubs which sprang up in towns and villages throughout the country, there were also other significant amateur ventures in large towns and cities which attempted to operate in a quasi-professional way, often with the aim of developing an indigenous drama. At a time when there was little home-produced professional theatre in Scotland, as opposed to touring productions coming from England, Scottish writers and performers often found early opportunities to develop their work with companies such as the Curtain Theatre and the Park Theatre in Glasgow, the Rutherglen Repertory Theatre, the Byre in St Andrews (converted into a theatre by the St Andrews Play Club), and Glasgow Unity Theatre, all of which began as amateur companies. Robert McLellan, for example, had his work regularly performed by the Curtain, and performers such as Molly Urquhart, Duncan MacRae, Nicholas Parsons, Gordon Jackson and Russell Hunter, to name but a few, first appeared in such companies.

From early on there were noticeable divisions between the nature of participation and the types of plays produced in various areas of Scotland. For some, especially in isolated areas, participation was primarily a social activity, an amusing pastime, while others

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See the SCDA’s website, [http://www.scda.org.uk](http://www.scda.org.uk), for an account of its foundation.
were motivated by a desire to develop an independent Scottish dramatic tradition, and others still were more concerned with the political potential of theatre. English romantic comedies and farces dominated the repertoire of some societies; more progressive English and international drama was taken up by some others; the attempt to promote Scottish themes and language produced some excellent naturalistic dramas and a few interesting historical plays, but also led to a spate of kailyard plays and kitchen comedies which presented a largely sentimental and comic view of rural life; and many workplace drama groups and groups linked to the labour movement were interested in developing work which more closely reflected the lives of their working-class members: for example, the St George’s Co-operative Players, the Glasgow Clarion Players, the Shotts Miners’ Welfare Drama Guild and the Bowhill Miners’ Players, who became famous for their productions of Joe Corrie’s early work and eventually toured professionally. While some of these groups did compete in the SCDA festivals, often very successfully, others did not, preferring to perform in local working clubs or at meetings of the Independent Labour Party.

An editorial in the *Glasgow Herald* on 15 October 1938, argued that the work of the ‘amateur clubs associated with the community drama festivals’ had played a large part in the fact that ‘a serious interest in the theatre is more widespread throughout the country today than at any other time in its history.’ Gordon Bottomley, opening the SCDA Festival in 1935, suggested that the amateur movement was the basis for a Scottish national theatre, ‘not represented by a costly building in a metropolis … but by a deep foundation in every village hall in the country.’ Others were less sanguine. Clyde Irvine in *The Scots Magazine* of March 1938 commented on the amateur clubs’ plays:

> These ‘sappy’ plays are written by people who believe that the average Scots audience is composed of dumb bells… We are content to see season after season the amateur stage of Scotland made a penny peggie for the perpetuation of as crass and ignorant a policy as ever disgraced any national attempt at self-expression.

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* Here we might note that key figures involved in the early development of the SCDA, such as D Glen MacKemmie and Gordon Bottomley, were also involved with the Scottish National Players, an early attempt to create a national theatre in Scotland.
* Cf., for example, the production history of the Clarion Players, found in Mackenney, 2000: 265-7.
* ‘Building a National Theatre’, *Scottish Stage*, iv.4, November 1935, 16.
Joe Corrie, whose plays vary from more politically committed work such as *In Time o’ Strife* to the rather anodyne comedy of *Kye Amang the Corn*, which is more typical of his many plays which were presented by SCDA members (and provided him his living), might be seen as biting the hand which fed him in a series of polemical articles written during the 1930s. In one he comments:

> Apart from half a dozen groups who hide their performances in little halls in city back streets, the movement is composed of people who are not really serious about their art... The stage is an escape for them and naturally they wish the same for their audiences. Groups are formed for the same purpose as tennis groups are formed, or dances are held, to give them all a good time. And, if they can find plays which they can behave in and kid themselves and their audiences that they are acting, they are happier still. I’m quite sure every Scots playwright has deplored the fact that his funny plays keep running while his serious ones lie covered with dust on some shelf.  

Elsewhere he asks, ‘How many of the plays produced at the community drama festivals are really part and parcel of the common experience of the players?’ and slates ‘bourgeois amateurs in Dundee trying to render plays about Highland peasants of two centuries ago, or the cocktail “debutantes” of today they know next to nothing about’ (Corrie, 1985: 178). In contrast, however, Corrie does at other times suggest that distinctions need to be made between urban and rural work, and he seems alert to the community-forming potential of the latter work:

> The drama festival, especially in the rural communities, is a thing in which all take part. Here it is the movement of the masses. In the cities it may be more of a cultural movement, patronised by the middle classes and the working man or woman who take an interest in drama. But the masses are all at the music hall or pictures. In the village that is not so.

The debates to which Corrie was contributing were taking place on a wider scale throughout Britain as amateur clubs proliferated. Some commentators at the time praised the adventurousness of some of the amateur groups and recognised their role in the development of the repertory movement and in the establishment of an alternative to mainstream theatre. But many professional theatre workers, often even people who had

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indeed risen from the ranks of the amateurs or who had undertaken work as producers, adjudicators or tutors for the amateurs, became defensive about what they perceived as a threat to professional theatre posed by the amateur movement. For example, Norman Marshall, an excellent director who contributed much to what might be seen as the ‘alternative theatre’ of the period and who had at one time believed the amateur movement was potentially a progressive force, wrote in his 1947 book *The Other Theatre*:

> It was only gradually that I began to realise how seldom is the amateur interested in the theatre as a whole… What puzzles me most about amateur actors is how seldom they go to theatre. Even if they had no particular interest in the drama one would have thought that they would be frequent playgoers if only to learn for their own sakes more about the craft of acting. But few amateurs believe they have much to learn from the professional. (1947: 85)

He suggests, with a certain amount of disdain, that:

> the main function of the amateur movement is simply to give as many people as possible opportunities for indulging in an extremely pleasant form of recreation. There are tens of thousands of people whose lives are much fuller and happier because of the amateur societies. Acting gives them a chance of escape from their everyday environment; it stimulates them; it probably rids them of a number of inhibitions; it gives them confidence and poise and teaches them to speak and move with a certain amount of grace. Such is the glamour of the stage that some of it shines even on the amateur actor, giving him a new importance among his friends, and increased confidence in himself.

Acknowledging that ‘the professional on the subject of amateurs is inevitably suspected of prejudice and ignorance’, Marshall goes on to quote Frances Mackenzie, one of the British Drama League’s tutors and adjudicators:

> These (good) groups represent, however, a minority in the amateur movement as a whole. To a great extent the amateur movement is still content to tread the beaten track of out-worn West End successes, or machine-made one-act plays, and is satisfied with clumsy productions and stereotyped acting, but then, could not exactly the same be said of, say, 60% of the professional theatre? There appear to be a great many amateurs who are complacent about their own efforts. They just have not got the artist’s approach to their job. They have no pride in wanting to make a thing good for its own sake, if they can ‘get by’ with something second-rate which demands less of them.

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*’Use the Freedom of the Festival’, article for the *Scottish Stage* in unclassified Corrie papers, Scottish Theatre Archive, quoted in Rattray, 1989:16.*
While there was clearly a certain accuracy in this picture of some of the amateur groups, one might speculate whether some of the condescension which informs Marshall’s account is shaped by the fact, subsequently revealed (page 89), ‘that the amateur theatre has lately acquired official status as a “cultural and educational activity”. Public money is being spent on it by local education authorities.’ Marshall proceeds to ‘doubt if official assistance of this sort is going to do much to raise the standard of amateur drama.’ It is open to question whether what became familiar themes of professional rubbishing of amateur theatre at this point owed something to the fact that the recently founded Arts Council was still in the throes of developing a policy around amateur work and local authorities were also starting to take a role in funding arts activities.

In fact, the Arts Council went on to be dominated by a commitment to professional arts, most local authorities did little to actively support the amateurs, and the ‘awe-inspiring growth of the amateur movement in the years before the war’ (Marshall, 1947: 86) gradually gave way to what some feared would be a terminal decline. The amateur movement had effectively reached its peak towards the end of the 1930s. During the World War II, despite the fact that the SCDA cancelled its Festivals and despite the constraints produced by wartime rationing and the absence of men, many of the amateur societies carried on producing. After the War there was a period during which the movement seemed to be regaining its momentum (exemplified by around 500 entries to the 1950 Festival), but a slow decline set in from the late 1950s onward, with SCDA membership drifting down to 293 in 1980 and eventually stabilising at 224 in 1990. Also, many of the more politically oriented companies disappeared during the 1950s; most notably Glasgow Unity, which folded in 1951, despite its considerable success with productions of plays such as *The Gorbals Story* and *Men Should Weep* and a brief period when it operated a professional touring company as well as its amateur groups. While individual groups had particular reasons to disband, some of the more general reasons which have been cited as contributing to the broader decline over this period include:

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- It should be noted that the work done by professional touring political theatre from the early 1970s on shared many of the aspirations of the earlier companies, and indeed 7:84’s Clydebuilt season in 1981/82 paid homage to the earlier movement.
wider ownership of television and expansion in its range of programming; increasing availability of diverse leisure pursuits; the consolidation of the professional theatre; increased geographical and social mobility leading to the breakdown of old identifications with a local community; the increasing influence of popular culture and youth culture.

What is noticeable in this brief account of the early developments in the amateur movement is the way in which conflicts and debates of the 1930s are echoed in discussion today, despite considerable changes in society and theatre in the interim:

- There is still, for example, a strong sense that the clubs play different roles in urban and rural or small town communities; while many urban clubs are less identified with a particular locality, a club in a village or small town is often one of the few organisations which bring together a range of people from throughout the community and its performances are an important part of the community's annual calendar of events.

- Just as some of the amateur companies filled a gap in professional provision, so now, many involved in amateur drama, particularly in areas away from the Central Belt, would see amateur activity as providing a service to communities with little access to professional theatre; and with some of the larger, more ambitious clubs, which mount a year-long programme of work, there is an extent to which they need to have a fair degree of professionalism in their organisation.

- There is still a strong element of disdain amongst many professional theatre workers towards amateurs and a typification of them along the lines we see emerging in Marshall’s treatment of them. Then, as now, criticism of the competitive nature of the SCDA festivals was also voiced.

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Cf. Hutchison & Feist, 1991: 15, ‘In mainly rural areas, the amateur arts are frequently the sole form of arts activity.’ And their statistics on pages 37-8 demonstrating that ‘it is the metropolitan areas which have the lowest number of societies per million population. Conversely, areas of low population density record some of the highest figures.’

On this, Mary Rattray, 1989: 98-100, makes the interesting point that in rural communities friendly rivalry is often formalised in all sorts of competitive events, from shearing and sheep-dog competitions through to baking and flower shows; in many ways such competitions simply form a raison d’être to bring people together for community events in which individual skills may be exhibited and shared. It has also routinely been observed that the origins of Western drama lie within the competitive festivals of Athens,
• The way in which working-class theatre was typified by proponents as more concerned with the realities of life as opposed to a supposed escapist theatre of entertainment being provided by middle-class clubs has parallels in the divisions between community theatre activists and the amateur movement today. Those involved in community theatre often see themselves as more radical, involving excluded sectors of society in representing their lives on stage, in the face of what is seen as the dominance of bourgeois life in mainstream professional and amateur theatre. In contrast, some amateur theatre people see community theatre as being overly concerned with politics and having little real interest in aesthetic standards, whereas they want something for relaxation and entertainment. What is interesting to observe, however, is that some of the positive personal benefits of amateur participation which Marshall rather condescendingly notes are, in only slightly altered form, recurrent motifs in contemporary justifications of the social impact of arts participation, though usually applied to community arts rather than amateur arts.

• Even within the amateur movement, as in the 1930s, there is lively debate over the types of play which should be attempted: while for some the play is almost irrelevant (so long as it has a number of male and female roles which suit the performers in the group and requires set and costumes within the group’s capabilities) other groups have tried to be more experimental in their choice of plays, often subject to a tension between their ambitions might and what they believe a local audience will find appealing.

B. Early developments in community theatre

Many amateur theatres in Scotland are members of the Scottish Community Drama Association. Implicit in the title of this organisation is the notion of the clubs involved somehow serving or involving their local communities – and in discussing amateur

where the best production and best actor were awarded prizes. With the district and divisional competitions, there is an extent to which the competitive situation also unites locals behind a ‘team’ in a way similar to football supporters identifying with their local team.
theatres this report will indeed be looking at this aspect of their activity. Yet commonly distinctions are made between amateur theatre and community theatre.

So, the amateur theatres, I’m probably thinking of the likes of Dundee Dramatic Society, as far as I know, don’t have any sort of professional support. They may, through whatever fundraising they do, get contract lighting and costume and things like that. But there doesn’t seem to be a professional leader there, although they are very professional in their approach, as are organisations like Act IV.

It’s not what I would term community theatre which I think is much more avant-garde, original work whereas the stuff that they tend to do at the Whitehall might be reruns of *Guys and Dolls*.

At the Rep though, you’ve got *Twa Plehn Bridies* (1999 Community Play). The production is sold out every night, you know. So, there’s community theatre with individual members of the community in it, but it was also well attended by the community. But you’ve got exactly the same in the Whitehall, except the difference, as far as I can see, is places like the Whitehall and the Dundee Dramatic Society are not creating original works. Whereas what Steve (Stenning, of Dundee Rep) and the outreach team do is all new, written for them. It reflects the community at this point in time.

Norrie Colston, Arts and Heritage Manager, Dundee City Council

The origins of these distinctions lie in the emergence of community arts and community theatre as ideas and sets of practice in the 1960s and 1970s. This is not the place to rehearse fully the factors which led to the development of these ideas and practices – these have been discussed extensively elsewhere. Nor will it be possible to explore the whole history of community theatre in Scotland. If, however, we are to understand some of the tensions and debates which still arise in discussions of amateur and community theatre and how they might relate to current government and SAC initiatives around social inclusion, it will be helpful to summarise the developments which have occurred in the past 30 years. It is important to observe how notions of community theatre have shifted more recently and be aware of changing approaches in Scotland during the period.

Community theatre in its modern manifestation emerged out of the social and cultural ferment of the 1960s – although in many ways it harked back to earlier activities such as the Workers’ Theatre Movement and Joan Littlewood’s Theatre Workshop. Early usage of the term referred to professional work which was trying to reach a different audience from that which most mainstream theatre attracted – which was commonly typified as middle-aged and middle-class. While some work, such as Peter Cheeseman’s community

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*Cf. Hutchison & Feist, 1991: 14, ‘amateur arts activities tend to be self-motivated and self-organised (entirely or largely by volunteers), community arts programmes and projects tend to be initiated, or at least facilitated, by those paid to take initiatives, whether community artists, animateurs, community workers, local government officers or others.’*
documentaries in Stoke-on-Trent, was located in professional theatre buildings, much of it was carried out by the plethora of touring groups which appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, often with an explicit political agenda.

i) Its [community theatre’s] content attempts to deal with the everyday reality of ordinary people’s lives, to reveal the causes for the suffering, bad housing, low wages they experience;

ii) it performs in places where people gather to socialise as part of larger events (carnivals, meetings, demonstrations, rallies, parties, etc) perhaps, rather than attempts to gather people, socialised into theatre-going into the theatre;

iii) it is often followed by a discussion in which the assertions of the theatre group, and the dominant ideology they challenge, are both measured against the perceptions and experiences of the audience...

iv) it attempts to develop a form and style which is hard-hitting, direct and involving.


Some companies (eg Red Ladder) started originally as groups of part-time performers motivated by their politics, but the field quickly became professionalised and companies began to tour more widely. While some developed a more popular base (as 7:84 and Wildcat did in their early days), by the end of the 1970s many of the companies were less directly political and many of their performances were taking place in arts centres, studio theatres attached to reps, or certain community venues which had gradually become part of an informal network. There had also been a shift in some cases away from more clearly class-based work to work dealing with issues such as racism, gender and sexuality. Around the same time, of course, Theatre-in-Education work was also going through a period of growth. While some TIE companies operated independently, many rep theatres set up TIE operations as part of an attempt to take a more proactive role in their local communities. As rep companies had been attracting increasing levels of subsidy through the 1960s and as local authorities played more of a role in sustaining them, awareness of the relatively narrow social base of most regular theatre audiences led to growing pressure to widen this base. Apart from acknowledgement of its intrinsic merits, TIE was often seen, alongside other outreach activities, such as talks and demonstrations, backstage visits and occasional workshops, as a significant way of building more diverse audiences. As there was increasing passage to and fro between touring companies, TIE companies and the reps in the 1970s, the sort of ideas which by

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now were being associated with the label ‘democratisation of culture’ became increasingly accepted as part of the common currency of discussion of theatre. Exemplifying this, while ‘increasing the accessibility of the arts to the public’ had been an original object of the ACGB, and then of SAC, discussions of how to overcome not just economic and geographic but also social and cultural barriers to accessing the arts began to appear more frequently in various ACGB and SAC reports from the late 1970s on.

I feel very unhappy between the linking of community and amateur theatre, because I think they are so removed. I think amateur theatre is like professional theatre, it replicates professional theatre without paying people and therefore if you want amateur theatre, stick them in the reps because that’s where they belong, that’s where their ethos is, what they do. Community theatre doesn’t belong with amateur theatre, not to me. It’s so far removed. I think what some of the reps do is reproduce amateur theatre with a lot of people and call it community theatre because they think they’re doing something for the community. Maybe that’s tough... maybe they make some of those decisions sometimes because they genuinely think that is best to develop that in that community. But as a point of principle, I think the separation between amateur and community theatre needs to be clear.

Robert Rae, Director of Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh

Almost simultaneously with these developments, however, the practices associated with such work, and ideas around democratisation of culture, were being challenged by work which grew more out of community arts and was aligned with notions of ‘cultural democracy’. Here the focus turned to the participation in arts activities of people who had frequently been excluded in the past. Sometimes the work originated with the ‘excluded’ in one way or another wanting access to some form of arts activity (as in the famous story of Helen Crummy’s initiating the work of what was to become Craigmillar Festival Society because of her anger over the lack of instrument tuition for her son); at other times arts workers initiated some form of project, which in many cases led on to the establishment of longer term arts activities; also, already existing theatre companies began to undertake residency projects within communities, working alongside them to create theatrical projects. There were, however, many diverse motivations and practices. For some it was motivated by more general concerns with what might be seen as the spiritual, mental and emotional benefits and pleasures to be got from participation in arts activities.

One must not be afraid to say art is productive, not in the economic sense of the term, surely, but productive of values, images, ideas and symbols. Through artistic activity, the individual helps himself [sic] to make his way as a man, that is to say, widen his social and emotional dimension, explore the hitherto untapped resources of his intelligence and sensitivity, and to become his own master. 

E Grosjean & H Ingberg, in Simpson, 1978: 64_

For others it was about trying to re-establish a sense of community in areas which were suffering from a common malaise of modern cities, as described by Landry and Bianchini:

There is the diminishing sense of locality, of shared place and identity that has made cities less clearly defined as places. Communities are now increasingly defined on the basis of common interests rather than in geographical terms. Even at the level of the neighbourhood there is often no community, because the factors that give rise to it – social homogeneity, immobility and the need to co-operate – are no longer there. (1995: 5)

For still others there was an issue of both political equity, in terms of arts activities being viewed as a human right for all, and political intent, in terms of the issues with which arts activities might engage and the democratic structures through which they operated. Even here, however, differences emerged between those who saw the arts as providing effective means of mobilising people around specific oppressions which they may suffer as either a community of interest or a geographical community and those who pushed for the role of the arts in community development of a broader kind. A trenchant statement of the more radical position is found in Owen Kelly’s work:

Cultural democracy (as opposed to democratisation of culture) is an idea which revolves around the notion of plurality, and around equality of access to the means of cultural production and distribution… The community arts movement must take the idea of cultural democracy as its overall aim, and with regard to that aim, it must clearly, and loudly, demand the decentralisation of the means of cultural production. (1984: 101)

For those involved in such an approach, however the ‘community’ defined itself – whether on social-geographical lines, or as a community of specific interests, such as a women’s group or an unemployed group, one of the premises from which they proceeded

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Cf. Brinson, 1992:2, ‘“Arts in the community” means the arts which take place in a particular locality or which emanate from a community of interest… Many of these activities have an emphasis on participation and access, and many link their work in the arts with social issues such as disadvantage, environment, health or anti-racism. This emphasis, which could be summarised as “arts plus social concern”, is a distinguishing mark of much of the arts in the community.’ Note the shift here to the phrase ‘arts in the community’, which will be addressed later.
was that they were concerned to explore their ideas of that community, their relationships within it, and its relationships outwith itself. Although the activity may have brought individuals benefits in terms of communication skills and confidence, the work was seen as extending beyond this. In doing so they operated with a dynamic interpretation of community of the sort Kelly discusses:

The question should be concerned with the nature of the community that a group is working towards; that is, what community a group is participating in bringing into being... A community grows as its members participate in and shape its growth, and it grows because of its members’ participation.

(1984: 50)

With such an approach, workshops and performances became concerned not just with extensions of individuals’ skills or with providing an incidental entertainment, but with identifying positive and negative aspects of a community’s current identity and past history, in the hope of contributing to its future development. Inevitably, this would lead at times to groups addressing contentious social or political issues, which might even cause divisions within the group or between the group and sections of the community of which it was a part. Linked with all of this were, of course, many debates about issues of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, ‘process’ versus ‘product’, celebratory arts versus contestatory arts, questions of ‘standards’, the appropriateness or otherwise of various forms and styles, the role of the professional worker in community arts situations, and the legitimacy or not of such work receiving public funding.

Animation is aimed at a different kind of cultural work:
- directed at groups, not individuals;
- involving and drawing upon their own culture, inextricably bound up with their own economic situation (not a transfer of middle-class culture);
- in which the educative and cultural activities are a means in a process of emancipation rather than ends in themselves


Notwithstanding such debates, the 1970s and 1980s witnessed a burgeoning of various forms of participatory community theatre activity throughout Britain. The earlier work of groups such as Craigmillar Festival Society, Theatre Workshop, Easterhouse Festival
Society, was joined by all sorts of work in places like Pilton, Wester Hailes, the Gorbals, and Drumchapel. Sometimes activity led to production of community plays such as those in Craigmillar and Easterhouse, where work took place under the umbrella of broader community development organisations; but the mounting of very large-scale community plays, of the sort associated with Ann Jellicoe and the Colway Theatre Trust, was not as frequent in the 1970s as it was to become later, when Dundee Rep and Theatre Workshop began to create this sort of work. More frequent was smaller-scale workshop and devising work, often with particular interest groups, and often with a direct political objective. Some examples of groups active in the mid 1980s are (to name but a few from the Central Belt): groups of unemployed people in Drumchapel, Ruchill, Clydebank and Rutherglen, disabled groups in Kinning Park and Hillington, women’s groups in Muirhouse, Pilton, Wester Hailes, the Gorbals, Bonhill and Springburn, young unemployed groups such as On Yer Bike in Cumbernauld or the Gorbals Diehards, and a group concerned with housing conditions in Hamilton. The range of work produced varied from full-scale plays in community centres or even theatres, to sketches and agit-prop pieces which played at rallies or conferences. Some of the groups worked regularly through the year, others came together more sporadically: in particular, a few built their work around opportunities provided by Glasgow’s Mayfest, which supported tours of community centres by such groups. While some work was theatrically quite accomplished, other work perhaps put more focus on the exploratory work which led to presentations than on the development of theatrical skills. Sometimes work was supported through Urban Aid projects, sometimes through inventive use of Manpower Services Commission and Youth Opportunity Programme schemes, and sometimes Community Education departments provided a base and even some sessional support workers.

Riot Act: Where the Green Grass Grows

- On this last, it was not just that in the early days various governmental and Arts Council figures expressed scepticism about the quality of such work, but also many community arts activists feared the dangers of institutionalisation and compromise which subsidy might bring.
- Cf. Giesekam 1986 and 1987 for accounts of various projects in Strathclyde at this time.
- The first large-scale community play in Dundee was Witch’s Blood in 1987. See below for more recent examples of large-scale community plays in the Highlands, Eastwood and Musselburgh.
The play concerns a family living in a slum in Glasgow during the early 60s, at the tail end of the mass exodus from the centre of the city to the new, vast housing schemes. It tells of the expectations of those willing to change, and the shifts in attitudes and loyalties when relocation is forced. It also looks at personal relationships, family secrets and social prejudices. The company is based in Clydebank UB40 Centre, and is a collective of unemployed and unwaged people from Clydebank.

Programme for Mayfest 1988; the show toured to seven community centres.

More frequently, however, where Community Education departments played a role was in the support of youth theatre activities or of more general adult drama workshops, where the ostensible focus was more on the development of drama skills along with the sort of personal and social development which practitioners of educational drama had been espousing for many years. Strathclyde Regional Council, for example, put considerable funding into Glasgow Arts Centre, where, by 1985, the following groups were active: a children’s group, three adult drama groups, an unemployed group, a senior citizens’ group, a women’s group, a group with learning difficulties, a youth theatre, and a couple of specialist groups for more advanced work (out of which actors such as Blythe Duff and Robert Carlyle emerged).

Although often community theatre in Scotland tends to be seen as an urban phenomenon, there were parallel developments in some rural areas, as in Ross and Cromarty, where in the late 1980s there was a team of artists-in-residence dealing with dance, drama, visual arts, music, traditional music and writing. They sustained a regular programme of workshops for children, teenagers and adults and occasionally did productions, as John Batty related in interview:

People travelled from Dingwall and Poolewe to attend rehearsals; there were district-wide opportunities if people were willing to travel. Complementing that were different projects in individual villages. For example, Cromarty was quite a distance away, but with a sizeable community round it. So the whole team would go over, start workshopping an idea, produce a script, creating a community play. There were two principles – either there should be enough local interest, requesting a project; or it could be the initiative of an artist suggesting it to a community. They would hold a public meeting, get a local committee together to

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*Cf. Jenny Wilson, Director of Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association: ‘I think of amateurs as groups of people who want to put on plays either for competitions or because they like the idea of getting up and doing a piece which will entertain the people, and they have the fun of acting or directing or whatever turns them on. Community Theatre as I understand it is not necessarily urban, but more easily achieved in a contained urban context and Dumfries Youth Theatre is our nearest. It's in a deprived part of the town and it includes youngsters who come form a lot of different social backgrounds.’
make it happen. Sometimes it would just start with a few people who had been involved in a more general project, who had come from a village and they would say there were a lot of people in their village who’d like to get something together. Other times it might go through a contact in a local school. We had to be eclectic in our approach.

As participatory community arts and community theatre increased in quantity, quality and diversity across Europe, many of the ideas associated with it came to be taken up (in mutated form) within governmental and non-governmental agencies to do with social and cultural development. An early example of this was the establishment in 1970 of the Council of Europe’s Project on Socio-Cultural Animation, which over the subsequent eight years held various symposia of cultural workers, urban planners and other social theorists and produced a number of key publications. While central government in Britain was resistant to the sort of work explored in such publications, it had an increasing impact on local authorities throughout the country. Community arts and cultural democracy became increasingly intertwined with policies to do with community regeneration. In Scotland, for example, Strathclyde Region’s Social Work Department cited the desire to pursue a community development model as its motive for supporting several hundred community arts projects throughout the Region during Glasgow’s year as City of Culture.

A line of continuity can be traced between the sorts of discussion disseminated through the Socio-Cultural Animation Project and later publications by writers associated with the Policy Studies Institute, Comedia, and the Demos think tank, whose work has fed into New Labour thinking on aspects of culture, community development and social inclusion which has shaped much recent policy direction. Most notably, much of Matarasso’s work on developing ways of evaluating the social impact of participation in the arts is premised on the sort of regenerative and developmental models which were evolving in the 1980s.

- For an account of these, see McCabe and McVicar (1991). On p.208 the Chairman of the Social Work Committee states, ‘A community development approach means providing the resources to allow people to make up their own minds about the creative initiatives which they wish to explore. The Social Work Committee feel the whole department should be working towards a community development model.’
More detailed discussion of the impact of Social Inclusion policies is contained in Appendix 2. At this point, however, it should be noted the increasing municipalisation of community arts and community theatre since the 1970s has not occurred without throwing up various confusions, contradictions and tensions. On the one hand, those who adhere to the more radical aspirations of community theatre have found much of their language about empowerment and community activism taken over by the very governmental agencies they see as in other ways sustaining traditional cultural hierarchies. Furthermore, although such practitioners often saw theatre as having what Kelly (1984: 101) calls a pre-figurative role in terms of social change, the ways in which recent developments have been accompanied by demands for ‘hard’ evidence of social impact (but ‘social impact’ often defined in terms of social harmony, lower crime rates, improved employability etc), is seen by some as leading to an overly instrumentalist approach to the arts. This does not actually progress much beyond the sorts of economic arguments for the arts which became prevalent under Thatcherism, and fails to accord community theatre activities validity on the grounds of their own artistic projects. The fear has also been expressed that increasingly what happens in the community field has become dictated by shifting policies of government and funding agencies, to which those most able to respond are professional companies or local authorities; this re-enforces the

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Cf. Knight, 1999: 23. Also, see K Worpole in interview, Another Standard, Summer 1982, 7, ‘Community was a word that was run by the radicals between 1968-72 and then has been won back since, so that all the state and local forms of the state are now labelled as community. You have community prisons, community childcare, community education, community schools.’
Cf. John Fox, ‘Although, as Myerscough has argued, there is a case for the economic benefits of the arts in terms of urban regeneration, jobs, tourism, and exports, this is really a rationalisation written in the jargon of the dominant culture of Grocerism.’ (A Plea for Poetry, a discussion document for the National Arts and Media Strategy, ACGB, 1991)
On this, note Brinson, 1992: 61, ‘The mark of these years (1980s) can be seen, though, in gaps in provision, a general sense of instability and a need for each local initiative to devote inordinate efforts to pulling together a multiplicity of small contributions in order to sustain a programme. The complexities of funding policies and disparities in the way support is given have been a cause of much perplexity to arts organisations over the years. Even those in the know have to be agile as to where and what funds are available and have to be agile at re-construing their objectives to keep up with the constant need to meet the varying and sometimes incompatible criteria of funders.’
growing professionalisation of the work, often distancing it from direct community control.

From a different angle, some of those involved in amateur activities see documents which press the need to encourage work which involves young people or the elderly, which recognise the part the voluntary arts have to play in developing local community identity and self-organisation, and praise the self-empowering effects of such involvement, and so on, and wonder why they are not given the support they think they deserve. Although they are part of a large movement involving many thousands of participants and attracting a million spectators a year, they feel that, because of a history of disdain with which amateur theatre has been seen by both mainstream professionals and more politically or stylistically vanguardist elements of theatre, this popularity is ignored. Yet, paradoxically, if, as individuals, they do become involved in some of the projects which are carried out by professional companies or workers under a community theatre brief, they suddenly turn into community theatre participants and are deemed worthy of support. What such participants are experiencing is some of the blurring of the boundaries which now exists between amateur and community theatre, somewhere in the middle between high-kicking chorus lines in *Guys and Dolls* at one end of the spectrum and a group of lone parents doing a performance about women’s health issues in a community hall.

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- Cf. Kelly, 1984: 50, ‘Community… grows because of its members’ participation. It is an act of oppression, therefore, to attempt to “work with” a community as part of a directive, professionalised role, since this will impose an externally manufactured shape and direction upon community which people will be invited to accept as their own.’
- Criticising a statement by a member of Brinson’s enquiry team that community arts were arts plus social purpose, while amateur arts were arts for art’s sake, Hutchison and Feist note, ‘although “stimulating or contributing to local action, democracy and change” may nor be a pronounced part of much amateur arts and crafts activity, all the “additional social purposes” ascribed to community arts can be found, in greater or lesser degrees, in the main streams and tributaries of amateur arts. Many of those heavily involved in the amateur arts are consciously and explicitly concerned with personal development as well as social cohesion’ (1991: 14). I return to this subject in the discussion of current practice below.
- Most of the community plays and a number of workshops activities which we encountered during the year contained a number of people who also are active in local amateur groups. As one Perthshire amateur commented, ‘If I’m in a play by the Players I’m an amateur, but if I go to the Arts Week run by the Council’s Arts Team, I’m community theatre – but it’s still me!’
C. Some common issues

Before moving on to document current work in amateur and community theatre, it may be useful to address in more detail a few further contentious issues: the ‘process’ vs. ‘product’ debate, questions of ‘standards’, and some further thoughts on the notion of ‘community’ as it affects both areas of activity.

‘Process’ vs. ‘Product’

People often draw distinctions between amateur and community theatre on the grounds that amateur theatre is more concerned with ‘product’, while community theatre is concerned with ‘process’. On the surface, given some of the things that have already been said about both in the preceding pages, this may seem to be a neat opposition, but I would suggest that it establishes a misleading dichotomy which does little justice to the better work in both fields and ignores the different sorts of contexts in which various activities take place.

Given the objectives of individual and community development which are implicit in earlier understandings of community theatre, it has sometimes been argued that the focus of work should not be on the creation of performances for public consumption or, if work does lead to some form of public performance, such a ‘product’ must be viewed in a way which accepts that the process of creating the work is more significant than the quality of any product put before the public. There is no problem with saying a series of workshops which does not lead to any public performance is more ‘process’ oriented. Where the difficulty lies, however, is when people sometimes attempt to defend what may seem, to the outside observer, an under-developed or poorly prepared performance, by saying it doesn’t reflect the process, which, the observer is assured, was good. While this may be understandable, given the adverse conditions under which much work is done, where time and resources may be inadequate and the participants may have little prior experience, it may sometimes be a way of avoiding genuine reflection on the extent to which the objectives of a particular project were clearly understood and shared by all concerned and whether they were appropriate for the circumstances.
When it comes to theatre production, such a distinction also fails to recognise that a performance itself is an ongoing process – between performers and performers, performers and audience, and performers and whatever text there may be; it should not be seen as a separable product. Moreover, the production itself is part of the process through which the participants are going and it is important they are prepared for this process. A devising or rehearsal ‘process’, whether in amateur theatre or community theatre, which takes no account of these points may ultimately lead to as negative an experience as one which sets its sights on a particular sought-after ‘product’ and goes for it, come hell or high water, through an authoritarian approach to rehearsal which makes no room for the performers to develop or contribute. (This, of course, is how critics often characterise amateur approaches to production, sometimes accurately.) Equally, the latter type of production often ends up failing to engage an audience, since most of us will recognise the emptiness which lies at the centre of a production where the performers have no sense of ‘ownership’ of what they are performing, where they are just going through predetermined motions without any real investment in their performance. It has to be said, our experience of attending both amateur and community productions has included (in both sectors) examples of work which did not pay sufficient attention to the development of appropriate skills and work which exhibited signs of the performers not having this sort of investment. Conversely, the more effective work in both sectors, work which both performers and audiences seemed to find satisfying, usually showed commitment by the performers to what they were presenting, along with dedication to the acquisition of sufficient theatrical skills to communicate this effectively to an audience.

I would emphasise that I am not trying to overturn the way in which community theatre work has recognised the need to work in a developmental and exploratory way, which takes note of the particular circumstances and levels of skill of the participants. But once a group wishes to move towards expressing their discoveries in a more public way, the development of sufficient presentational skills is important and not just symptomatic of ‘bourgeois fixations about artistic standards’ (as such a concern has sometimes been called) or the imposition of irrelevant values onto the participants. When little real
commitment has been made to developing the performers’ ability to present the vision of
the world they want to get across, there is a danger of the production in fact being
counter-productive, exposing participants to feelings of frustration and inadequacy which
can arise from participation in an ill-considered, ill-prepared presentation, emotions
which contradict the supposed confidence-building aims of community theatre workers.
This was recognised by both amateur and community participants, in their responses to
our questionnaires and in discussions, as they commented on the hard work demanded of
them but acknowledged the sense of satisfaction derived from a successful production.

We can write and say ‘we do x amount of exercises, games, projects and these are the learning outcomes’
but the process is not interesting for councillors; they are interested in the product because that's the public
end of what's happening and they can justify it to themselves and the public by there being a product. It's
more difficult to get people to fund the process.

Scott Johnston, Director, West Lothian Youth Theatre

Scott Johnston’s comments, however, identify a dilemma sometimes facing community
theatre workers. The very nature of the sort of funding often available for community
theatre work creates the expectation of some sort of public performance. (Equally, for
amateurs, their survival depends on box-office success, which may at times inhibit
attempts at more developmental or experimental work.) There is often little allowance
made for the need to develop skills over a long period of time – not just theatrical skills,
but also the skills needed to investigate genuinely the experiences of the people involved
in a project and explore how these may be structured into a theatrical experience which
builds upon these. This is a major problem with the way funding is sometimes allocated
to one-off projects which do not build on a history of more developmental work in a
locality. Where occasionally such projects manage to get away with it and create
something which has a reasonable degree of theatrical effectiveness, it is often the case
that they have either been very directive or that they have relied on drawing in a sizeable
number of local amateurs who already have some fundamental performing skills.

Of more value is the sort of work which allows time to explore and develop without the
end-point of production already set. Some examples of such work we encountered
include:
• West Lothian Youth Theatre, which runs workshops throughout the year which young people attend whether they are interested in taking part in productions or not; at certain times the groups move towards making a production which is able to build on and respond to the developing competencies of the participants.

• John Batty’s workshops at Eden Court, where the first ten weeks of each year’s activities are purely devoted to exploratory and developmental work; people then commit to involvement in some form of presentation (but not full-scale production) the following term, which again takes into account the skills and interests of the participants.

• The way in which Theatre Workshop approaches its community plays: although the broad concerns of the play are known in advance, it is written over the course of a long lead-in time during which participants are taking part in various investigative and workshop activities, in which the issues of the plays are explored and their theatrical skills are developed.

• Andy Howitt’s approach to developing the dance element of Perth Youth Theatre’s performance *Club 1 Ate 5*: where he workshoped with participants over several months developing their sense of movement, so that when it came to the creation of the show they were able to contribute to the choreography and feel comfortable with the style of movement incorporated.

Standards

**Hippolyta:** This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.

**Theseus:** The best in this kind are but shadows; and the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.

**Hippolyta:** It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

**Theseus:** If we imagine no worse of them than they of themselves, they must pass for excellent men.

*(A Midsummer Night’s Dream, V.1)*

Standards of performance are an old stalking horse of those who reject the potential of both amateur theatre and community arts work and the notion of public subsidy for them. Assuming the existence of some Platonic set of ‘artistic standards’ by which we appraise performances, they take it for granted that most amateur and community theatre work
will be of an inferior standard, involving, as it does, non-professional performers. The way in which the word ‘amateurish’ has come to mean ‘unskilful in execution’ (Concise Oxford Dictionary) is evidence enough of the prevalence of such attitudes.

Disregarding for a moment the nature of the material presented – which of course is a significant factor also, it may be useful to address this notion as it particularly relates to skills in performance and staging. When we are watching a performance in progress, whether in the theatre or the streets, are we really so concerned with doling out As and Bs, or are we more concerned with whether the whole event contains something which stimulates, challenges or entertains us? Acknowledging that there are times when we are excited by particularly skilful or charismatic performers and other times when patently incompetent performers make it impossible to engage with a production, is it not the case that much of the time, if performances have a sufficient level of competence to allow us to engage with the production, it is the nature and quality of that overall engagement which contributes most to our experience? We’ve all attended polished professional productions where the so-called ‘standards of performance’ might be described as high, but the whole event seemed to lack something which really engaged us: even if it’s a play we find interesting, it’s ‘well’ designed and directed, something is missing which really makes us feel ‘present’ at the performance in a vital kind of way. Again, it’s possible sometimes to see an amateur or community theatre production in which individual performances may have less superficial expertise but the collective commitment from the cast to the task in hand, and a sense that they are sharing with the audience something which engages them both imaginatively and in subject matter, may lead to a more exciting and rewarding experience than some professional productions. Discussion of standards surely then must take into account the extent to which a performance communicates with its particular audience about situations, emotions, and ideas which both audience and performers find of interest, in a manner which is sufficiently imaginative to engage the audience in the presentation. Aesthetic standards here have more to do with the collective nature of both performance and event.
To exemplify, in April 2000 we saw a show by the Red Road Young 'Uns, a group of elderly people, in a community centre which lies literally at the foot of one of the notorious Red Road high rise tower-blocks in Glasgow’s Springburn. I wrote down some impressions afterwards:

Long tables are laid out at right angles to the stage and over a hundred people are sitting at them, chatting, drinking the carry outs they’ve brought, smoking, eating snacks. The majority are of pensionable age, a number are in wheelchairs, and there’s a sprinkling of younger people, a few clearly care staff, the others probably relatives and friends of people who attend the centre. There’s a lively atmosphere of anticipation as we wait for the show to begin, most of these people seem to have been at performances before. (But talking to several elderly women near us, it’s also clear that they sometimes organise parties to attend the professional theatre in town – they talk quite knowledgeably of recent productions seen at the Citizens, the King’s, and the Pavilion.) The show is late going up, but no-one seems to mind too much, there’s plenty of conversation going on, people are calling across tables to each other, more raffle tickets are being sold amongst much banter. Finally, after a welcome from a member of the centre’s staff, the play begins. Written by a member of the group, Pat Connelly, the comic plot, which is fairly thin, revolves around a wedding which unites a girl from the East End of Glasgow with a boy from ‘posh’ suburban Bearsden – the young couple are of course played by performers in their 60s and 70s, a neat reversal of the more common situation in youth and student theatre where you see young people trying to age up. The bride is rushed off to have her baby in the middle of the wedding party and plenty of play is made of the social discomfort of the Bearsden parents at the lively party where everyone’s expected to get up and do a turn (the play’s not short of social stereotyping). The comic twist is that the Bearsden couple are recognised, much to their embarrassment initially, as in fact being ex East Enders (who had moved out after winning the pools). The party setting provides lots of opportunities for O’Casey-like cameo roles of neighbours in a tight-knit working class community and for group songs as well as individual turns, songs, recitals, a wonderful tap dance by a woman in her 80s and a hilarious Charleston by a woman in her 60s in a 1920s It-girl outfit, all to splendid piano and drum accompaniment provided by a couple of other performers well past retirement age. The communal party atmosphere also spills into the auditorium; a supper of pies and mushy peas is served at interval, and the tables are cleared away at the end for people to get up and party.

The audience loved it, laughing, cheering, applauding, exchanging banter with the cast throughout. If the show was judged against ‘professional standards’, of course, it would be possible to note a number of seeming failings, despite the rigorous attention the director, retired professional actress Kate MacColl, had given to getting the performers to
give their all. (She is a demanding taskmistress in rehearsal, working the cast, several of whom have visible disabilities, very hard over small details of choreography and delivery.) To say that such ‘standards’ are irrelevant is not patronising – as it sometimes can be when spectators, like Theseus and Hippolyta, feel forced to ‘make allowances’ for defects in an amateur or community performance. It is to recognise that both researchers enjoyed themselves immensely, at times being near to tears with laughter. We both agreed that our immediate theatrical enjoyment of the event (as opposed to more reflective responses to the nature of the event or its circumstances) was far greater than we had experienced at anything professional we had seen recently. – No ‘allowance’ needed to be made. If standards are understood as referring to the whole field of communication which is set up between performers and audience, the event was of a very high standard. (It is also worth noting that instances of such successful events are not just confined to the field of community theatre; I could equally have cited a performance of *The Steamie* by the Antonine Players in Bishopbriggs as an example, although it also involved performers whose skills were, by traditional standards of assessment, rather more developed.)

More reflectively, of course, there are important points to be made about the significance of the event. Here were 25 performers, average age in the mid-70s, one of them in a wheelchair, several needing support walking, a couple with speech difficulties, people who in our society are seen as ‘past it’, who are seen as in need of ‘care’, people from an area that is portrayed in the media as a cultural wasteland, suffering all the symptoms of urban deprivation, creating an effective and hugely enjoyable piece of entertainment which they offered back to their local community. In the process they revealed the normally forgotten high level of skill of several individual performers in music, singing and dancing. Such a performance did not need to be based on particular issues to do with old age, in itself it managed to subvert much of the way in which many people tend to

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It might be tempting here to use Schechner’s idea of the ‘integral audience’ as a way of explaining the success of the production with its audience: that is, the nature of the occasion and the audience’s familiarity with the performers creates a different way of responding to it than an ‘accidental audience’ might (Schechner, 1977: 193-6). This certainly must be a factor at both amateur and community events, but it is
regard the elderly. Within the broader context of this study, it should also be noted that such work is not the fruit of a one-off project; the Young 'Uns have been going for ten years – although inevitably, given the age of the participants, death and incapacity have led to considerable turnover in membership, with the result that the cast was a strong mix of recent joiners and some who had been with the group for several years.

Some concluding comments on ‘community’

This is not the place to discuss in any detail the large theoretical literature on notions of community. But is perhaps worth developing a few points which emerge from some of the above discussion.

Initially, we might notice, then caution against, the warm glow which is often seen to hover around use of the word. Some of the above and some of what follows almost inevitably succumbs to this. On a small scale, when I celebrate what happens in performances by the Red Road Young 'Uns or the Antonine Players, what I am in part celebrating is the sense of community which is created in that place on that night. I stress the time and place, because we should recognise that in many ways such an immediate sense of community, however powerful it may be and however predicated on pre-existing relationships and senses of community, is temporarily heightened, manufactured by and for those involved in the event. When it takes place as part of a larger, on-going set of activities it may actively contribute to shoring up already fixed notions of the local community or perhaps contribute to the evolution of an expanded sense of the

worth noting that the researchers were hardly part of this integral audience – although the event itself, both through the play and discussions with those around us, did gradually integrate us into it.

It’s become customary here to quote Raymond Williams’ comment, 1976: 66. ‘Community can be the warmly persuasive word to describe an existing set of relationships or the warmly persuasive word to describe an alternative set of relationships.’ Note also, Bell and Newby, 1974: xiii, ‘The use of the term community has remained to some extent associated with the hope and wish of reviving once more the closer, warmer, more harmonious types of bonds people vaguely attributed to past ages.’
Either of these may result from the way amateur societies operate in their local communities or might be an implicit objective when it comes to large-scale community plays sponsored by local authorities.

Whether the desire to share a sense of community with others is a by-product of living in society or whether the need for it has become greater as a result of the sort of atomised existences many people lead in the post-modern city described by Landry and Bianchini, we must be aware that the sense of community often involves a process of ‘othering’ people not included in the ‘community’ so constructed – of strengthening one’s (ultimately imaginary) sense of community by excluding certain people from it. (A fairly lightweight example of this may be seen in the Red Road group’s vision of people who live in Bearsden, an inversion of much mainstream drama’s ‘othering’ of the lives of working-class people; more common examples, of course, occur when those who are seen as other are seen as such on grounds of race, ability, or sexuality.) Usha Brown, who works for the Scottish Poverty Information Unit, makes an important point:

Faced with the complexities of a pluralist society, and the unresolvable and painful contradictions all this can pose, it is understandable that we seek refuge in our own cultures and communities. The trouble with refuges is that they can turn into fortresses. Take the example of the gated communities which came into being in the United States. In essence, they have encompassing walls, restricted entry points with guard posts, overlapping private and public police services and even privatised road space. They are safe havens for ‘us’, not for ‘them’.

In such circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that more recently some activists and commentators have become critical of the positive emphasis which came to be placed on notions of community in the past 30 years or so and expressed concern about the way community can work at both real and imaginary levels to flatten out or suppress difference. This may lead to a desire not to become part of a community or to recognition of the temporary, shifting nature of relationships and alliances which may be embraced under the umbrella term of ‘community’. Attempts to enforce inclusion in a

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- I am conscious here of falling into a use of “community” in a geographical sense, but the same might apply to a community of interest.
- In Wha’s Like Us, a report from a conference on cultural diversity, inclusion and the new Scotland, 13 April, 2000; publ. by The Foundation for Democratic Advance, London.
‘community’ may sometimes alienate just as much as enforced exclusion. Such concerns should always be borne in mind, even when in the following pages certain groups or events, whether in amateur or community theatre, are commended for making some contribution or other to their community.
Information gathering

At the beginning of this research the Scottish Community Drama Association was contacted, and it provided addresses for member clubs of the association, as well as inserting notice of the project in the Association’s magazine, *Scene*. The National Operatic and Dramatic Association also provided a membership list: while a number of groups are members of both organisations, the bulk of the NODA membership is made up of clubs doing light opera and musicals. The limited time available for the research prevented a comprehensive investigation of this sector, but some exploration of their work was undertaken (discussed in the section on Musical Societies). We contacted local authority Arts Officers and Community Education Officers throughout the country with lists of amateur clubs and community theatre activities we had identified in their areas, asking for the names of any which had been missed. While initial response to this was patchy, further chasing resulted in returns from the majority of authorities. After piloting a questionnaire (Appendix 3.1) with a small sample of drama groups, we sent them to about 240 amateur groups – all the SCDA members and a number of others we had learned about. After an initial return of about 40 questionnaires, further approaches were made to certain clubs in an attempt to ensure that the overall sample was reasonably representative geographically. In the event, 73 questionnaires were returned (30%). Subsequently 13 groups which perform musicals and light opera completed questionnaires; to their replies was added the return from the Pantheon Club, a large musical society which had responded to the initial trawl of amateur groups. It should also

- On the difficulties of finding reliable statistics on arts activities in Scotland, see Michael Quine’s *Scottish Cultural Statistics Report* for the Scottish Cultural Agencies, March 1999, especially p6: ‘It is plain that the cultural statistics that do exist at present are limited, incomplete, and inadequate to address the needs of the sector.’ Note that generally Quine makes little reference to amateur participation except in workshops. He also notes, p11, ‘One person commented that “tangible” measures tended to consider the number of people who attend a (touring) theatre production and the revenue earned: it is hard to measure the social impact of 30 people from a community of 75 coming together to see the same show.’ This is perhaps even more applicable in the case of amateur productions in small communities.
be noted that at this point we did not specifically approach youth theatres, intending to do so later with an amended questionnaire; but in fact nine of the responding groups turned out to operate as youth theatres and one was a student group. Returns from these and the Pantheon are not included in analyses below, since they are dealt with elsewhere.

Although not all the clubs that responded are affiliated to the SCDA, it is worth noting that the spread of their locations is broadly in line with the distribution of SCDA membership. The SCDA clubs are organised into the following four divisions, with the relevant proportion of clubs in brackets: Western (28%); Northern (28%); Eastern (32%) and Highland (12%). Of the 62 questionnaires analysed here, 29% are from clubs in the area covered by the SCDA’s Western Division, 26% from the Northern area, 24% from the Eastern, and 21% from Highland. Matching them against SCDA lists, they included a representative sample of smaller and larger clubs and rural and urban clubs. Such factors were also borne in mind when approaching musical groups.

These initial questionnaires were designed to provide broad data on the ages and size of the memberships, the nature of their activities, their audiences and budgets. Groups were also asked if they would be willing for us to contact them later for further information. We subsequently visited performances by a number of groups, spoke with their members and distributed more detailed personal questionnaires to the memberships (Appendix 3.2). These attempted to investigate something of their backgrounds, attitudes and aspirations and encouraged participants to add further comments or advice for the research. The following draws on analysis of information gained from both questionnaires and the discussions with participants.

A. Amateur dramatic societies

i) The audience for amateur drama

It is notoriously difficult to estimate annual audiences for amateur arts. However, the returned questionnaires do provide the foundations for making a reasonable estimate of the audience for amateur theatre in Scotland which can be tested against previous UK-
wide surveys. Of 62 adult groups responding to the initial questionnaire, 56 filled in their approximate annual attendance. This varied from smaller village groups mounting one play a year to audiences of around 100, to some larger groups in places like Greenock, Wick, and Kirkintilloch, which played to annual audiences of around 4,000. The total audience was 68,000 for the 56 groups. If 1,214 is taken as the average annual audience of the returning groups, the annual audience of the SCDA’s 224 member groups might be estimated as 271,936.-

Further account should be taken of the fact that a quarter of the returning groups were not in fact members of the SCDA. If this figure was representative of the proportion of SCDA to non-SCDA clubs throughout the country, it would suggest that there are a further 75 non-SCDA groups, a figure which coincides with the figure quoted in Hutchison and Feist (1991:135) as the SCDA’s estimate in 1990 of non-affiliated drama societies in Scotland. The figure of 75, however, is likely to be an under-estimate. Although, through our communications with local authority officers, approximately 50 non-SCDA societies were identified, information covering all the Scottish local authorities was not obtained. Furthermore, given the variable degree to which local authorities interact with the amateur theatre movement, some of the information provided is likely to be incomplete. It should also be noted that Hutchison and Feist’s sample investigation of activities in five English cities and districts revealed that only 19% of amateur drama groups active there were affiliated to a national ‘umbrella’ organisation. This compares with an estimated 75% affiliation to the SCDA above. Acknowledging the fact that the SCDA demonstrably has a higher profile in Scottish amateur theatre than equivalent bodies do elsewhere in the Britain, 75% affiliation is almost certainly an overestimate. It may be more realistic to accept that SCDA groups form about two thirds of amateur drama groups active in Scotland. If that were the case then estimates of the non-SCDA annual audience might be in the order of 136,000. This would give an overall annual attendance at amateur drama in Scotland of about 408,000. This does not, of

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- It should be noted that groups were asked to include under audience figures only audiences for ‘home’ performances; ie these figures do not include the audiences attending District, Divisional and National finals of the SCDA competitions, which would surely add a further 10,000 to the total.
course, take account of the audiences for the many light opera and musical societies affiliated to NODA which are discussed elsewhere, and the audience for over 100 youth theatre groups. It also does not take account of occasional amateur performances by groups who are together for another purpose, such as Young Farmers’ Clubs, who hold an annual competitive festival.

It may be of interest to compare such attendances with those at subsidised professional theatre in Scotland. Such comparison is made difficult because of the layout of such figures in SAC’s Annual Reports. In the 1998/99 Report audience figures are given for Revenue Funded Organisations, Four-year Fixed Term Touring Companies, Project Funded Companies, Stage One Touring Productions, and for Multi-arts Venues which receive revenue funding from the Combined Arts Committee. There are several areas in which duplication of figures may occur: eg Revenue Funded Organisations include figures for both Own Productions and Visiting Productions, which may include visits by various touring companies which also list their figures separately. Also, in the case of multi-arts venues, such as Cumbernauld Theatre and Eden Court, the distinctions made between different audiences are variable: eg they both distinguish between artforms, but, while Eden Court notes attendance at drama and at amateur events separately (interestingly, the amateur audience surpasses the drama audience by 5%), Cumbernauld does not – nor does it distinguish between audiences for its in-house work and touring companies. Given that it hosts a lot of amateur performance and touring work, it makes it impossible to estimate what proportion of its drama audience of 17,794 should be accounted for elsewhere under audiences for amateur and touring work.

Bearing in mind these uncertainties and duplications, it seems reasonable to aggregate Own Production audiences of the eight Drama Revenue Funded Organisations with audiences for various Fixed Term Touring, Project Funded and Stage One Touring Productions (numbering 39), along with Edinburgh Festival Drama audiences, to gain some sense of the audience for subsidised professional theatre. The total figure is 484,884. Allowing a generous contingency for a few touring companies which do not provide audience figures, for audiences at touring productions which have not been
included, and so on, it is likely that the total audience for SAC-assisted professional theatre in Scotland in 1998/99 did not exceed 550,000.

ii) **Number of productions and performances**

Groups were asked for information on the number of productions and the number of performances usually given. Again, there was a certain level of non-completion of the question and again the patterns of activity varied widely. Some clubs such as Carnoustie Theatre Club, the Birchvale Players in Dalbeattie and the Antonine Theatre Group mount upwards of five productions a year, totalling over 30 performances. Others smaller clubs perhaps mount one one-act play a year. As might be expected, given the existence of the SCDA One-Act Play Festival, this type of work featured prominently: 240 performances of 101 one-act plays were given, and of the 62 clubs replying to this question, 13 only performed one act plays. However, full-length plays were also performed by 75% of the clubs, with there being 291 performances of 66 plays. Furthermore over a third of the clubs (22) stage an annual pantomime, giving a total of 111 performances.

An extrapolation of amateur production throughout the country might suggest that 3,480 performances of 1,024 plays were performed annually. This might be compared with Hutchison and Feist’s (1991: 136) estimate of the annual number of performances by amateur drama clubs in Britain in 1989/90. Assuming a total of 3,575 amateur groups (not counting musical and light opera societies), Hutchison and Feist estimate annual performances at 47,576, playing to 7.2 million people. This is about 20% higher than might be expected if the proposed Scottish pattern were replicated in England and Wales. A number of factors might contribute to this: an overestimate on their part of activity elsewhere in Britain and/or an underestimate by us of the Scottish situation, a higher level of amateur activity elsewhere in Britain, or a decline in activity since 1989/90.

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- We should observe that Hutchison and Feist’s figure is exceeded by John Pick and Malcolm Anderton’s estimate in 1996 of 8,500 amateur dramatic societies in Britain, playing to 24 million people. (Pick & Anderton, 1996: 43) An earlier survey by the Central Council for Amateur Theatre (Husbands, 1979), on the basis of returns from over 1,000 clubs, extrapolated a figure of 7,219 clubs in England, with a membership of 479,002, playing to c.14 million spectators. Although it had returns from 90 Scottish societies (with 3,967 members and playing to 137,464 spectators), it did not extrapolate a figure for Scotland as a whole.
Given the difficulty of securely establishing the extent to which any one of these factors or a combination of them may be at work, what may at least be drawn from the comparison is the likelihood that our estimates for Scotland are not over-generous, and they may indeed be a little too conservative.

iii) Annual turnover of amateur theatre and sources of income

In recent years much has been done to investigate the economic impact of arts activities in Britain. Usually studies are confined to professional theatre. It is very difficult to acquire sound statistics on the amount of economic activity generated by the amateur arts. Given the costs involved in mounting theatrical productions, from venue and equipment hire through to set and costume production, it should come as no surprise to discover amateur theatre in Scotland generating considerable financial activity. Our first questionnaire asked amateur groups to indicate their annual budget. While some did not reply, or stated that it varied from year to year, 43 did include a figure. The amounts were hugely variable, ranging from £200 to £40,000. Thirteen groups estimated turnover at £1,000 or less, 18 turned over between £1,000 and £5,000, and 12 had a turnover of over £5,000. The median figure for the 43 groups is £2,500 and the total turnover was £218,520. If this figure was extrapolated across the rest of the amateur theatre movement, assuming a total number of 336 groups (again, disregarding musical and light opera societies), the total annual turnover might be estimated as £1,707,216.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Budget</th>
<th>No. of clubs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£200 - £1,000</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£1,200 - £5,000</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£5,250 - £40,000</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>43</td>
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Table 1: Annual budgets of amateur theatres

Most of the groups derive their income primarily from box-office returns. For most their annual membership fees are relatively low, in an attempt to make membership accessible to all. Six charge no membership fees, while 44 groups indicated fees, varying from £1 to £25. The median figure was £10, which was the fee for nine clubs, and only six clubs

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- Cf. the work of Myerscough (1995 and 1998) and the regular Cultural Trends Reports produced by the Policy Studies Institute.
- Cf. F Marchal’s criticism (1999) of this deficiency in Matarasso’s The Arts in Essex, 1999; her own study does attempt to quantify the economic impact of amateur arts in Chelmsford, Essex.
had fees of £20 or over. Twenty eight of the clubs operated concessionary fees, usually for junior, elderly or unemployed members. Beyond box-office and membership fees, almost half the clubs held fundraising events, 24 raised some sponsorship locally, 10 received some support from their local authorities, 11 had other means of raising funds (mostly from patrons), and only eight had received financial support from the Scottish Arts Council (mostly instances of National Lottery grants below £5,000 for refurbishment or equipment).

There seems to be little pattern to local authority support beyond the fact that most clubs which received support were in rural areas: one group received support from Shetlands Arts Trust; groups in Portree, Wick and Selkirk received £200–£250; groups in Dunlop, Dollar and Livingston received an undisclosed level of support; the Antonine Players in Bishopbriggs, who lease their building from the local authority but maintain it and run it as a venue for theatre, film and children’s workshops, received £3,000, and one group in Edinburgh received an undisclosed sum. Four of these groups were amongst the 14 which paid reduced rates for hire of local authority buildings. Regarding such reduced rates, again little pattern emerges, with some groups paying reduced charges for rehearsal hires but not for performance hires, and vice versa. With the exception of two in Edinburgh, two in Aberdeen and one in Kirkintilloch on the outskirts of Glasgow, most are again in rural areas, ranging from Shetland and Wick down to Denholm and Stranraer. Even in districts where one group is receiving some form of support or may be paying a reduced rate for venue hire, other groups may receive no support and no reduction. For most groups, accommodation hire forms a significant proportion of their annual expenditure, an issue which is explored in more detail in the discussion of musical theatre groups.

* On this subject, cf. Brinson, 1992: 67, ‘Local authority premises play a vital part in bringing arts to people. Schools have been one of the most important providers of cheap accommodation for arts in communities, but under the impact of local management, whereby schools have to meet individual budgets, many now price the use of their accommodation outside the range of community groups.’ If anything, the situation has grown worse in recent years, as illustrated in the discussion of venue rental charges in the section on Musical societies below.
It depends a lot on finance, if a group uses the school hall and they get charged the same rate as everybody else, there needs some way for there to be a reduced rate. Particularly when you think of the more social work part of this business as well.

There needs to be some sort of recognition of the social value of the work. Because while we are doing youth work, having 80-90 kids involved in the pantomime, involved in youth theatre activities, Community Education doesn’t have to provide it.

A member of Carnoustie Theatre Club

People in the community have this conception that the drama group’s well off, when in fact we are the largest contributors to the village hall in terms of lets. Plus we pay royalties for music, purchase of the scripts, costumes and the set. Yet people see the price of tickets £4.50 and they think ‘these people must be rolling in it’. We contribute 25% of hall income which is about 25% of our expenditure. We are the major supporter of village hall, but it would be horrendous for us if the village hall folded. The community hall is the village, but it’s not supported in any obvious way by Angus Council.

A member of Letham Drama Group

As a further aspect of the financial operation of amateur theatres, it should be noted that a number of groups also raise funds for various good causes through their performances. The major example of this is Act IV, a Dundee group which was set up in 1984 specifically to raise money for charities through theatrical performance. Usually performing a couple of comedies per year, for runs of 4-6 nights, with income from each night devoted to a different charity, it has raised £180,000 since its inception, for cancer and leukaemia research, MacMillan Nurses and many others. On a smaller scale, donations for programmes and refreshments at Atholl Players productions last year raised over £1,100 for a variety of causes such as the British Heart Foundation, the Breast Care Unit at Perth Royal Infirmary, and the RNLI. The same kind of charity fundraising took place at the Antonine Players’ performance of The Steamie and other clubs, including musical societies, also occasionally operate in similar fashion. A quantification of annual contributions of this kind has not been attempted, but it is potentially a further significant way in which amateur theatres make a contribution to their communities.

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Cf. Rattray, 1989: 78, ‘In 1987 the position was reached where only the Dunaverty Players and the preschool playgroup were using the hall on a regular weekly or twice weekly basis… It is doubtful if the hall could continue without the regular bookings of Dunaverty Players … but the regular increases put pressure on the club. For example, until recently only a token membership fee was expected (in conformity with the principle that the club should be open to all) – now the club is being forced to consider a more realistic subscription.’ She points out the hall’s importance for other annual fixtures in the community calendar, ceilidhs, dances, charity coffee mornings and an annual dinner where the young women of the parish cook for the older women, and observes that if the hall had to close because the Dunaverty Players could no longer afford it, many of these community events would be in danger.
iv) Membership figures

The number of members in the 60 groups which completed this question was 2,416. (Two clubs also mentioned the existence of a further 114 ‘associate’ members. It may be that in the cases of some other clubs which listed over a hundred members a number of these may be associate members rather than actively involved in production.) Membership numbers varied from as few as five to as many as 206, with an average membership of 40.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of members</th>
<th>No. of clubs</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 - 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>31 – 60</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-206</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,416</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average: 40 per club**

Table 2: Membership numbers

In line with various national surveys on both participation in arts activities and spectating, the greater proportion of the membership is female, with there being 1,426 females (63%) and 835 males (37%); no gender was given for the others. With these proportions it is not surprising that one respondent to the request for suggestions on how SAC might help was, ‘find us some men!’ If this average membership is extrapolated across the estimated 336 clubs operating in Scotland, it is probable that 13,440 people are involved in amateur theatre clubs.

But we had a marvellous situation where we had a lady on the stage acting in a reasonably sized part in the Festival at the ripe old age of 91 and she had performed in something 60-odd years ago, in a One-Act Festival. She can learn her words better than some youngsters. We asked her to present the trophies at the Scottish Finals one year and she was sitting chatting and she says, ‘Morna, I think I would be in my box if it wasn’t for the drama.’ She goes to rehearsals three times a week and she makes the coffee, she bakes the cakes.

**Morna Barron, Chairman of SCDA**

The age distribution of the membership was quite wide: again disregarding the eight clubs which are for young people, and noting that five clubs did not give an indication of age distribution, the membership of the remaining 57 clubs was as follows:

| Below 15 | 440 (18.6%) |
| 16-25    | 307 (12.9%)  |
| 26-40    | 422 (17.7%)  |
| 40-60    | 852 (35.7%)  |
| Over 60  | 377 (15.8%)  |

Table 3: Ages of members

A number of issues worth observing emerge from these figures:
• Contrary to popular preconceptions and to a concern which exercised some SCDA members at one time that the clubs were in danger of becoming dominated by the middle-aged and elderly, there is an almost even balance in the membership between those aged below 40 and those above it.

• While this balance does not necessarily exist in all clubs, it is noteworthy that in only five clubs are there members in only one or two age categories; two of these are SWRI clubs and the other three have total memberships of below twelve. In all others the ages of members span at least three age groups, with most also spanning four. The implication is that amateur drama provides a very good opportunity for inter-generational activity, and indeed this is an issue which did emerge in some discussions with group members.

• That said, there is a relatively healthy involvement of people of pensionable age, which is in line with their proportion in the population at large. At a time when social agencies are turning attention to issues around the social exclusion of those who have retired and the beneficial health effects of continued social and cultural activity, it would seem that amateur drama is already providing a valuable service in this respect. (Also, see some of their comments in section viii below.)

• Apart from the eight clubs already mentioned which are in fact youth theatres, thirteen of the clubs do operate separate activities for young members or enter youth teams in the SCDA festivals. (For the SCDA youth festival see below.) Beyond such special provision, younger members are sometimes involved in the general run of productions, and the annual pantomime in particular tends to involve club members from across all age groups – some clubs mention 50-80 young people taking part in them, usually additional to the overall membership numbers.

• The dip in attendance at cultural activities by members of the 25-40 age group in the populace at large, which is reported in other surveys, is to some extent reflected in the

\[\text{- Cf. The SAC Response to the Consultation Document on a National Cultural Strategy (2000), 10.6.4: ‘In 1998 17.9% of Scotland’s population was of pensionable age, in fact only 15.2% were of school age. By 2016, 21% will be pensioners.’ Also, cf. Matarasso, 1997: vii, on the intergenerational activity found in community arts projects.}
\]

\[\text{- Cf. Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy, 2000: 46, ‘We also need to find ways of maximising the benefits of the considerable contribution and experiences of older people and ensuring that they continue to have opportunities for a wide range of cultural participation throughout their lives.’}
\]
figures. While instances of people cutting back involvement during their years of child-rearing and career establishment were reported, the figure of 17.7% participation from this age range is relatively high, and the figure of 35.7% participation by people in the 40-60 age range suggests a reasonable level of return to the activity after these ‘dip’ years.

v) The nature of the work produced

The range of work produced by the groups is illustrated in the following table. The figures refer to the number of groups which indicated that they had performed the particular type of play in the past five years. While some groups tended to confine themselves to a small number of types (eg panto and comedies), many performed a considerable range of plays.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Play</th>
<th>No. of groups</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modern Scots writers (post 1945)</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>McGrath (John), Byrne, Lochead, Roper, Lamont Stewart, Scotland, Glass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earlier Scots writers (pre-1945)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Bridie, Corrie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern comedies</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Stoppard, Coward, Ayckbourn, Simon, Saunders, Godber, Fo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern ‘serious’ drama</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Pinter, Churchill, Marcus, Priestley, Miller, Greene, Rattigan, Friel, Albee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musicals</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classic texts</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Shakespeare, Wilde, Sophocles, Chekhov, Sheridan, Ibsen, Yeats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pantomimes</td>
<td>29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plays by local writer</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play by member of the group</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(Often the panto)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-devised shows</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
<td>farce; murder mystery; variety shows, revue</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Types of work produced

Some of these figures and examples might have been predicted. Scots writers such as James Bridie, Joe Corrie, James Scotland and Harry Glass have long been a staple of the amateur movement, and there is the expected popularity of figures such as Wilde, Coward and Ayckbourn. But there is evidence here of a considerable number of groups attempting to broaden their repertoire in quite adventurous ways, with the production of writers such as Caryl Churchill, Dario Fo, John McGrath and Brian Friel, and the
presentation of plays by local writers and group-devised shows. The work is not perhaps as hidebound as popular myth and some of the entries at the One-act Play Festivals might suggest. Amongst contemporary Scots plays, Tony Roper’s *The Steamie* has turned into a ‘banker’ for many clubs, and indeed we witnessed an excellent production of it by the Antonine Players which played to full houses for a week. A tremendous sense of rapport was established with the predominantly female audience by a cast which gave as effective an ensemble performance as a professional production seen at the Pavilion a year earlier; combined with the lively sense of identification which clearly exists between performers and a regular audience, this made for a ‘shared experience’ of the play which certainly surpassed what is sometimes found at professional productions.

You have to give local audience something you know they're going to enjoy. You can stretch it a bit at festival time, the one we're doing at the moment some people at home didn't enjoy. There were some people who were less than happy with choice of plays. They thought we had done them very well but not their type of entertainment and you have to be very careful that you don't do that too often or you damage your relationship with your audience. But having just done *The Steamie* and had raves for months after, and huge audiences, they'll forgive us our strange things for the festival and then we're going into a comedy for early June which will bring people back.

A member of Atholl Players in discussion__

Amateur clubs have to think carefully about how to balance their need to challenge themselves theatrically and the demands of their audiences. They not only depend upon their audience for their financial survival, but some of the more active clubs in certain communities have a cycle of production which inhabitants come to rely on as their regular source of local entertainment. There is also a feeling amongst some audience members in rural communities of alienation from what they see as work which caters to metropolitan tastes but has little relation to their lives. In her dissertation, Mary Rattray explored how in the early years of Dunaverty Players, when it was almost wholly made up of locally-born people, there was a strong sense of constraint about the potential subject matter and styles of plays presented which contributed to the majority of plays being within a kailyard or rural comedy tradition; as the group began to take in more ‘incomer’ members in the 1970s and 1980s, tensions sometimes emerged over attempts to perform more contemporary drama (often with urban settings)._ A few years later, in

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Rattray, 1989: 33-35. By 1989 the “incomer” membership had grown to about 36%, twice what it had been in 1949.
1993, Dunaverty Players, a small club at the extreme end of the Kintyre peninsula, went on to win the Scottish and British One-act Play Competitions with a Harold Pinter play. But old tensions die hard, as evidenced in an anecdote by Morna Barron:

I was sitting besides a little lady in Campbeltown who didn’t know who I was… she was chatting away and there was one particular group who are good but their producer retired, so they’ve got a new chap, a young chap… they had done Pinter and they’d done Chekhov and they’d done it beautifully and this young chap came in and he was looking at Jimmy Chinn and completely different things, and she said, ‘Aye, they used to be very good, but I don’t like the rubbish they produce now. You know I could adjudicate for the SCDA if they asked me, because I’ve been coming here to this Festival, this is my seat for 30 years, and I wouldn’t miss it for anything.’ And she was telling me what was wrong with it, what they should have done, what they shouldn’t have done, where the adjudicator went wrong … Scotland’s full of that.

It is interesting to note in this context that while some clubs do ‘tried and tested’ old plays at the One-act Festivals, others use it as an opportunity to attempt types of work which they might not otherwise do for their home audiences. So, for example, Atholl Players did a moving production this year of David Mamet’s Duck Variations.

The difficulty is the audience. We were quite experimental a few years ago but Carnoustie audiences just wouldn’t come. Even now, you have really work on your publicity if it’s not a well known play. We would like to take on something more adventurous. We’ve got the people who can do it. We would like the public to rise to that challenge. Perhaps one every year. As a club we would want to do it, it would be great for us to challenge ourselves. And I think we have to do it as well: the club has to set itself a challenge to see if we can do that kind of work as well as everything we do. I think we’ve experimented with festival plays because we’re not box-office driven there.

A member of Carnoustie Theatre Club in discussion

vi) Growth and decline in number of groups and longevity of groups

After peaking between the 1930s and 1950s, the level of amateur activity declined; as late as the 1980s SCDA membership was still in decline, dropping from 293 clubs in 1980 to 224 clubs in 1990, a figure at which it seems to have steadied. To gain a sense of the degree of turnover, clubs were asked to provide foundation dates. These varied from 1890 in the case of Dollar, to clubs which were founded in 1998. The relevant figures are found in the following table:
Such figures suggest both the continuity of participation in amateur theatre in many areas of Scotland and a degree of renewal as some older clubs disappear and newer ones spring up. (It should be noted that two of the more recent foundations were in fact amalgamations of previous clubs which had been founded in the 1920s or 1930s.) Many older clubs have been in existence longer than any of the professional theatres in Scotland; they have only been able to survive due to the dedication of many volunteers, some of whom, like a number of respondents to the members’ questionnaires, have been active for up to 50 years.

vii) The background of participants

At various performances questionnaires were distributed to club members. These attempted to discover something of the participants’ background and their views of amateur theatre. Some 101 questionnaires were completed, from members of 10 clubs in Glasgow and environs, Edinburgh, the Highlands and Islands and Central Scotland. It should be noted, however, that the majority of respondents lived in either cities or larger towns, and this may distort the nature of answers to some of the questions, particularly those to do with occupation, educational background and household income. (Questionnaires were distributed to several other clubs, but, unfortunately, they were not returned.) Forty one per cent of respondents were aged between 15 and 40, while 59% were over 40 – thus the higher age group is slightly over-represented in the returns. While some respondents did not answer certain questions – particularly the question on household income, for most questions there was a high rate of response, and the attitudes revealed in surveying the questionnaires are likely to be reasonably representative of participants across the movement. It should be noted that 17 of the respondents were members of the Edinburgh Graduates’ Theatre Group, while all the rest were in mixed groups based in a locality. Although note is taken of most aspects of the EGTG returns in the discussion below, given their very particular origins as a group of graduates would be likely to distort overall figures, it was decided to exclude their statistics from discussion of two aspects discussed: educational background and occupation. Not unexpectedly,
they contain a high number of graduates and postgraduates and almost all of them are or have been in professional employment; curiously, given studies suggesting graduates on average earn more than non-graduates, their household incomes were not out of line with the broad pattern, so their returns have been retained in these statistics.

a) Length of involvement in amateur theatre and time commitment involved

The relationships built up in any group activity, particularly drama, can sometimes lead to the formation of exclusive cliques, and amateur clubs have sometimes been accused of this failing. To elicit some sense of the groups’ openness to new members and the level of commitment which members do sustain, participants were asked how long they had been involved in the group. The shortest time anyone had been involved was one night. The longest was 50 years! A high degree of loyalty to the activity and their clubs is evident in the number who had been active for many years, but the fact that a quarter of respondents had been involved for less than three years suggests again that a certain level of renewal is going on within clubs. The individual returns have been grouped into the following periods of membership:

1 night – 1 year 10% 1–3 years 14% 4–9 years 28% 10–15 years 14% Over 15 years 34%

Table 6: Length of membership

Members were also asked to give an estimate of the average amount of time they devote to their theatre activities per month. While some noted that time varies greatly when they are working on a production, the time devoted by most members is quite considerable. The figures are as follows:

5–10 hours a month 17% 10–20 hours 41% 20–30 hours 21% More than 30 hours 21%

Table 7: Time devoted to participation

b) Recruitment

In a further attempt to gain some sense of whether groups tried to avoid becoming too self-enclosed, through encouraging new members to join, we asked how participants came to be involved with their groups. While some respondents interpreted this as
looking for the reason they joined and answered with comments such as, ‘had an interest in drama’ or ‘wanted an outside interest’, most indicated the route through which they first became involved. Of these, about 35% became involved through friends or relatives who were already members. Seven percent approached their groups after seeing a show and another 7% were approached by committee members or producers and asked to join. Fifteen percent responded to advertisements in local papers or libraries, a further 7% joined their groups after moving into the area, and the rest came through a variety of routes such as through participation in school drama, junior clubs, young wives’ clubs, and work. This variety of routes into the groups was reflected also in the ways in which clubs attempt to recruit new members. In the first questionnaire 41 of the clubs reported that they advertised in local newspapers for new members, and the majority also put notices in their programmes. One made the point of letting people know shows are cast by suitability, not seniority, clearly mindful of the impression many people may have of clubs being rather self-enclosed.

To discover whether amateur drama clubs are effective in involving people in drama who had previously had little experience of it, members were also asked to indicate their level of prior experience. Thirty percent of respondents had taken it up without prior experience, while 70% did in fact have some prior experience. For half of these their experience had been in school plays or university drama. The others predominantly had been active in other amateur groups, with a couple having been involved in youth theatre and/or community theatre.

Counter to stereotypical views of amateur drama as a cliquish activity, and notwithstanding the fact that some smaller groups may indeed be so, the broad movement does, therefore, seem to attempt to bring new people into it and to encourage those with little or no experience to take part. That said, only a quarter of clubs affirmed that they had people with disabilities involved. These disabled members were active across a range of areas from acting through to light and sound control. It may be that the figure is an underestimate, given variable understandings of disability. A few clubs, for example, did mention that a number of older members had various infirmities to do with old age. There
may have been little consistency as to whether respondents were understanding disability only as a long-term, registered, and readily perceptible disability (as with clubs which mentioned blind or deaf members) or whether they recognised some infirmities of age as forms of disability. Nevertheless, noting that professional theatre has been mostly slow to recognise the potential contribution that people with disabilities might make and to acknowledge the barriers that dominant traditions of theatre have placed in the way of accepting people with disabilities (especially as performers), some of the amateur clubs should perhaps ask themselves whether they are making themselves as accessible as they might be.~

c) Participation in activities other than amateur theatre
In view of suggestions in past studies that involvement in some form of arts activity in the community is likely to encourage broader participation in the community as a whole or at least in other cultural pursuits (eg Matarasso, 1997: 16), we asked respondents to indicate what other organised activities in the community they take part in and what other arts activities they engage in. Of those who responded to the first question, 56% were involved in other activities in their local community. The range of participation was extremely broad, with over 40 activities listed. Many reported involvement with sporting and other leisure activities such as swimming, cricket, hockey and tennis clubs, yoga and Scottish country dancing. In some cases they specifically noted their membership of organising committees for such activities. About half the group were involved in what might be seen as some form of voluntary activity in the community, such as Scouts, Guides, Save the Children, hospital visiting, youth work, special needs work, voluntary work for a housing association, and involvement in village hall and leisure centre committees; some were involved in local church activities or in groups such as Rotary and Probus, and one was a member of an anti-quarrying pressure group. While one cannot establish whether participation in amateur theatre may have led to some of these

~ We might note a significant exception here, with Carnoustie Theatre Club. Apart from having a number of active members with disabilities, they have in the past organised a day-long workshop on working with disability, to which members of other groups were also invited, along with a group of disabled young people.
other involvements, it is clear that a large number of participants in amateur theatre are active ‘joiners’, with about a third of the sample devoting other time to community service of some sort.

What was perhaps surprising was the comparatively low level of participation in other arts activities. Only one quarter of the respondents indicated such involvement. Here there was less diversity in the types of activity, with participation in music groups, choirs, and writing classes being most popular; pottery, stained glass, painting, photography, Highland dancing, and railway modelling also figure amongst other pastimes.

d) Theatrical tastes and theatre attendance

In view of a common belief amongst professional theatre workers that many amateurs are often not particularly interested in theatre as such and do not attend professional theatre (exemplified by Marshall’s comments, cited on page 9), respondents were asked to indicate their level of attendance at professional theatre over the past year and what sort of theatre they liked. Even discounting the answers by nine respondents from Shetland, where there is little access to professional theatre, the results lend some confirmation to the above view, but they also reveal a core of amateur theatre enthusiasts who are very active theatre-goers and who have a wide range of theatrical tastes. In the past year 49% had attended the professional theatre between one and four times, 27% between five and eight times, 10% between nine and twelve times, and 14% more than twelve times. The choice of theatre companies which respondents enjoyed attending obviously depended to some extent on their geographical location: so, those in Perthshire and Dundee tended to cite Perth Rep, Pitlochry Festival Theatre and Dundee Rep, while the Royal Lyceum and Citizens were attended by those in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Interestingly, however, touring companies such as Wildcat, 7:84, Borderline, TAG and the now defunct Communicado each received a few mentions and a few respondents enjoy attending the Traverse. There were also six references to the RSC and four to the Royal National Theatre. Tastes in types of play enjoyed were also quite diverse, as the following table suggests:
Types of theatre enjoyed (83 replies)  __Musicals_ 49%  __Comedies_ 31%  __Dance/ballet_ 10%  __All types_ 20%  __Opera_ 13%  __Serious dramas_ 24%  __Contemporary drama and social issue plays_ 13%  __Classics/Shakespeare_ 13%  __Others : Farce (3); Murder/mystery (3); Pantos (2); one-act plays (2); Mime; most except musicals; not plays which preach; not comedy; traditional plays in unusual styles; Pinter, Beckett, Wilde (3), Ibsen __

Table 8: Theatrical tastes

e) Participants’ occupations

Excluding EGTG members, 13 of the 82 respondents are retired (12 included their pre-retirement employment), five are students, two are registered disabled and one is unemployed. The nature of employment amongst respondents overall is quite diverse: although 12 (including four retired) are or had been teachers, and eleven occupy or have occupied various sorts of managerial position (sales, health and safety, glasshouse, etc), the remainder are involved in 30 other occupations, including: audio-typist, bank teller, gents’ barber, housewife, house-husband, milk salesman, part-time checkout operator, PCV driver, professor, secretary, social worker and taxi driver. Applying JICNARS classifications (and including retired people according to their pre-retirement occupation), the majority of participants are in Social Grades B and C1 based on occupations, as illustrated in the following table, which also includes comparable figures from the General Household Survey for 1998:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social grade and type of occupation</th>
<th>Number and Percentage_1998 GHS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: higher managerial, administrative or professional_6 (7.3%)_5%_B: intermediate managerial, administrative or professional_36 (44%)_16%_C1: supervisory or clerical, junior managerial, administrative or professional_19 (23.2%)_35%_C2: skilled manual workers_7 (8.5%)_19%_D: semi-skilled and un-skilled manual workers_1 (1.2%)_18%_E: state pensioners, widows, casual or lowest-grade workers_3 (3.7%)_6%_Other: househusband; housewife; students_10 (12.2%)__</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Social grades by occupations of amateur theatre members

12 The fact that the majority of respondents lived in cities or large towns may have contributed something to the preponderance of participants in Social Grades B and C1. By comparison, however, a 1985 survey of eight amateur clubs (with 363 members) in Strathclyde found only 13.3% of members classified as C2, D or E – which is in keeping with these figures (Giesekam, 1985: 23). A stark difference between the two results is that in 1985 only 11% were university graduates, as opposed to 43% of this sample.
Given the consistent finding of surveys to do with arts attendance that attendance is predominantly among classes A, B and C1, it is perhaps not surprising that this pattern should be revealed in participation rates also.

The growth of professional/amateur collaboration should not obscure the powerful influence of major social factors – class, gender, ethnicity – in the way the arts are financed, practised and enjoyed. Practising the arts in a purposeful and satisfying manner calls for a good deal of time as well as appropriate facilities. The time and facilities needed, as well as the economic backing to promote work effectively, are more readily available to some social groups than others.  

Hutchison & Feist, 1991: 1_

f) Educational background

Given the nature of the above employment distribution, particularly the high number involved in education, it is also not surprising that many respondents have further educational qualifications. Again discounting EGTG members and two respondents still at school, only a third of respondents had secondary school qualifications as their highest qualifications, 27% percent have FE college qualifications, and 40% have university degrees, of whom half have further postgraduate (including teaching) qualifications.


g) Participants’ household income

The question on household income was answered by fewest respondents, only 67%, and a number clearly regarded it as an intrusive question. Of those who did answer, 16.4% had an annual household income of less than £10,000, 32.8% an income of £10-£20,000, 14.9% an income of £20-£30,000, 29.8% an income of £30-£40,000, and 6% an income of over £40,000. That is, almost half had a household income below £20,000; in comparison, the General Household Survey of 1998 reports 73% of married couples with children having an annual household income above £20,000.

viii) Views of participants on taking part

Like the professional arts, the importance of the amateur arts can be put in five main ways: the social dimension; as a form of recreation; as a means of personal development; the psychological importance of the arts; and their economic importance. The social and psychological importance of the amateur arts need underlining in our technocratic age.

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By comparison, the 1998 General Household Survey reports 21% of the adult population have attended a polytechnic or FE college and 9% attended a university.
We explored the motives participants have for taking part through means of both an open question on their reasons for joining and maintaining involvement with their group and a multiple choice question in which they were asked to list three reasons for being involved in drama activities. While the latter question was potentially broader in its scope than the more group-oriented nature of the former, the extent to which answers to the former could for the most part be grouped under the sort of reasons listed in the latter, suggests that most respondents were answering at a fairly general level. The inclusion of the open question did, however, give respondents the opportunity to express in their own terms how their particular circumstances may have shaped their involvement or to express their enthusiasm for the activity rather more eloquently. Broadly, the four dominant motives which run through answers to both questions are simply ‘fun’ in a general sense, a specific enjoyment of theatre and plays, a liking for the social interaction provided by such activity, and the opportunity drama provides for challenge and creativity. The following table groups responses to the first question under six broad headings derived from repeated key words or concepts and includes some specific examples of replies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enjoyment/fun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26. Interest in theatre or particular aspects of it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. I love the theatre; I enjoy working with props; I love performing; to try acting in a ‘safe’ environment; intellectual stimulation of plays; the group is professional and committed to high standards of theatre; it has good rehearsal premises</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meeting people/camaraderie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>33. The friendship and support it provides; social integration; enjoyable social activity; a happy band of players – with no cliques; provides incentive to get out on long winter evenings; new phase in my life – time on my hands (a retired person); want to get out and meet new people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creativity/new challenges/intellectual stimulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14. Creative outlet; being able to express myself in a way that isn’t usually accepted; enjoy challenge of learning and understanding a piece and change from daily routines; different from working life; to learn new skills; enjoy the challenge of backstage work; pride in our achievements; intellectual stimulation; to follow my muse!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Therapeutic aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Keeps me sane and relieves stress; builds confidence; memorising lines is good for the old brain (someone 60-70 years old); enjoyment and therapy; keep fit; relaxation from stressful day job; the ‘buzz’ when a show hits the stage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team spirit/contribution to community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Recognise the need to maintain a local arts centre; the team spirit it encourages; involvement in a community group; sense of satisfaction which comes from teamwork</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following table of responses to the multiple choice question reflects a similarity in responses when respondents were offered the chance to choose three reasons, although
the general heading ‘fun’ gains more answers than any, in contrast with the previous answers – perhaps because there it was simply taken as a given or was in any case implicit in some of the other motives.

It’s fun 68 (80%) It provides me with a creative outlet (65%) I enjoy the social interaction it provides 54 (63%) I enjoy plays 38 (45%) It provides different challenges from daily life 40 (47%) The group fulfils a need in the local community 13 (15%) Table 11: Reasons for participation in amateur theatre, ii

ix) Workshops and training

While most amateur drama groups are primarily concerned with rehearsal and production of plays and there is little tradition of exploratory workshops taking place for their own sake, as they do in some forms of community theatre, it is noteworthy that many of the groups in the survey do, in fact, host workshops unrelated to productions. In the group survey 70% of groups stated that they ran workshop or training workshops. In the members’ survey 72% of respondents stated the same, with 65% having taken part in such workshops. Workshops seem to have been mostly centred on skills development: they included acting, make-up, dance, lighting and sound, stage-management, choreography and dance, singing, and Shakespeare. Groups also held poetry and play-reading sessions and talks. A third of all groups had held workshops run by the SCDA adviser, a third had run workshops themselves, and a quarter had invited in professional theatre workers to run workshops. Asked if they would like to see more of such activities, 90% of members said they would. Asked to indicate in what areas members would like to see workshops, those completing the group questionnaires responded as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acting</td>
<td>49 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directing</td>
<td>45 (66%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>31 (45%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>41 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>28 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighting</td>
<td>37 (54%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sound</td>
<td>34 (50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devising</td>
<td>18 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>22 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leading workshops</td>
<td>23 (35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: make-up</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: dance</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 12: Workshops desired by amateurs

This picture of members being keen to develop their knowledge of theatre is supported by the many responses which suggested that one of the ways in which SAC and Local
Authorities might support amateur theatre would be to support workshop and training activities; it is also evident in the way in which members of amateur theatre groups have often participated in projects or workshops which have taken place under the heading of community theatre: as in many of the large-scale community plays (eg Dundee, Musselburgh, Inverness, Eastwood) or events such as Perth’s Artsweek and groups run by Eden Court or Dundee Rep. Others attend SCDA and NODA summer schools, although most are prevented from doing so by the time and cost entailed. There is clearly an unmet desire on the part of many members to extend their participation. From discussion with participants, it is also clear that in some instances this stems from a recognition that their work could be more adventurous in the sort of issues it deals with and the forms productions take, but they often lack the confidence to attempt this without some support and guidance.

x) Views of participants on needs of the sector

Group members were asked whether they thought funding bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council and Local Authorities could do more to support amateur theatre activities. Ninety six percent answered in the affirmative, with most giving concrete examples of how they could provide such support. Suggestions ranged widely from general suggestions about providing financial support or simply recognising the community role of this work, to very specific ideas about ways in which they could support new work or get young people involved.

- About a third of respondents suggested that SAC and/or local authorities could help provide drama tutors or workshops and provide funds for groups to hire in professional assistance. More specifically, some suggested the desirability of grants to support productions of new works, work with young people, larger-scale productions than normal, and collaborations between clubs. Others suggested the SCDA should receive more support so that it could expand its advisory service. (This

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- The SCDA ‘Drama Holiday’, a week in July in Aberdeen, costs £240. The NODA summer school, which takes place this year at the University of Loughborough, offers week-long workshops with professional tutors on a dozen subjects, from the Art of Musical Theatre Performance and Basic Stage Lighting, to advanced classes in Drama Performance and Directing a Musical. It costs £390.
issue also surfaced several times in discussions with group members, who pointed out the limitations of having only one advisor for the whole of Scotland.)

An awful lot of work at district level is concentrated on the Festival, but until SCDA can boost up the advisory service, it won’t change. A lot of us would like to see an additional advisor to work with the groups. Perhaps a two year secondment, not someone straight out of college, but an older person who can work with people. This goes back to what we are saying about SAC and some younger drama workers to work with the young folk.
Member of Atholl Players

- A large number (about 40%) highlighted the difficulties clubs face over premises and equipment. While some suggested the need to create more venues, most urged Local Authorities to bring down the costs of hire and desired more support in maintaining buildings and equipment: several commented on the poor standard of comfort and safety and the presence of poor equipment in many local authority buildings. On this, it should be noted that in some instances clubs have successfully taken over long-term management of buildings from Local Authorities or have become involved in consortia which run them; in this way their voluntary labour has led to more effective provision of a community facility which otherwise the local authority may have closed or run down. Examples which other clubs or local authorities might wish to consider include the Whitehall Theatre in Dundee, the Fort in Bishopbriggs, Carnoustie Theatre Club’s involvement in the management of the local school’s use by community groups, and the Dunlop Players’ application to take over their community hall.

I don't know if SAC is in position to do anything about it but one of the problems we have in our group is the very low standard of facilities and lighting in our own town hall is very basic; it’s not much better at Blairgowrie. None of us has our own accommodation. Some way they could help clubs get better facilities in local authority halls or even help or advice or direction, but something to help us upgrade our technical input. We're always limited in what we can achieve because of the facilities.
A member of Atholl Players

- Many respondents suggested that the clubs could benefit greatly from advice and training in areas of marketing, management, and promotion; they felt that local Authorities and SAC could help the promotion of amateur work by more active recognition of its value.
Other comments included suggestions that SAC should ‘concentrate on local drama development rather than come-on down centralised development’ and that there should be a more integrated strategy to funding professional and amateur theatre. There was also a feeling that the professional theatre could do more to help the sector. Only seven of the clubs reported ever receiving any help from a local professional theatre company.

In the questionnaire comments and in discussions with amateur participants during our visits to productions there was often a recognition that this area of activity is and should remain primarily a voluntary activity: but it was felt that if it were to survive threats posed to it by rising costs and increasing demands on members’ time, and if it were to meet the raised expectations amongst participants and some spectators about the quality and nature of productions, there was a place for some strategic public support. Moreover, this support was deserved, given the wide-ranging contribution many clubs are making to their local communities. These issues come through in the following sample of comments from the open comments and suggestions part of the questionnaire:

‘Support for groups is long overdue; if we’re to continue as a truly community-based group, then all aspects of theatre production should be encouraged by providing buildings at a cost clubs can afford.’

‘On the whole groups such as [ours] have to be self-sufficient and cannot rely on financial handouts. More imaginative methods of support could be found, eg offering to run/subsidise workshops could be useful.’

‘The best of amateur theatre is as good or better than the lower end of the professional theatre: we are not given credit for this, the “they are only amateurs” attitude prevails.’

‘Amateur clubs are an integral part of their communities and deserve better recognition.’

‘Amateur theatre/opera is in great need of support if it is to survive and be the platform for professional performers and serve a social need.’
SAC has Arts and Social Inclusion and there may be a spin off that may help some of drama groups, but there’s not anything specifically for amateur groups - which has to change. I don’t think it’s about handouts, one of the things I really admire about groups here, they’re not queued up outside the council asking for handouts. Ask them what do they want and need - provision of a better infrastructure and facilities in the theatre and better support to learn to market ourselves properly, help us to increase revenue etc – it’s very admirable.

A local authority Arts Officer

xi) Previous support from SAC

The feeling that there is little official support for amateur theatre possibly has contributed to a low level of application to SAC for funds before now. Only 14 of the responding groups have applied – in most cases for funds from National Lottery programmes. Carnoustie received assistance for work on its theatre in 1992/93 and 1998/99; Livingston was given money from Awards for All to install an induction loop and upgrade drapes; Killin has received £15,500 towards lighting, sound, curtains and an induction loop; Dunlop Players have been awarded £12,000 for upgrading lighting and sound equipment; groups from Dollar, Elgin, Letham, Stranraer and Greenock have been awarded grants below £5,000 for equipment or developing storage premises. Several others have been turned down: some were for grants towards productions or exchanges abroad, while one had an application turned down on one occasion because its bank balance was too healthy, and on another because it did not own the premises it was trying to upgrade. Both these last examples provide an illustration of the catch-22 situations in which the clubs sometimes find themselves. Some of the bigger societies which are mounting a number of productions a year have to build up a healthy balance to pay production costs up-front and guard against box-office failure. Although, therefore, their annual turnover will at times exceed the £15,000 limit prescribed for applicants for Awards for All, it does not necessarily mean they are particularly well off. Again, even if a club is a major user of a local authority hall, if the local authority is not prepared to contribute to development of the facility, the club is limited in its capacity to raise funds externally.

Both in comments on questionnaires and in discussion with club members a general feeling emerged that the way in which SAC and National Lottery applications are framed and the language used in them is inappropriate for voluntary groups: although some
acknowledged the Awards for All scheme has been more straightforward, it is often the case that a first negative encounter with funding bureaucracies deters people from making further attempts. The following sentiments of a very experienced chairperson of one group were echoed on several occasions:

We did try for a couple of grants from SAC; that Scotland Onstage had just come out but they threw us back, it was our first experience of filling in forms and part of the problem is that you need the right language. Now I don’t work, I find I don’t have the right language. I used to write reports and references but now I don’t, fashions in bureaucratic language change… I find the forms very difficult, the Scotland Onstage form I found really almost beyond me and I’m not a stupid person. I went to one of the guys in the committee and said can you help me with this because he’s a university lecturer and more used to that kind of language. But I think it’s bad that it’s couched in all that kind of language, that’s very off putting for ordinary people and they just give up, they say we can’t do this.

B Amateur musical and operatic societies

Some of the leading amateur clubs are primarily concerned with the performance of musicals and light opera (with a few also doing grand opera). The National Operatic and Dramatic Association Directory of Scottish members lists 210 member groups. A number of these are also members of the SCDA and are primarily concerned with dramatic productions. A number are school-based groups, and the names of others suggest that they are dramatic rather than musical or operatic groups. Subtracting these gives a figure of 180 groups primarily concerned with opera or musicals. Our impression is that NODA has a very high proportion of clubs performing musicals enrolled as members – we found only a couple of clubs producing musicals or light opera which were not affiliated. It might be safe to assume, therefore, that the total number of clubs active in this area is not much more than 200 – this will be the figure for extrapolated estimates below.

Before proceeding, it may be worth a brief digression to acknowledge and attempt to understand the fact that there has tended historically to be a bias against musicals in much academic discussion of theatre, as well as amongst many theatre practitioners and commentators, and in funding circles. Whatever the validity of specific views about the

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Interview with members of Eastwood Theatre Users’ Forum.
form, to do with its escapism, its emphasis on spectacle and emotion, the reactionary nature of the sort of stereotypes traditionally found in many musicals and so on, it is possible perhaps to identify a combination of ‘institutional’ factors, to do with the history of public subsidy, the development of British theatre in the post-war period, and the discipline of Theatre Studies, which have contributed towards a common tendency to be dismissive of the musical. Briefly, and rather crudely, arguments for instituting public subsidy for the arts and theatre in particular, and arguments for the idea of theatre being worthy of academic study at tertiary level, both depended in their early formation on broad notions circulating around the spiritually and intellectually enhancing value of theatre, which gathered momentum from the arguments of people like George Bernard Shaw and Harley Granville Barker earlier in the century. It is perhaps not coincidental that the founding of the Arts Council and the founding of the first university Drama Department (in Bristol) occurred within two years of each other (1945 and 1947 respectively). In the early days of both public funding and academic study of drama it is arguable that the need to justify themselves in the face of public scepticism entailed a focus on ‘serious’ theatre or comedy within the classic tradition. The so-called revolution in British theatre which occurred in the late 1950s, with its emphasis on the socially investigative potential of theatre, which was then reinforced by the emergence of an even more politically engaged theatre in the post-1968 period also coincided with a period of growth in public subsidy and a burgeoning of academic departments. At the same time increasing value also came to be attached to innovations in writing and directing. The musical came to be portrayed as an outmoded, commercialised and reactionary form, even though the 1970s saw academics and practitioners turning with renewed interest to other popular traditions of theatre. The language used to dismiss the musical (and exclude it from progressive notions of the ‘popular’) owes much to debates in the 1950s about the threats of ‘mass culture’ and American culture, in which Richard Hoggart, who later was a leading figure in the Arts Council, was a major contributor. Consequently, while in the 1970s and 1980s popular theatre (in a politicised interpretation of the term, both in relation to professional theatre and community theatre) recognised the

entertainment potential of using music and song again (notably typified in Scotland by Wildcat’s work, and in community theatre by the community musicals of Craigmillar), the sort of musical associated with London’s West End was still regarded as beyond the pale by ‘serious’ theatre practitioners, commentators and funding bodies. Hence the sort of fuss which accompanied occasions when leading classical directors such as Trevor Nunn and Richard Eyre turned their hand to directing musicals, especially when in some instances these were through the major subsidised companies such as the RSC and the Royal National Theatre (as with, for example, *Oklahoma!* and *Guys and Dolls*). While opinions have perhaps softened in recent years, partly due to the interventions of such figures and more serious discussion of the form in the academy (usually in music departments), it should be borne in mind that such negative preconceptions are still quite common. (Both the present researchers admit to sharing some of these; while we have enjoyed the occasional musical, we are not regular attenders.)

Whatever the views on the form’s dominance within the professional theatre industry, it cannot be denied that the huge popularity of the professional musical is matched by similar levels of popularity within the amateur sector, as is illustrated in some of the data which follow. Attempting to gauge the level of activity in Scotland, we have made use of a survey by NODA of rehearsal and venue hire charges paid by clubs in the 1997/98 period, information in the NODA newsletter for February 2000, and information from 14 club secretaries whom we interviewed. Clubs surveyed included the Pantheon Club and Orpheus Club, Glasgow; Anstruther Operatic Society; Kirkcaldy Amateur Operatic Society; Paisley Musical and Operatic Society; Inverness OS; Lothian Youth Arts; Polkemmet Musical and Drama Group; Thomson-Leng OS in Dundee; Callander AOS; Newton Stewart AOS; Hawick AOS; Elgin OS; Innerleithen AOS. This was felt to offer a representative spread geographically from Elgin and Inverness in the north to Hawick and Newton-Stewart in the south, with a couple of larger city societies, a couple of societies in urban areas, a few smaller societies in rural towns, and a youth group. The following table gives some broad statistics, which are explored and justified in the ensuing narrative sections.
i) Membership and participation
Given the size of casts involved in musicals and light opera, it is not surprising to discover that the average number of members in musical clubs is higher than that of primarily dramatic clubs. The 14 clubs surveyed have a total membership of 908, with two clubs also reporting the presence of a further 90 non-performing associate members. Average membership is thus 65. The smallest (Newton-Stewart) has 35 members, the largest (Inverness) has 110. The proportion of women and men is very similar to that for amateur dramatic clubs: 65% and 35% (this ratio also existed across most of the clubs individually). If the average figure were to be replicated amongst other clubs, the membership nationally is likely to be 13,000. Such a figure would of course underestimate the number of people who are involved in some way or other with productions. Beyond the further presence of formal associate members in some clubs, several club secretaries spoke of the many friends and relatives who help out as the production week itself approaches, working on set and costumes, advertising, front of house etc; while this is usually the case with other amateur work, the scale of musical productions and the size of audiences demands even more volunteer (or volunteered) hands on deck during production periods. As with large-scale community plays, in some towns a sizeable proportion of the local community is often involved in some fashion.

All the clubs take active steps to encourage new members to come along, with the exception of one club which has more members than it can use effectively – and even it does take on new members, often from people arriving in the area and seeking a way of becoming involved in the local community. Seventy five percent of the groups surveyed advertise for new members in the local press, a few advertise in local shop windows, all gain new members through word-of-mouth, and several hold open auditions. Only a quarter have active members with a physical disability; it is disappointing that the case of one club which has a performer who has not walked since birth is an exception to what
seemed to be a fairly general assumption that the all-singing, all-dancing nature of musicals made them not very suitable for people with disabilities. Discounting Lothian Youth Arts which is specifically for a membership of under 25-year-olds, proportions of members in various age groups are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 25</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26-40</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 14: Ages of members of musical groups

As with the dramatic groups, there is a good degree of inter-generational activity represented, although fewer people over 60 are actively involved as performing members: two secretaries referred to them becoming associates as they move away from performing and maintain involvement through helping in other ways. It should also be noted that two of the clubs run youth sections – figures for which are not included in the above statistics. According to two secretaries, it is not unusual to find members of three generations of a family active in one way or another.

ii) Activities

As might be expected, most clubs focus on rehearsal and production. Most tend to rehearse once a week for several months and then at least twice a week for the last three months: demands on members’ time is, therefore, considerable. Several of the clubs surveyed occasionally have some form of workshop activity – and there was strong support for more activity of this sort if it were able to be resourced and made available in nearby regional centres. (A few attend the NODA summer school and others attend the SCDA summer school in Aberdeen which is less expensive, but still demands a considerable outlay in time and money.) Beyond these activities, some of the clubs also mount concerts, hold play-readings, or even create touring concert parties – some of these activities form part of fundraising events, others are occasionally in aid of local charities.

Coming to productions themselves, the repertoire is fairly traditional: as well as Gilbert and Sullivan operettas, popular titles include *The Boy Friend; Oliver; My Fair Lady; Fiddler on the Roof; Oklahoma!; Crazy for You; Hello Dolly; 42nd Street; Anything Goes*;
Me and My Girl. Few more contemporary musicals are staged. In some instances amateur rights are not available while they are still playing in the West End, but it is also the case that well known musicals are more reliable in box-office terms, an issue which is examined below. In a couple of instances clubs reported suffering a drop-off in attendance when they attempt less familiar titles.

iii) Audience
In the past year the 14 clubs presented 93 performances of 18 productions to an approximate audience of 43,200 (average, 3,085 per company). Venues varied from a couple of school halls seating 250-300 people to the Kings’ Theatre in Glasgow (seating around 1,500). If similar levels of activity and attendance were achieved by other groups the annual attendance nationally at musicals and light opera might be estimated as 617,000.

This estimate may be tested against other sources. For the period February to June 2000, 65 musical or light opera productions by NODA member clubs were listed in the NODA newsletter, with a total of 344 performances. Seat capacities of venues for 39 of these productions were identified; for these the total potential audience was 128,620. In the same newsletter there are brief reviews of 67 productions between September and December 1999, playing a similar number of performances. Although all the venues were not noted, the general pattern was similar to the ensuing spring season. A conservative estimate of the potential audience capacity for these 132 productions would be in the order of 400,000. A further conservative estimate of 70% attendance would suggest they attracted 280,000 spectators (averaging 2,120 per production). (This is conservative, because generally audience figures at musicals are higher than for ‘straight’ theatre: nine of the clubs we surveyed reported attendances between 70% and 92% of capacity, while one reported a figure of 60%, which was ‘low’ for them.) Given that these 132 productions were mounted by only 95 of the member clubs, the picture painted is still incomplete. Not all clubs inform the newsletter of upcoming productions, and not all performances are reviewed. If the pattern of activity by these 95 clubs was replicated by others of the 200 clubs producing musicals, the total estimated annual audience would be
589,473. Taken with the figure of 617,000 above extrapolated from our sample, it would seem reasonably safe to assert that the annual audience is in the order of 550,000 to 600,000. Such a figure does not wildly exceed what we might expect from the estimate in Hutchison and Feist: that in 1990 around 4.7 million people attended amateur performances of musicals and light opera in Great Britain as a whole (1991: 136).

iv) **Some financial figures**

According to the NODA survey, 60 societies paid a total of £38,892 in rehearsal hire alone during 1998 (average £648); 18 of them had faced increases in rehearsal hire charges of more than 10% over the preceding two year period, with some facing increases as high as 247%, 80%, 75%, 64% and 50%. Extrapolation of rehearsal hire figures for 200 clubs suggests that the annual rehearsal hire costs would be in the order of £129,640. Most of the clubs were using local authority halls or theatres. Charges for rehearsal hire varied from as high as £120 a night for Rothes Hall and £55 for Carnoustie High School, to as low as £7 or £8 in a number of town halls. As with the amateur dramatic movement, there seems to be little real national pattern in terms of what local authorities are prepared to charge for use of their halls.

Added to these costs are the theatre and other venue hire charges for performances: theatre rental for 52 groups in the NODA survey came in at £122,000, with 28 companies paying less than £1,000 per week, and the others paying between £1,015 and £15,862. The average was £2,346. This produces an overall average figure of rehearsal and performance hire of £2,994. Again, comparison with the sample clubs suggests such a figure does not overstate the situation: eleven clubs gave estimates of their annual venue hire costs, with the total being £44,000. That is, on average, they pay around £4,000 per year in hire charges.

Thirteen of the 14 surveyed groups gave an indication of their annual budgets: these varied from £5,000 to £70,000 (with a median of £19,000) and totalled £334,000. The average budget is, therefore, £25,692. Extrapolation of this figure across the sector would yield an overall annual budget of £5,138,000. Given the extent of the correlation between
the audiences and budgets of the sample group and the figures revealed by the NODA survey, we are confident that this is a reasonably accurate estimate overall. It is worth making several observations about these figures:

- The clubs depend almost totally on earned income – either through box-office, annual memberships or fundraising events. The survey revealed that, as with the dramatic societies, there is very little public subsidy for this sort of activity: one group received £610, another £100, and another a ‘small grant’ from the Local Enterprise Company.

- Beyond approximately £600,000 paid to theatres and local halls for hires, considerable sums are spent on equipment and costume hire; royalties; professional fees for orchestras, directors and musical directors; programme printing; catering and such like. While a third of the clubs own some lighting and sound equipment and elements of set, and a half have some costume store, 13 of the 14 surveyed depend primarily on hire for all of these. Ten of the 14 hire in professionals for certain aspects of their productions; in particular, the sector clearly generates a certain amount of employment for musicians, either as Musical Directors or playing in orchestras.

- As well as the considerable economic activity directly generated by this sector, there is significant indirect activity generated: one of the clubs spoke of up to 40 bus parties coming from the surrounding area; another spoke of the hotels in their small town doing roaring trade during the week of the run, as 600 people a night attended.

- Many of the societies, especially the larger ones, demand a considerable degree of ‘professionalism’ from their volunteer committees to ensure that they make ends meet financially. Several spoke of the fact that they generally just about break even. This leaves little room to build up reserves against the risk of a production failing: some do have reserves, but several secretaries acknowledged that they have to play safe with production policies, so as not to put the club in jeopardy.

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Cf. Pick & Anderton, 1996: 43, ‘At this end of the amateur spectrum, the risk now taken by amateur administrations is formidable, and what may at one time have been a pleasant local hobby is now drawn inevitably into the realms of commercial administration.’
Despite the robust level of activity indicated above, several club secretaries spoke of the difficulties sometimes faced in trying to sustain what they see, especially in smaller localities, as an important element of local entertainment provision and a focus for community activity. The financial pressure associated with rising costs, competing demands on members’ time, the difficulties in getting more young men involved and the fact that promising younger members often end up going away to college, the decline in music provision in schools in some areas, were all cited more than once as factors influencing the viability of this work. There was a general sense that the value of the work, in both entertainment and community involvement terms, is underestimated by local authorities and SAC.

With regard to SAC, it should be noted that only one of the 14 clubs surveyed had been successful in applying for National Lottery funds. Seven others had applied unsuccessfully, and several others had considered it but felt that they would not fit the criteria. The applications were in general for small sums to help towards equipment purchase or costume storage facilities; in one instance they were knocked back because, although they operated by the NODA constitution, they were told they would have to have one of their own; in another so many further demands were made regarding the facility they were attempting to convert into a costume store that they were unable to pursue the application further – in fact they ended up getting some support from the Local Enterprise Company and completed a modified version with volunteer labour. A couple had looked into the possibility of making an application to develop facilities but did not think they would be able to raise the required level of partnership funding and a couple thought they would be ineligible because their annual budgets were over £15,000. There was also evidence of some confusion over how the 25% partnership funding required by National Lottery regulations might be constituted. Whether justified or not, there was a general air of cynicism about the prospects of applications to SAC or the National Lottery. There was a feeling that there was very little sympathy for the nature of their work and that applications involved the sort of demands which took no account of the voluntary status of those involved.
C Summary of key findings of the survey of amateur societies

• Whichever way it is measured, the amateur dramatic movement in Scotland is a sector of considerable size and significance for the many thousands who come into contact with it. Including over 500 dramatic and musical societies, it annually involves over 26,000 participants performing to a total audience of approximately one million.

• The amateur societies mount approximately 1,300 productions a year, playing 4,740 performances.

• The annual turnover of amateur societies is approximately £6.8 million; almost all of this money is raised through box-office, membership fees and fundraising activities. They receive a negligible amount of financial support from local authorities and SAC.

• Fees paid for hire of venues for rehearsal and performance make up a significant proportion of this turnover – over £800,000, most of which is paid to local authority venues. Hire of lighting and sound equipment, sets and costumes, and the hiring of professional assistance in the case of many musical societies, make a further considerable contribution to the arts economy.

• In many rural or non-metropolitan areas amateur societies play an important role in providing entertainment for communities which are rarely visited by professional companies and which are distant from professional venues. They are also perceived in such areas as playing a significant role in providing people with an opportunity to participate in arts activities. In some areas the local amateurs also act as promoters for incoming professional work. In Dumfries and Galloway, for example, they operate in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, and undertake management and promotion of visiting productions.

• Given the participation of people of all ages in most of the societies, they are also valued as a site of inter-generational activity. While amongst their numbers they have a proportion of people over 60 which is comparable to their place in the national
population, many groups are also making concerted efforts to involve younger people as participants.

- The participants themselves devote considerable time to their activity; they are primarily motivated by social and recreational reasons, but a considerable number recognise it as contributing to their general well-being and that of their communities.
- Participants are at present generally drawn largely from social classes B and C1 and generally have higher educational qualifications than the population at large; this does, however, vary considerably from club to club.
- While the musical societies still present a relatively conservative repertoire for the most part, there are signs that many of the dramatic societies are being more adventurous in what they prepared to attempt. There is a strong desire amongst participants to develop both their skills and their awareness of different approaches to theatre-making, so that they can tackle more challenging material. The desire to do so is to some extent hampered by financial constraints: both in relation to the costs of mounting workshops and the financial risks involved if they move too quickly ahead of their audiences.

**Summary statistics for amateur dramatic and musical groups**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-act Plays</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>240 Performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Plays (62 Groups)</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>642 Performances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Turnover (43 Dramatic Groups)</td>
<td>£218,520</td>
<td>Average: £5,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Musical Groups</td>
<td>£334,000</td>
<td>Annual Turnover (13 Musical Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of Dramatic Groups</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2,416</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COMMUNITY THEATRE

As suggested in Chapter One, there are many different approaches to and understandings of community theatre. A number of recognisable models have emerged over the years, but the very nature of the work demands that these be strongly adapted to the context in which the work occurs. What follows is not a comprehensive picture of community theatre activity in Scotland; it is more a sampling of some of the projects around, which illustrates something of the diversity of work going on, identifies some interesting practice, and indicates certain issues which have arisen in discussion with people involved.

A. Activities developed through theatre companies

Reflecting the increasing professionalisation of work discussed in Chapter One, a considerable amount of work done in this field is carried out through various outreach or community programmes operated by established professional theatre companies. As the following sample illustrates, the extent to which such activity is integrated with mainstream work of any individual company varies; furthermore, while it may be supported to some extent by the mainstream funding received by the companies, such work is usually dependent on companies accessing other funding streams. There is, therefore, considerable variety in the types of approach adopted.

i) Dundee Repertory Theatre

Dundee Rep has a long history of outreach and community theatre work, going back to the 1970s when it housed a TIE team and the 1980s when it undertook pioneering work in community dance. Its Community Department was re-organised in 1992 under the direction of Michael Duke, whose departure in 1998 was followed by the appointment of Steve Stenning. During this period the Department has managed to grow and diversify, often against the odds. Its agility in managing to put together funding packages from an ever-changing range of sources has enabled it to develop a wide variety of services for different groups in Dundee. When this research commenced the Department consisted of
ten workers, a few of whom were on part-time contracts, and employed a changing number of sessional workers for specific projects or activities. As well as running a variety of groups in the theatre itself and throughout Dundee, it also includes the only theatre-based drama therapy service in Britain, and has regularly mounted large-scale community plays.

The situation was in flux, however, as the Arts Advocacy Project (which was funded by the Lottery Charities Board for three years to facilitate the advocacy of people who are or had been mental health service users) was about to come to an end. Also, the Rep’s Outreach Project funded by the Lottery’s New Directions Programme, which has been developing a network of city-wide community drama projects, is due to end in July, 2001. Under this scheme, ten part-time trainees, with varying backgrounds in after-school clubs, social work and other occupations, have taken part in a carefully structured and monitored programme of training and placement work, aimed at enlarging the pool of trained community theatre workers available to projects in Dundee. The scheme has also enabled the Community Team to service and initiate more activities in the city through using the trainees to lead workshops.

The team strikes a balance between developing or initiating certain core activities, such as the youth and adult groups based in the theatre, and the community plays, and responding to requests from community-based groups. Sometimes this may involve initiating and running a group, at other times it may be providing a drama worker for a specified period of work. Its growing profile in the community and the presence of a Community Forum, which brings together people from many groups around the Dundee area, means that there is usually no shortage of requests to initiate or support projects. As well as having links with Dundee Council’s Arts and Heritage Department, it also works in conjunction with the Neighbourhood Resources Department, and much of its workshop activity takes place in areas identified as experiencing a high degree of social deprivation. Recent examples of work include: children’s and youth workshops in Ardler, youth groups in Ormiston, Fintry and in the Highwayman Youth Centre and the Corner Centre (whose last project, *Baby Love*, was described in the team’s Newsletter as ‘a
devised piece reflecting the range of young people’s views and experiences of sexual health, relationships and pregnancy’); a gay youth group; work with a group of Bengali girls and an Asian women’s group in Hilltown; support for Sister Act Women’s Theatre Group and the International Women’s Centre Drama Group, which ‘seeks to bring women from different cultures and backgrounds together to share ideas and common issues’); multi-arts work for the Craigmill Skills Centre at Strathmartine Hospital; and work with the Open Door Drama Group, which Steve Stenning discusses:

It was an amateur drama group, which asked us in. We introduced them to a new way of working, we put a drama worker in and they devised a piece, which was very different from anything else they’ve done... There are some great old troupers who have done lots of shows and they found it a bit difficult at first, not to be doing a script and things, but they did it tremendously well, they seemed to get a lot out of the reaction they got from doing it.

The reaction in question was at one of the team’s Mainstage events, when the disparate groups come together in the Rep itself to share work with each other and an invited audience. At other times groups often perform in local community centres, which effectively provide a network for performances to play across different communities in Dundee. The other main commitment of the Community Drama team is to the community play.

Community theatre is a living piece of our culture and we can do things that professional theatre couldn’t afford. We had a show in Dundee where the audiences were taken round in 12 double-decker buses and we had six sites around the city, we had boats on the river, we had scenes in graveyards, we had a purpose-built arena in the middle of town, in front of the castle, we had a cast of 500 people, we had the police, the fire service – I mean, you’re talking movies. It happened in 1987 and there are people who were in that show, who came out of the street, who went on to drama college, professional actors who spent a year-and-a-half at the RSC, there’s a whole drama department at the College of Further Education which opened on the strength of it, there must be four or five different community drama groups.


After the success in 1987 of Alan Lyddiard and John Harvey’s collaboration on *Witch’s Blood*, which was not actually a Dundee Rep project as such, although Lyddiard and Harvey worked there, the community team subsequently established a tradition of doing large, imaginative productions which reflected on the past history and current circumstances of Dundonians. Productions have dealt with the jute industry in Dundee, the Timex factory, and, in 1997, *The Time of Our Lives*, a history trilogy, involved 180 performers, 80 of them from Dundee’s ethnic minority communities, dealing with aspects
of youth culture, women and work, and immigration into Dundee. In 1999 this tradition of work continued with *Twa Plehn Bridies*, in which 80 performers presented a comic ‘unofficial unauthorised history of Dundee’, written by three local writers. As has usually been the case in recent years, it played on the main stage, and was seen by 2,500 people. The Dundee community plays have generally have taken a strong ‘people’s history’ slant, of a type commonly found in large-scale community plays, which tend to celebrate local identity and past struggles, showing ordinary people in contest with the outside world or the people who have wielded power in the city.

My Favourite Schemes – from *Twa Plehn Bridies*

Mill o Mains closies thit look like a midden,
Curtains in Whitfield is usually widden,
Mid-Craigie, Linlathen yi ken beh the screams,
These are a few oh oor favourite schemes.

When the doag muck
Seems ti git stuck
Makes it hard ti miss,
When yi canna go a minute without standin in it,
Then yi ken thit yir in Douglas

Beechwood’s aye cheenged though they’ve kept the same lingo,
Charleston’s aye empty, thir ah it the bingo.
Downsfield’ that full thit it’s burst it the seams,
These are a few oh oor favourite schemes.

When the fowk fight,
In the moonlight,
Ootside a hostelry,
If yi kin hear the haids crackin fae the glens ti the brackens,
Then yi ken thit yir in Lochee…__

The amount of activity going on through the Rep has in part been influenced by the City Council’s decision a few years ago effectively to withdraw from direct service provision in community and amateur arts activity, as explained by Norrie Colston, Arts and Heritage Manager, Dundee City Council:

Because we had a funding relationship with the Rep there was the community theatre facility there, and what came out of the meeting was that we would set up a working group which involved some of the participants, including writers’ groups and what else from the Dudhope, and we’d work together with the Rep, to see if we could find a way of continuing to develop Community Theatre in the city, but on a totally different footing. So after many anguishing months, meeting at least once a month, and whatever else, we came to a situation whereby Michael Duke at the Rep put together a proposal which would expand on the Community
Drama at the Rep, and would bring in a training initiative, new funding and whatever else. And the idea was that they could assist in a more practical way amateur groups within the city, to help them develop that... As a Council, it was also our intention not to be direct providers of services and as far as drama went, that would be left to professional organisations. Organisations such as the Rep, are better suited to doing that.

The context for this was local authority reorganisation and the development of the new Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA). Although the Rep has managed to undertake very diverse provision, the decision was not without controversy, as groups which had previously worked in the Dundee Arts Centre felt they were effectively being deprived of support they had previously received, in order to fund the new DCA and the Rep’s work.

In different ways the sort of issues raised in this instance have resurfaced elsewhere while researching the report. If a council does not have the infrastructure to fully support a range of activities directly, there are attractions in making provision, in a sort of arm’s length fashion, through one independent organisation, which effectively ends up running an unofficial franchise. While in the cases of Shetland Arts Trust and Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, this has been formally acknowledged, there is an extent to which places such as Dundee Rep and Eden Court Theatre in Inverness are fulfilling such roles. The danger is that projects or demand which arise out with their orbit become marginalised and have few avenues through which to seek support.

I think the arts bodies need to fund local development in communities, Dundee Rep is good at that. They did a very good series of workshops, we learnt a lot from that. But Dundee Council is becoming very proud of its centre of excellence thing which is good, but it's only good if work’s done as well in the sticks and communities of Dundee. There's too much investment in the centre of Dundee, at the cost of outreach development in the communities of Dundee so that groups can get involved with this kind of thing. We need both, not one at the expense of the other. It's a big contradiction.

An example of that is I was in a photography group and we thought we were going to get the new Arts Centre but it costs too much. But we pay taxes as well. Groups are going down for the sake of a couple of hundred pounds, whilst Dundee is spending hundreds of thousands of pounds on ‘centre of excellence’ arts development. It's tunnel vision again, there's something wrong there. The Arts Centre isn't for ordinary people. (Assent from others for this.)

It's wonderful, beautiful architecture but alongside there has to be arts development. It's intimidating, you can't afford a cup of coffee there. I don't have the right clothes to wear there.

A member of Open Door Theatre, Dundee

ii) Cumbernauld Theatre
Cumbernauld Theatre, funded by SAC’s Combined Arts Department and North Lanarkshire Council as a mixed-programme arts centre, primarily provides a venue for visiting productions and local amateur and community productions, as well as mounting its own pantomime and one or two productions a year. Its theatre work is complemented by film showings and music events. Having started as an initiative of local residents in the 1970s, it has always had strong roots in its local community, and there are still some of the original Cottage Theatre founders involved in activities. Much of the pattern of community provision which operates today began in the early 1980s; despite the history of success in carrying out such work, however, funding standstills and cuts over the years have meant that it has not been able to expand in ways which theatre staff would like.

Its small staff, led by the Director, Simon Sharkey, is fully stretched to provide a wide range of services. Through its Outreach team it mounts two TIE projects a year in local schools, runs an adult drama group, six children’s and youth theatre groups, a group for adults with learning difficulties, and vacation workshops. It also provides support for a number of local amateur and semi-professional groups which make use of the theatre, such as Apex Players, Phoenix Productions and Kilsyth Operatic Society. The theatre’s own groups are open access, but participants are charged a small fee per term. The theatre also mounts a large-scale community play every two years. Although the adult companies tend to operate in different ways and attract their own audiences, there is some crossover in participation between members of the theatre’s own groups and the amateur groups, and the community play brings together people from many of the groups as well as people who just join for the project. The mixed nature of the overall programme at the theatre means that a large number of people in the local community make use of it. The workshops and performances by the various groups are seen as integrated into the building’s overall running in a way that is rare in other professional theatres. The Director’s own active involvement in the community projects is also indicative of this integrated approach. A concrete manifestation of the way it is valued by the local community was provided when, a few years ago, funding cutbacks looked likely to close the building: within three days 12,000 local people had signed a petition demanding the continuation of the theatre.
Simon Sharkey would like to see the outreach work developing further – there is plenty of unmet demand within North Lanarkshire, but he would also like to see the company’s professional production work expanded. He sees the community work being strengthened by the presence of good professional work emanating from the theatre. But, in common with some other interviewees involved in both professional production and community theatre work, who have noted an under-valuation of community work can then work against a person’s professional credibility, he senses that Cumbernauld’s identification with community-based activity has counted against it in attempts to gain more funding for professional production. He sees some hope for future developments in a recently-established consortium of smaller theatres around Scotland, including the Brunton Theatre, Paisley Arts Centre, the Byre and others, which is creating opportunities for small-scale tours to be mounted between them. Cumbernauld’s production of *Bold Girls* in 1999 and its forthcoming tour of *Like a Virgin* have been made possible by the existence of this informal consortium, and it has played host to productions from other members of the consortium.

iii) **Eden Court Theatre, Inverness**

Eden Court, like Cumbernauld, receives funding from SAC’s Combined Arts Department to deliver a mixed programme, although it aims to serve a much wider geographic area in the Highlands. Like Dundee, the local council has to some extent withdrawn from direct provision for theatrical activity in local communities and expects Eden Court to develop that, which does bring its own difficulties, as John Batty suggests:

> It’s probably an easier decision to put anything pan-Highland into the hands of a place that would seem to have all the back-up. So if you’re faced with a decision to either employ or house back-up for a number of artists-in-residence, as opposed to, say going to Eden Court where they already have administration, marketing, address lists, etc, then it’s easier to sub-contract. The difficulty is that while we deliver what we promise, it’s much more difficult to do that pan-Highland and on a community basis.

Eden Court’s outreach activities across various artforms are undertaken by a team of workers co-ordinated by Sonia Rose, the theatre’s Education Officer. For theatre, work in
recent years has been primarily through John Batty or the Starfèis project, which is discussed in the next chapter on youth theatre. Over the past 18 months this has been supplemented by the work of the Pan Highland 2000 (PH2000) project. The post of Drama Artist in Residence, which John Batty holds, was originally a full-time post half-funded by SAC; it is now funded entirely by Eden Court but only operates for nine months of the year. He describes his post:

The remit is to involve people as participants in all sorts of ways. About 60% of my work is in-house. I see it as concentric circles: the centre is the theatre, getting people to have a relationship with it and we visit them; then there’s a circle of around 20-30 miles where people can travel in and out easily. I’ll maybe do a project regularly with them over ten weeks – say, I might visit Golspie to do a project with local teenagers. Outwith that distance it’s more problematic – I might visit a project as an adviser, do a weekend workshop; there’s a negotiated input, because it’s impractical for me to go and direct a project on Skye, for example – unless there’s some partnership funding.

The core work is done through children’s, youth and adult groups which meet for regular workshops in the theatre. In addition to occasional work in areas beyond Inverness referred to above, Batty runs weekly classes for the Downs Syndrome Association of the Highlands, makes seasonal visits to resource centres for adults with special needs, and does occasional workshops with groups like the Highland Society of the Blind and in special schools. He also does special needs training for teachers. The regular groups are open to all comers, but are notable for the way they have developed into integrated groups involving a number of participants with special needs:

The main aspect is the policy of all classes being open to everybody – without making a big deal of it. There are wheelchair users in my secondary group, and children with special behavioural difficulties in the primary groups. It’s spreading a gospel of inclusion... The (adult) group serves as many purposes as there are members. Some people came to learn about devising ensemble drama in order to go back to their schools (there’s been four or five teachers); they’re coming to get that experience, and sometimes they say they’ve tried out something we’ve done in their classes. Others are there because they want to act – eg students from the college who want to get further experience; or there are others who have phoned and said their kids have left for college and they want to take up a hobby for winter nights. Then there’s a few who see it as an alternative to local amateurs – which it’s meant to be, or some even who go to both, looking for something a bit different here... I had a couple of approaches from people caring for autistic people in that first year, and then inclusivity spread. So next year, out of 15
people, there were four who one might classify as having special needs – if you wanted to so categorise. This in turn attracted some people who were interested in working with special needs – who wanted to act, not just observe, but also were working in special schools or training centres. So the complexion of the group changed within a year from a majority of ‘thesps’ to people who were open to working with whatever complexion the group was and in finding how to work with each other. We’ve tackled a mix of things. As well as using a script as a basis, we’ve developed shows from improvisation – like a piece we developed through improvisation from three Chaucer tales... We’ve also done purely a script – Strindberg’s Dream Play. There was a lot of adaptation to the group, but no building it up from improvisation.

As indicated in Chapter One, each year’s work is centred initially on exploration of theatrical approaches and skills, which subsequently leads to some form of theatrical production, the nature of which is based on interests which have emerged in the earlier work. Batty sees the focus of the work based in the theatre as being on developing people’s creativity and the community that is formed amongst them, rather than the sort of issue-based community theatre which he was more involved in in earlier years and in an urban context:

It’s partly to do with the rural situation. You’re looking at very diverse bunch of people: it’s not like in a city where you can go for a very particular type of work and be sure of getting a lot of people turning up. Here you have to approach people gradually to get them involved.

The demarcation between amateur and what I’m doing is to do with the openness and variety of methods. People can and do cross over. I’ve got kids who are doing quite ‘avant-garde’ stuff (for them) one night, and the next they’re rehearsing Grease at school. They’re not concerned with the difference – they mostly see it as just another production.

My job is by hook or by crook, sometimes by stealth, sometimes by being up front, to develop creativity in people. Generally (not always) dramatic societies are about putting on a play under the directorship of a producer, mirroring a type of theatre which is slow to catch up with what I call creative theatre. The repertoire is maybe from the 50s or 60s, sometimes the early 70s, but it’s not looking beyond traditional ways of representing life – with full costume up on a proscenium arch stage, drawing people in, taking them through a gamut of emotions leading to catharsis, whether tragic or comic. My ambitions are to look at the abilities of my groups and tackle something in a way appropriate to them... Each of these people is capable of moving an audience in their own way. What methods, devices, structure will release their creativity and enable them to be truly effective? So when people see them they won’t have to make allowances. We’re not going to have a stab at A Doll’s House, but we can do A Dream Play in a way that we can do it and an audience has a good experience of it. They’re not
sitting thinking, ‘that’s a good play, I wish I could see it at the Lyceum.’ It’s having a belief in people’s creativity.

Pan Highland 2000 was a project funded by the Millennium Arts Fund, Highlands Council, HI Arts and business and other sponsors. Although originally intended to be a three-year project leading into the Millennium, delays in putting the funding into place meant that work did not commence until January 1999, led by Martin Danziger and Pip Hills, who had both previously worked on large-scale community plays in Thurso and Wick. The aim was to contribute to the development of on-going arts activities throughout the Highlands, as well as supporting the development of new work where demand arose, and to bring groups together from all over the area for a day of celebration in June 2000. After advertising the project in local media, about 40 groups decided to take part, many of them youth groups, some of which were linked to the Starfèis project. The project’s broad remit ended up embracing a wide variety of activities: sending workshop leaders to groups throughout the area, giving very concrete advice to groups about where to obtain materials or how to raise sponsorship for their activities, organising a parade through Inverness on June 24th, which was followed by groups presenting examples of their work in three marquees and around the grounds behind Eden Court Theatre, and devising a spectacular final performance involving a few hundred participants from all over the region. As well as the development work done with local groups, the project also developed training for a large group of volunteers who became involved in all aspects of its operation, from administration and marketing through to scenic design and website creation.

One of the achievements of the PH2000 project was to celebrate the diversity of theatrical activity going on throughout the scattered communities of the Highlands and Islands and bring together people who are active in amateur and community theatre, as well as local artists, musicians and dance groups. In interviews with various people involved in theatre in the region, reference was often made to the isolation which many groups feel and to the scarcity of professional theatre provision in the area. There are in fact a number of professional touring groups active, including Stray Theatre, Highland Theatre, Theatre Tosg, and Grey Coast Theatre. All of these have in the past done
excellent work and often have developed community projects alongside their touring work. For example, Muriel Macleod (of Highland Theatre) directed over a hundred people in an ambitious and well-received community play, *Potrona*, in Stornoway in 1998 and has run various workshops activities in Inverness and elsewhere. Despite the success of such activities (and of their professional tours), and despite the commitment of such figures to combining both professional touring with community projects, there have been major problems in sustaining continuity of work, due to lack of funding. Both Robert Livingstone of HI Arts and John Batty argued for the need for more support for such professional work, pointing out that, while the Highland Producers’ Fund and Highland Touring Fund have been important, if limited, sources of support for individual touring productions, the lack of revenue funding for such companies (apart from some limited funding of Theatre Tosg) means that the directors are continually having to spend half their time on fundraising and administration, thus limiting the time and energy which can be devoted to community projects.

If SAC could support the professional network across the Highlands then it would improve the ability of them to feed into community work as well... In the short term we need to build greater stability. SAC could help by evolving a scheme that built on the Producers’ Fund and would provide a guaranteed level of funding for, say, a period of 3 years, so that individual companies or consortia could have access to some core support over and above projects, which would enable them to keep people in place. Tosg has been able to achieve so much more because they have an AD and Administrator (funded by HI Network and SAC). Putting that kind of resource in place for a few of the touring companies would make a real difference and would feed into the community sector as well... You would begin to see the theatre community as a whole developing: from kids in school to teenagers considering theatre as a viable career and going off to train and coming back here to work – not losing them from the Highlands because they stay in Glasgow, Edinburgh or London, because there’s not enough work here. At the moment companies scrabble round for good actors because they stay away. The contrast is with the fèisean movement – where lots of musicians can make a living because the fèisean gives them tutoring work – not just in the main fèis in the school holidays, but weekly/fortnightly through the year.

Q: Talking to three young people yesterday, they were all very busy in activities around the place and they all want to go on and train. But one wondered if there would be much work back here.

We’ve got Grey Coast, Theatre Highland, and Stray only because their leading forces came back, wanting to live and work here – all earning a lot less than they could elsewhere. But so many others stay away because they can’t find a regular living.

Robert Livingstone, HI Arts

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iv) Other theatre-based work

The above, of course, does not exhaust the range of activities which are being undertaken by professional companies around the country. Theatre Workshop’s approach to
community plays is discussed below and some of the youth activities there and at Eden Court and Perth Theatre will be discussed in the next chapter. Glasgow Citizens Theatre has more recently been developing community projects: in 1999 and 2000 Guy Hollands, a professional director who has, however, worked with a lot of community-based groups such as Lone Rangers and former mental health clients in Alloa, has been employed to direct two productions in the theatre’s Studio with young people from the Gorbals. There is also the work of Fablevision, which has for many years been mounting large-scale multi-arts projects with community groups and has done a lot in the field of disability arts. Companies such as Borderline, TAG and 7:84 also all have a variety of workshop activities which complement their touring production work; indeed, Borderline recently received a £200,000 National Lottery award to develop youth theatre projects, while TAG’s programme of work which culminated earlier this year in young people debating issues in the Scottish Parliament for a day justifiably gained a lot of media attention.

After its appointment of an outreach worker in 1992, 7:84 developed an increasing interest in longer-term work with various community groups – beyond simply accompanying touring productions with workshops. Its writing workshops have provided opportunities for untried writers to develop, it has worked with disabled groups, the Lone Rangers single parents’ group, and more recently the outreach officer, Lorenzo Mele, and the company’s design and production team were responsible for mounting WHALE’s Christmas production (see below). In autumn 2000 it is commencing a project on identity with second and third generation members of various ethnic communities in Glasgow, and plans are being developed for a project on the nature of belonging which will lead to a collaboration between communities in Glasgow, Aberdeenshire, and Benbecula. Mele, along with some others interviewed for this report, recognises that there is a danger of some companies perhaps using outreach work as part of their marketing and audience.

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It might be noted here, how the concepts for these projects emerge from within the company, which seeks out communities with which to implement them. Lorenzo Mele sees the company as, ‘identifying gaps in what is being said politically and asking communities what they would like to say about such issues.’ This is part of a deliberate move towards a proactive policy, where in the past the company has perhaps more often responded to requests to develop work in specific communities (as in its work in developing a community play for Paisley’s 600th anniversary, Whispers of Water and Yarn, commissioned by Renfrew Council).
development strategy, but he argues that 7:84 sees its community-based work as an integral part of its overall ethos as a company.

A. Community plays

I think it is the place to explore identity. Part of David’s Gift is what does identity formulate around? Belief systems? Even Stockaree was an exploration of how it was easier in the industrial revolution when there were built communities around crafts or work or immigration. I found when I worked in places like Southall, the most unlikely people are thrown together through their experiences of emigration, who back in their own country wouldn’t pass the time of day with each other. Humanity needs collective experiences, because it plays to the strength inside us all, but how do you create that? Well in a peculiar kind if way, community plays almost look to create community and celebrate community. Is that the job of the community play maker in the post-modern?… The skill of the writer is to find the core values that people can then coalesce around – what is naturally going to be a diverse bunch of people. With increasingly diverse cities, different classes rubbing shoulders together, how do you create community in this context? It’s hard.

Robert Rae, Theatre Workshop

Although the mounting of large-scale community plays, usually with the assistance of professionals in aspects such as direction, writing and design, is a model of activity which has come to be associated with Ann Jellicoe, who seemed to claim it as her own invention in her book, Community Plays : How to put them on (1987), their roots of course lie far back in all sorts of guild plays, village pageants and festivals, and in some of the activities of the amateur movement. Their more specific use in a community development context in Scotland dates back to the work of Helen Crummy at Craigmillar Festival Society (CFS), beginning in 1964. The CFS established a practice of employing a professional director and sometimes a few professional performers to work with large groups of local people on musicals which dealt with issues of concern in the community at the time, such as child poverty and the problems of drug abuse. Alongside the work on the annual show and the establishment of various adult and children’s drama workshops, CFS became involved in diverse community development activities, including its pioneering work on the ‘communiversity’. Unfortunately, recent cutbacks in the funding of CFS have led to a scaling down of theatre activity. Although Handrolled Productions operates under its aegis, the community musical is no longer on the scale of previous years: in 2000 it was more just a children’s project, involving ten children working with the Incohorts team. As we have seen above, however, large-scale community plays have begun to appear elsewhere.
i) **Theatre Workshop**

Another building-based organisation which has regularly produced community plays, since the 1970s, is Edinburgh’s Theatre Workshop. Since his appointment five years ago the present Director, Robert Rae, has produced three: *Stockaree*, which explored the history of Stockbridge; *Jimmy C*, about the life of James Connolly; and *David’s Gift*, which dealt with the Holocaust. Each production had a long gestation period, usually with over a hundred participants working over a five month period. Although Rae or others have written the scripts, some participants are involved in the research leading towards them, and others are attached to the various other professional contributors to the productions, such as the designer and musical director. Considerable workshop activity feeds into the rehearsal process, as Rae describes:

> We do a lot of workshops, but if you tell people that they wouldn’t know as they came along to do the play. But in the process of the play, they will do workshops in music, dance, drama, Boal techniques, different acting techniques, they actually get through a lot and the first part of that process is workshops.

Rae, who had directed several large community plays elsewhere in Britain before coming to Theatre Workshop, sees such plays as providing an opportunity for participation in a scale of collective activity which has increasingly been lost:

> Working-class people have always felt solidarity in numbers, their collective culture... The power is in the work collectively, in the strength they had to draw from each other, and you express that on that scale. All the projects I’ve done, that’s been the centre of expression, that point of collective culture, that point where people stand together. For me, it’s people at their best, and people enjoy being part of that and being reminded of it.

With its base in Stockbridge, which has undergone a certain amount of gentrification while still having quite a lot of council housing stock, the productions attract a diverse social mix, as well as a good range of ages. As with much amateur and community theatre a lot of participants are women, particularly ‘women returners, women who have put their lives on hold while they brought up their kids and are now keen to emerge into the world – they’ve the heart and soul of every community play I’ve ever done,’ says Rae. Participants have been drawn mostly from the local community, but the success of
past productions has led to an increasing number of people from throughout Edinburgh seeking to take part, as exemplified by one woman’s experience:

I had an enormous task to get here. Finishing work, I would rush home in teatime traffic to collect my son and I would try and have something to eat, sometimes not, and back in again. I was doing 64 miles every day just to be in this play.

While this is testimony to the level of commitment such work inspires, and to the scarcity of opportunities to take part in such activity, the theatre is aware there is a danger of diluting the local community’s sense of identification with the project if it takes in too many people from across the city.

My philosophy is that community play making is a partnership between professionals and the community and while the professionals are there to facilitate the community, they are not there to patronise them… There are still some disciplines and history that’s involved with the making of theatre and I don’t like it when community plays suspend all that and pretend that you can make this happening. I tend to push the participants, not hard, but I tell them beforehand, when I go through the commitment procedure. I usually tell them its going to be worse than it usually is, if you still want to be involved fine, but that’s what you’re going to do, so we have a formal commitment procedure. And I’ve always found a sense of satisfaction they get from doing a good a piece of work as well as something that is relevant are important, because if you do a good piece of work, it stops the people at the top patronising and just saying it’s good because it’s a community play. Our ethos is, people are denied access to the arts because of their class, culture, race, gender or whatever, but one should give access, they have the same potentialities as anybody. It’s not that the middle classes have a monopoly on creativity, it’s usually because they have the financial wherewithal to get their children into drama school. Some of the young people I’ve seen in the community plays have never been near a stage.

Robert Rae, Theatre Workshop

ii) **Moon over Musselburgh**

*Moon over Musselburgh*, was the product of a collaboration between Brunton Theatre and Benchtours, a company which mixes its own professional touring theatre work with undertaking community-based projects. In recent years this has included work with disabled performers in Edinburgh, developing youth theatre in Inverclyde, residencies at Oakland Special School working with autistic children, a large community play in Greenock associated with the Tall Ships visit and, in association with Aberdeen’s Lemon Tree, a production with a group of people with learning difficulties. The Musselburgh production was a year in planning, with Clark Crystal, the Director, making early contact with community development officers in East Lothian to identify groups with which it would be good to work.
The resulting production involved participants from a mental health rehabilitation project, a club for young people with learning and physical disabilities, two resource centres for people with learning difficulties, several schools, a local amateur club, and people of all ages who just responded to advertisements and posters. The level of integration in this project was far greater than anything else we witnessed during the year and was something for which many of the participants commended the project when they were interviewed. In total, about 50 people were on stage in the final performance and about 100 more were involved in two films which were specially made for the production. A number of participants also operated in an apprentice role, assisting with the professional team in running workshops, directing, lighting, filming and so on. The script, by John Harvey, was in continual development through the rehearsal period, in response to the input and needs of the participants. The final imaginative multi-media performance, involving music, dance, song and video, was based around a plot in which a film crew planning to make a ‘post-Braveheart blockbuster’ in East Lothian encounter a community which wishes to tell its own stories rather than take part in a period drama.

Making a sensible connection between the Russian Revolution, the East Lothian fishing industry, the 4.42 to Seton Mains (change at Drem), a group of surly girls, a Grassmarket execution of 1724, an American film director and the flight of the Airship R34 to East Fortune might seem an unreasonable task for a writer.

Making a sensible connection between Star Youth Club, North Berwick; Tynebank, Haddington; Dunbar Grammar and North Berwick and District Amateur Operatic Society might seem an unreasonable task for a theatre director. It is in the nature of community theatre that such unreasonable tasks must be made reasonable, and then result in a spectacular production!

**John Harvey, in the programme for Moon over Musselburgh**

From interviews with participants and from post-production evaluations carried out by the Brunton Theatre, it is clear that the production was very successful in providing opportunities for participants from a wide area of East Lothian to come together in a creative project which enhanced their individual self-confidence and collective sense of belonging to the area. The very success of the project does, however, raise questions about the place of all such projects mounted by a visiting company hired for a one-off event. It was made possible through grants from SAC, the National Lottery, East Lothian’s Millennium Fund, the Paul Hamlyn Fund and Lloyds TSB. While all

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concerned have been very pleased with the outcome and Brunton Theatre is keen to take further the community links it has initiated, it remains to be seen whether there will be the sustained investment which would be necessary to build on the success of the project. While one-off projects can plant the seeds of future community development work, the past history of sporadic, ad hoc funding in community theatre exhibits plenty of examples of such seeds failing to germinate through lack of subsequent watering.

iii) Other community plays

Other recent examples of community plays include: *Greenvoe*, Alan Plater’s adaptation of George Mackay Brown’s novel of Orkney life, performed by over 40 Orcadians of all ages at the St Magnus Festival and subsequently at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Directed by Penny Aberdein, who works as Expressive Arts Tutor for Orkney Islands Council, it is the latest in a series of large-scale community plays staged for the St Magnus Festival and it brought together a mix of participants from amateur groups and others who had not performed before. While offering detailed cameos of life in the Orkneys, it also dealt with wider themes of the effects of globalisation on local communities.

*The Play in the Park*, East Renfrewshire’s Millennium play, performed in Rouken Glen, a sprawling epic covering the history of the area from prehistoric times until today. Funded by East Renfrewshire Council and the New Millennium Experience Company, and produced by a professional team hired for the occasion, it drew on reminiscence sessions with local people and involved participants from local writers’ groups and as well as about 80 performers, mostly schoolchildren along with members of local amateur theatres.

C Community groups and organisations

Here attention is drawn to some examples of projects or groups which have been more actively generated by communities, which may involve professional input into the work but have not in the first instance been initiated by professional companies.

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*Cf comments by John Haswell and Pete Baynes in Knight, 1999: Appendix VI,37.*
i) WHALE

Building on the basis of a long-standing history of community arts in the Wester Hailes area of Edinburgh, WHALE (formerly Wester Hailes Arts for Leisure and Education) was launched in 1992 as an arts agency committed to generating opportunities for participation in the arts in Wester Hailes. It was the product of collaboration between Lothian Regional Council’s Community Education Department and a council of local people. Its earlier history and current operations reflect many of the changes which have occurred in the community arts field in recent years, detailed discussion of which is beyond this report’s scope. Briefly put, however, there has been a shift from work based around what resident arts workers might offer, which seemed to some to evolve in a rather random fashion, to a more targeted community development approach, in which WHALE operates more strategically as a development agency which brings in arts workers for specific projects. While the artistic aims of individual projects are a significant aspect of them, they are geared now to including more measurable development objectives, especially in the area of employment creation. This has partly been due to shifts in the nature of the funding sources which have been available to WHALE and the sorts of demands which accompany them. It has also been partly in response to a sense that earlier arts work in the area, although it had been reasonably successful in attracting participation and providing occasional entertainment for the broader community, had not been able to demonstrate ‘hard’ evidence of its social impact, for example, through employment creation or improved rates of gaining employment amongst participants.

To offer a traineeship we must have a group doing art for its own sake, otherwise there is no traineeship. People do arts for fun, but with opportunities to go to a higher skill level. I don't recall a time when someone has said 'let's just do art' because there is always an agenda, whether it is to raise awareness through an issue base or people want an outlet.

We had a women's video project about abuse, people talking about their experiences with also training opportunities involved to learn new skills - I don't think that art is ever just for art's sake, there's always something else.

_Sian Fiddimore, Manager, WHALE_

With a core staff of five full-time workers and four part-time workers, WHALE receives half of its budget from Social Inclusion Partnership funds, while the rest has to be raised
by other means, such as the National Lottery, Children in Need and small grants from Edinburgh Council. It is this supplementary funding which effectively enables it to employ the couple of dozen professional arts workers who are brought in as necessary to support individual arts activities, which include theatre, visual arts, and multi-arts work. A key example of the new way of working has been the Fireworks project, which has been funded largely by the lottery and is in its third, and final, year of operation. Through this, every year 15-20 local young people (aged up to 30) are taken through structured training programmes which are based largely around apprenticeship placements with the professional arts workers who are brought in.

Theatre activities are built around youth theatre activities and out of school projects, a community production at Christmas, and an adult drama group, Moving Parts, which has been in existence for 16 years and regularly performs in the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. In each instance some of the Fireworks trainees are attached to the projects, having negotiated which skill they would like to focus on. So, for example, when 7:84 was brought in to mount the 1999 Christmas panto, seven trainees worked with the director, designer, musical director and production manager. The performance, using a script by a local writer, involved about 35 local performers, a mix of adults from the Moving Parts group and children. Moving Parts sometimes devises its own work, as for example, when it mounts work with outside agencies, such as Housing Education Information Development. For the Festival Fringe performance they usually bring in a director or company to work with them, and have more recently done published plays, such as Sophie Treadwell’s *Machinal* or Steven Berkoff’s *Metamorphosis*, on which they worked with Theatre du Pif.

From those involved with the Christmas show, one girl got her Equity card and is doing paid acting work in the Festival, another who did a traineeship with the music and technical staff got sound engineering work in Edinburgh and a few other trainees have gained employment. The participants have been invited back - some are doing Moving Parts or other projects and some have dropped off. One front-of-house trainee is now part of a disability video group doing work about young people with disabilities and their access to education, others have gone on to do other traineeships.

**Sian Fiddimore, Manager, WHALE**

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As indicated in Chapter One, there are a lot of problematic issues surrounding such notions of ‘hard’ evidence and implications for the ideological underpinnings of community arts.
The training programme has been building contacts with local professional theatres and colleges, so that trainees may progress further from the work in Wester Hailes itself. With the recently formed Access to Cultural Industries Trust (ACI), of which WHALE is a member, and which is managed by Jon Gray, who formerly worked with WHALE, they are exploring ways in which the training might be accredited. ACI is a consortium of arts organisations, further and higher education institutions in Edinburgh funded by Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. It is working with arts organisations in Edinburgh’s SIP areas to develop a range of courses which will be recognised for access purposes by FE and HE institutions. An initial pilot project involves WHALE and Queen Margaret University College and Stevenson College. Such an approach clearly has potential to tie in with the Government’s directives in 1998 that local authorities should produce Community Learning Plans to address the learning needs of their communities and make a contribution to its objectives of Social Inclusion, Lifelong Learning and Active Citizenship.

Currently, local authorities are producing their Community Learning Plans and they are at varying degrees of development. Simultaneously there has been a Community Education review which has influenced the progress of these Plans in some areas. There are no examples of completed Community Learning Plans available to be considered for their commitments to including theatre and the arts as part of their strategies or as a tool for learning. Nevertheless, the way in which Community Learning Plans open up possibilities for less traditional access to learning opportunities does suggest the sorts of training offered at WHALE and through Dundee Rep’s scheme may become models for further developments in relation to theatre. It should be recognised, however, that a

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- The Scottish Office Circular of April 1999 states that the Plans need to take into account the needs and aspirations of local communities and reflect their priorities, the producing of the Plans should be open, fair and transparent to all partners and the community, and designed to meet local circumstances. The partners are the agencies and services which create partnerships to deliver and implement the Plans. The Circular further states that the strategies for implementing the Plans should pay particular attention to all aspects of community involvement and should reflect the role that national intermediary voluntary organisations can play. To support individuals in their lifelong learning, Individual Learning Accounts are being introduced to those over 18 years old. (There are examples where young people who have been in care or are homeless, yet under 18, are ineligible for an Independent Learning Account. This has echoes of the problems young people leaving care have experienced, being unable to get housing benefit until they are 18 years old.)
danger may emerge of activities only being supported if they lead to some sort of qualification. A number of years ago when Departments of Adult and Continuing Education in the universities were deprived of local authority support for any courses other than those which were certificated, it radically transformed the ethos of Adult Education work and led to the decimation of courses where participants wished to develop their broader education and interests without wanting to pursue qualifications and subject themselves to the sort of assessment exercises that then became necessary.

There’ll be a 10% cut in the SIP budget from next April (2001) and Fireworks finishes next April. So we'll have a lovely new building and no money. We’re looking for other funding. Lottery funding is good, but it’s short-sighted, short-term.

We’ve created a good model with Fireworks, but you're not allowed to repeat any work you’ve done before. We need to come up with something different. We’re hoping to recreate something along the lines of the Fireworks model, but in the new building instead of outreach. I don’t think they’ve put money into the building to not let us work in it.

The participants and the community have got to know Fireworks. I’ve taken a good year to say, ‘What is WHALE doing now, what’s different, what’s this Fireworks all about?’ We’ve built up trust and understanding and then next year we have to say ‘Right, now we’re going to do a project called Sparks’.

**Sian Fiddimore, Manager, WHALE**

Despite the successful development of projects such as Fireworks, Sian Fiddimore and others at WHALE are frustrated by the stop-start nature of funding over recent years and the continual battle to find new sources, as three year programmes come to an end, particularly when they see mainstream arts organisations being given funding for social inclusion work which they see as tokenistic rather than rooted in the social inclusion areas themselves. Fiddimore points out:

We get loads of offers from Edinburgh- or Glasgow-based companies saying they’re being sponsored to do work with people from deprived areas and they’re doing a workshop on this day at this time, could we provide people to take part. We get the group together, provide transport, a support worker … the company comes in and out, then ticks a form saying 25% of their work is in deprived areas…

Or someone to do with audience development will phone us up the night before a performance and say, ‘We’ve got 53 tickets for tomorrow, can you organise a group?’ That’s not audience development.

In contrast, Fiddimore argues that WHALE’s model of bringing in companies to work with local people in ways which are determined in consultation with potential participants is a more effective route, as is the structured scheme whereby they organise group visits to various arts events followed by evaluation sessions. In a way, what is seen
here has parallels with the Highland situation, where similar frustration is expressed over funds being devoted to companies from the Central Belt to tour to the Highlands, on the companies’ terms, as opposed to sufficient funding being devoted to development of local activities which may be seen as more in touch with what the local population wants.

ii) Work with older people: Red Road Young ’Uns and Springwell Autumn Players

Red Road Young ’Uns, whose production of *A Rerr Terr Up the Sterr* was discussed in Chapter One, and the Springwell Autumn Players, are rare examples of long-term groups run specifically with older people.

The Red Road group, based in the Alive and Kicking Centre in Springburn, has been in existence since 1991, and involves about 25 participants. Supported by the centre, which is funded by Glasgow City Council, it is led by Kate McColl, a retired actress. In the past the group has also received financial support from events such as Mayfest and Maydaze. Professional support is brought in for design, stage management and lighting.

While participation is open to anyone over 50, many of the current participants, including some who have been involved since the beginning, are in their 70s and 80s. They meet regularly on Friday mornings and more often during the later stages of preparing for a performance. They generally do a pantomime and a concert party performance each year and occasionally mount a play, as with *A Rerr Terr*, which was written by a participant in his 80s, Pat Connelly. In the past the group has devised a show based on reminiscences of Springburn Park, but it has not generally done reminiscence theatre as such. Although in earlier years they put together a couple of campaigning performances, it has been less concerned with such work, preferring to focus on creating entertainments which mix comedy and music. Performances take place in the Centre or other local community halls and the group has built up a loyal following locally – full houses are the norm. The group also took its work to a festival of the Third Age in Macon, France. As mentioned in Chapter One, rehearsals are quite demanding, with the group showing great patience and commitment (along with a few groans) as members threw themselves into rehearsing a
song and dance routine. In discussion with some of the participants at the rehearsal it was clear, however, that their participation in the group is a major source of pleasure in their lives and they get a great sense of satisfaction and affirmation from the success of their performances.

The Springwell Autumn Players, a group for over-55s, are based in the St Bride’s Community Centre in Gorgie/Dalry, which also houses the Positively Unemployed Group (PUG), children’s workshops, Edinburgh Youth Theatre, an over-55s choir and a range of other community arts activities. St Brides also hosts amateur and professional performances. Although the Centre employs Kirsten McIver to work with the group (and with the PUG) and provides accommodation, it needs to cover additional costs through membership fees and box-office returns for events. The group has been in existence for 11 years and at present has 14 members, a considerable number of whom are over 70. (A few members have been active since the group’s foundation, others have joined more recently.) The group has performed published plays and plays written especially for them, as well as doing concert party performances of popular songs. Although some of its work has taken on board issues of concern to participants, the group, like the Red Road group, primarily concentrates on providing entertainments for the members and the local community.

Both these projects have been very successful in providing retired people with not just an interest but also a way of contributing something to their local communities through the productions they mount. Given that retired people form such a large section of the population, as was noted earlier, it does seem surprising that there is relatively little of this sort of activity going on. Although David Atherton, Aberdeen City Council’s Cultural Services Education Officer, mentioned some similar work in Aberdeen, and reminiscence work with older people has become more common, it is still the case that almost all the opportunities for engagement in theatrical activities are provided by the

--- Concern was expressed by centre staff that the level of activity currently found there may be threatened by Edinburgh Council’s recent review of Community Education. Given the almost unique combination of international work (especially in dance) and amateur and community arts which occurs there, it is to be hoped that such fears prove groundless.
amateur theatres. In preparing this report, we had discussions with Glasgow City Council’s Social Work Services about the extent to which the sorts of activity initiated in 1990 were still occurring today. The Director of Social Work, acknowledging that far less is going on now, expressed enthusiasm for the benefits such activities brought and requested an audit of current work. In that audit, it was noted in regard to participatory arts work with older people in residential homes that, ‘when it is implemented it is greatly enjoyed by residents; however, such factors as staff time and numbers and resources mean that programmes are often sporadic in nature.’ The report observed that most homes thought such work beneficial but it would depend upon external resources to develop it further. Here it is worth considering the comments of David Atherton:

One of the things I’m conscious of is that social inclusion is targeting young people, and yet the most socially excluded people we encounter all the time are the aged, and these are people who have done war service… So in our oral history work, for example, we covered World War II events, and we were finding on first meeting we would have a lovely time with these people, have a cup of tea, then the second meeting we were recording a lot of what they wanted to say. Sometimes we were lucky enough to get a third meeting and that’s when you hear them in tears talking about the things they didn’t want to talk about, that’s when you see them drunk because it’s the only thing that keeps them going, and you’re conscious that there is a mass of people who are socially excluded but they’re not addressed by social inclusion policies. They emphasise the young.

iii) Lone Rangers

The Lone Rangers drama group was started by the single parents’ organisation One Plus in 1989. Based in Glasgow, it brought together single parents from around the city and beyond for drama workshop activities, which then led to a number of productions which were devised with the writer and actress Anne Swan, who worked with them for the first few years. Gradually what was initially an open group has over the years solidified into a small group of women who, with one exception, have been together for more than seven years. Most of the women joined without any prior drama training or experience, but they are now invited to perform at meetings and conferences all around Scotland, with

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Audit prepared by Anna O’Grady, Outreach Worker.

Some early performances included men. The group provides a rare point of continuity with the 1980s work discussed in Chapter One; through Anne and her husband Peter Mullan, they were linked into the network of community theatre activists around then, and other people now involved in the new wave of Scottish cinema, such as Gary Lewis and David Mackay, performed with them in early work.
invitations coming from women’s groups, the Workers’ Educational Association, conferences on various social issues, local authorities, lobbying groups and so on. They usually do about fifty performances a year, devising all the material themselves. They tend more to put together revue style performances now, with a series of sketches and songs dealing with issues which are appropriate to the context they are performing in; they regularly do performances for events around International Women’s Day, and have done work on poverty, housing, and, of course, single parenthood.

With basic costs still supported by One Plus, further costs incurred are covered by the organisations which invite them to perform. Thus they have managed to survive without getting any regular funding from grant-awarding bodies. At times they have collaborated or had workshops with professional companies such as Fablevision and 7:84, which has helped them develop further. The group itself now also leads workshops with children and other community groups, and two of the women were appointed last year to part-time posts as Arts Outreach Officers for One Plus. In that capacity they are involved in supporting over 20 groups across a range of arts activities in places such as Springburn, Castlemilk, and Easterhouse, occasionally leading drama workshops themselves. A former member, Frances Corr, has recently developed as a writer and was one of the co-writers of the 7:84 production 24 Hours which toured Scotland in Spring 2000.

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The above account is necessarily limited and has not been able to embrace anything like the full range of community theatre activities going on at present. Other types of work which would have proved interesting to discuss further include: work with unemployed people by groups such as the Positively Unemployed Group in Edinburgh; Farooq

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In interview with one member, Siobhan Harkins, it became clear that, although members have clearly developed their theatrical skills over the years, they have suffered from a lack of confidence and skills in coping with what is perceived as a very alienating system of funding. She commented, ‘There’s an awful lot of groups out there who don’t have workers and don’t know anything about funding, struggling along on their own, or it’s not made clear to them by anybody how they can get help.’ This is discussed further in Appendix 1.
Khan’s project in Glasgow, *Soul Food*, which brought together members of Glasgow’s Asian, Chinese, and Afro-Caribbean communities in a multi-media performance; work with disabled people carried out by ArtLink (although most of their work is in the visual arts); the work of Braendam, a house in the Stirlingshire countryside which provides respite spells for people living under adverse circumstances – its on-going arts activities included, in 2000, collaboration with a multi-national group of performers from Italy which worked with residents to produce a rather bizarre and beautiful site-specific performance; drama activities attached to some of the annual festival organisations found in thirty or so towns and cities; there might also be an argument for discussing the annual Beltane celebration on Calton Hill in Edinburgh as one of the biggest examples of a large-scale community play, involving as it did, around a hundred performers from all walks of life in an evening of highly theatrical rituals watched by around 10,000 spectators.

While these and the previous examples illustrate some of the diversity of activity, what follows is intended to give some sense of the background and aspirations of participants in such activities.

**D Community group participants**

Forty seven participants in community groups or projects completed questionnaires on their background, motivation and views of their groups. They included members of two on-going groups, the Lone Rangers and the Springwell Autumn Players, and participants in specific projects: *Moon over Musselburgh, Greenvoe*, and *Perth Artsweek* (a week of workshops organised by Perth’s Community Outreach Team). With a small sample from such disparate groups, responses to some questions were very different between groups, and it would be misleading to take aggregate statistics as being automatically representative of the wider range of activities in community theatre. Some broader statistics are indicated here, but attention is also drawn to differences between groups, and there is little attempt to extrapolate wider figures. What emerges is more a sampling
of the range of participants and motivations which might be found in different sorts of community project or group.

i) Participants’ backgrounds

As with other sectors surveyed in this study, the participants were predominantly female (64%). The age ranges of participants varied from project to project. The seven Autumn Players were all over 60, with three of them being over 70, and of 24 respondents from the Moon over Musselburgh project nine were aged below 20. It was the one project which included participants from every decile between 10 and 70.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 15-5</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15-20</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social grade</th>
<th>Number and Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A: higher managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: intermediate managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>8 (23.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1: supervisory or clerical, junior managerial, administrative or professional</td>
<td>11 (32.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2: skilled manual workers</td>
<td>2 (5.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: semi-skilled and un-skilled manual workers</td>
<td>1 (3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: state pensioners or widows, casual or lowest-grade workers; part-time workers</td>
<td>7 (20.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3 (8.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Employment

Eleven of the 43 respondents are retired (10 included their pre-retirement employment), five are still at school, three are students, three are unemployed, three work part-time and one is a client at an adult training centre. Employment amongst respondents is quite diverse: there are more teachers (two in each of the community plays), three nurses, two retired accountants, a retired policeman, a retired cook, a solicitor, and twenty other occupations. While occupational social grades are more broadly represented overall than in amateur theatre, there are again strong variations between the groups, with the Greenvoe and Perth groups contributing eight of those in grades A and B, while the other three groups have a share of occupations predominantly in grades C1 and below. The following table discounts the schoolchildren and students and one non-respondent.
Educational background

Similar variations occur when it comes to the educational backgrounds of participants. Discounting the eight participants who are still at school or are students, 29% have secondary school qualifications, 43% have FE qualifications, 29% have a university degree, of whom 70% have further postgraduate degrees. In total, those with post-school qualifications are, therefore, roughly equivalent to the percentages amongst respondents to the amateur questionnaire, but a greater percentage have FE, as opposed to university qualifications (43% vs 23.6%).

Participants’ household income

Of the 34 who answered, 47% had an annual household income of less than £10,000, 23% an income of £10-20,000, 18% an income of £20-30,000, 6% an income of £30-40,000, and 6% an income of over £40,000. The high number of participants with less than £10,000 as income was inflected largely by the inclusion of a retired group and a single parents’ group. Otherwise, for other participants the figures were broadly in line with those for amateur groups.

Participation in activities other than community theatre

Of those who responded to the question about participation in other activities in the community, 60% indicated involvement in activities such as: voluntary work; charity work; giving talks on drugs and alcoholism, and safety in the home; arts work through Orcadia centre; helping to run a senior citizens’ club; choir recitals in residential homes and clubs; Probus; audio description for theatre; church activities; leading scouts; writing with Survivors Poetry Scotland; horticultural society; golf; badminton, bowls club. A similar number were involved in other arts activities, with a fairly even distribution through involvement in choirs, dancing, music, visual arts and other drama activities.

Recruitment

Many of those who were involved in community plays heard about the project through the local press; of the total respondents, 41% had come via this route. Ten percent had
become involved through friends or relatives, a further 10% through visits by organisers to their schools or youth clubs, and another 10% through drama clubs they were already involved in. Others came through a variety of routes, such as seeing a group’s work and asking to join, finding out about the activity through the local council, being involved in a host organisation (One Plus and St Magnus Festival), and being invited to join.

Sixty five percent of respondents already had previous experience of drama before becoming involved with the projects in which they were participating. Twenty percent had been involved in plays at school or university; 29% were involved in amateur drama clubs; 11% had been involved in youth theatre or community plays; two were professionally employed in other drama activities and two others had been drama teachers; and 11% had been involved in either drama training, classes or workshops previously. The Lone Rangers and Springwell Autumn Players had fewest members with previous experience, while a quarter of the Moon over Musselburgh respondents had none.

**Time devoted to participation**

The average amount of time spent on participation in drama activities was slightly more than for amateur respondents to the same question. This is influenced by a few factors:

- A number of the participants are already active in amateur theatre and are involved in a community project over and above this.
- The nature of the large-scale projects tends to demand more time over a concentrated period than the practice of most amateur clubs holding rehearsals on a weekly basis over a longer period.
- The seven members of the Lone Rangers all devote more than 20 hours – two are employed to do so with other single parents, and the group as a whole regularly takes shows to various conferences and meetings, as discussed earlier.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Devoted</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5–10 hours a month</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10–20 hours</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20–30 hours</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 30 hours</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 3: Time devoted to participation*
Theatrical tastes and attendance
The figures for attendance at professional theatre were very similar to those for amateur theatre participants: 52% had attended theatre between one and four times over the past year, 26% had attended between five and eight times, 5% between nine and 12 times, 17% had attended more than 12 times. Not surprisingly, the Orcadians who answered this question noted distance as a problem. Those who don’t attend often were asked to indicate up to three reasons from a range of choices offered. Of 46 reasons chosen in total, a third were to do with cost, 26% were because of distance, 16% were because of family commitments, and a few didn’t like what is presented or preferred other activities. One didn’t like the atmosphere, another had problems with walking, and another preferred matinees to evenings. Looking at the theatrical tastes of those who indicated what they like, there is no great difference from the amateurs’ responses. Respondents tended to name fewer types of work each: most amateurs suggested a couple of types each, while many community respondents only offered one type of work. This may reflect a more limited exposure to theatre on the part of some. Thirty six responded to this question, of whom six liked ‘a wide variety’ or ‘anything.’ The bracketed figures below are the similar figures for amateurs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Community (%)</th>
<th>Amateur (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Musicals</td>
<td>37% (49%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedies</td>
<td>17% (31%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance/ballet</td>
<td>17% (10%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All types</td>
<td>17% (20%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opera</td>
<td>3% (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious dramas</td>
<td>10% (24%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contemporary drama</td>
<td>13% (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social issue plays</td>
<td>13% (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics/Shakespeare</td>
<td>13% (13%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others: Fringe; Liz Lochead; panto</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Theatrical tastes of community participants

As with the amateurs, companies which people liked tended to relate largely to their geographical location, but a similar range of theatres were represented: a few enjoy each of the Lyceum, the Edinburgh King’s, the Festival Theatre, 7:84, and Perth, while TAG, Trestle, Communicado, the Traverse, Borderline, Pitlochry, and the RSC all receive a mention.

ii) Motives for taking part
As with amateurs, the motives participants have for taking part were explored by means of both an open question on their reasons for joining and maintaining involvement with their group and a multiple choice question in which they were asked to list three reasons for being involved in drama activities.

Enjoyment/fun

_14___ Interest in theatre or particular aspects of it
_16___ Meeting people/camaraderie
_10___ Really interesting, nice people; meeting wide range of people; stimulating adult company
_6___ Creativity/new challenges/intellectual stimulation
_6___ Encourages me to be creative and gives me a totally different outlook on life; learning things from different angles; good for the brain
_5___ Therapeutic aspects

Enjoyment/fun

The following table of responses to the multiple choice question reflects a similarity in responses when respondents were offered the chance to choose three reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It's fun</td>
<td>33 (72%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides me with a creative outlet</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy the social interaction</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy plays</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It provides different challenges from daily life</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The group fulfils a need in the local community</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: brings together disabled people and others who do not use local arts groups; want to make my family proud</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helps keep old people healthy, happy and young at heart; a deeper understanding of the craft of acting and challenging my personal abilities despite the pain of arthritis.</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The broad reasons for involvement did not differ in major ways from those given by amateur participants; the figures for fun, creative outlet, enjoying plays and providing different challenges were all within 8% of each other. There was less emphasis placed on social interaction in responses to the multiple choice question (36% as opposed to 63%), and more on fulfilling a community need (30% vs 14%). As the comments section illustrates, many have similar sorts of motivation around looking for creative challenges and using the activity as a source of stress relief, or in the case of elderly participants, a way of developing a new activity in retirement.
iii) Views of their groups

Participants were asked to indicate the nature of the activities in which their group or project was most involved and what they understood the aims to be. For the first question they were given a range of choices which they could ring as appropriate, for the second they were asked two priorities from a range of choices offered. The results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mostly concerned with workshops for participants</th>
<th>Mostly concerned with creating pieces for public performance</th>
<th>Mostly uses already scripted plays</th>
<th>Develops scripts through devising, with participants contributing</th>
<th>Performances play to the general public</th>
<th>Performances mostly play to selected audiences</th>
<th>Performances mostly attended by friends and relatives of the participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Main activities of the group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>It aims to develop participants’ theatre skills</th>
<th>It aims to develop participants’ self-confidence and self-expression</th>
<th>It aims to explore issues of concern in the participants’ lives</th>
<th>It aims to explore issues of general social concern</th>
<th>It aims to raise issues of concern in the local community</th>
<th>It aims to provide entertainment for the local community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Main aims of the group

It is noteworthy that the dominant aims are perceived as being development of the individual participant and providing entertainment, with most of the replies which see the work as exploring issues of personal or social concern coming from members of Lone Rangers, as might be expected. There was generally a high level of satisfaction with the work of their projects: 57% thought their group achieved its aims very effectively, while 40% thought it did so quite effectively, and only one member felt his group should do better.

i) Views on the needs of the sector

Of the 42 adults who answered the question regarding the desirability of SAC and local authorities doing more to support amateur and community theatre activities, 39 agreed they should do so. Suggestions were very similar to those provided by members of amateur groups. Support was again sought for developing equipment and facilities (7), employing drama workers and running workshops (8), and promotion (3); a few suggested more grants generally, a couple suggested grants to help community shows tour or enable exchange visits, while others suggested the need for more drama in schools.
and assistance for individuals to further their skills. One commented, ‘the use of drama, music, visual arts should be supported in resource centres such as Tynebank, as this is the true avant-garde, people using the arts to explore their own lives,’ while another, presumably ironically, felt that ‘possibly they should, but they seem to have enough to do supporting ballet and opera.’ Possibly in response to the tendency of much community theatre these days to be focused on work with young people, one respondent suggested there should be ‘more adult only drama groups available for folk to take part in.’

E Some summary points on community theatre activity

- Much of the funded activity in community theatre in Scotland now is developed by professional theatre companies employing dedicated officers or teams. While this development in their activities has been encouraged by SAC both through policy directives and the injection of some funds, much of it depends on additional programmes of work funded by the National Lottery or charitable trusts and is thus subject to considerable fluctuation in resources.
- Outwith youth theatre work, which is discussed in the next chapter, there seems to have been a decline in the amount of direct involvement in community theatre activities by local authority centres or teams. (For more on this, see Appendix 1.) This has sometimes been accompanied by formal delegation of responsibility to ‘franchises’, as with Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association or the Shetland Arts Trust, sometimes by a de facto delegation, through channelling most available funding to one organisation.
- There has also been a decline in the amount of work by independent community groups of the sort exemplified in Chapter One, and by community organisations of the sort exemplified by Craigmillar Festival Society and WHALE.
- Where work is under the aegis of community organisations, there has been a push towards more concrete evaluation of community development outputs through ‘hard’ data, as opposed to the earlier focus on broad participation and either issue-based, contestatory, work or community celebration.
- While overall public funding available for community-based activities has expanded considerably, it is felt to be the case that organisations and theatre companies which
already have sound administrative and financial bases are better placed to seek further support.

- There is a greater focus on training in many projects, whether through formal schemes such as those run by WHALE and Dundee Rep, or through informal ‘apprenticeships’ in large-scale projects, as with Theatre Workshop and Benchtours.
- While such training provides a developing skills-base in local communities, it became apparent in a number of discussions that the necessary managerial and leadership skills required for community groups to take more control of projects are not being developed. This leads to the situation in which pilot projects or one-off projects often remain exactly that once the professional teams pull out, with there being nobody in place locally to take over longer-term development. (For more on this, see Appendix 1.) Combined with observations above, this suggests that, although much of the work is very successful in providing stimulation and social contact for individuals and sometimes a local entertainment, sight has perhaps been lost of some of the stronger aims to do with community empowerment which were proclaimed by earlier proponents of community arts.
- There has been an increase in the production of large-scale community plays in recent years. The best examples include a lot of development work leading into rehearsals. They attempt to work with genuinely diverse members of local communities and engage in a degree of critical reflection on local identities. Such work demands a great deal of expertise, sensitivity to the context of the work and resources. When insufficient engagement is made with the local context and little development work is done with participants, it may lead to frustration amongst participants and tedious pageantry rather than vital theatre.
- Work which is targeted at particular areas does manage to be more socially inclusive than much amateur work, and the integration of people with disabilities or learning difficulties into the work is more prevalent. Although a few groups in Scottish Asian communities are developing dance and music activities, there is little of the sort of work exemplified by Farooq Khan’s project above and, with a few exceptions, quite a lot of more general community theatre work does not reflect the ethnic diversity of local populations.
• Notwithstanding the above, for a considerable amount of activity the overall profile of those involved is very similar to the profile of participants in amateur theatre, and indeed community plays and workshops based in theatres often attract amateurs.

• As the following chapter illustrates, much of the focus is on youth work, the range of activities for adults is limited, and activities involving older people are relatively rare. The general impression is that, apart from some of the large-scale community plays, the opportunities for inter-generational activities are fewer than in amateur theatre.

• In areas away from the cities opportunities to engage in longer-term activity, as opposed to an occasional visiting workshop or one-off project are rare.

• Given the diverse and irregular nature of activities, it is difficult to quantify the number of people involved as participants in community theatre activities in Scotland each year. Aside from participants in youth activities, I would hazard an estimate of fewer than 4,000 people involved in any regular activities. This is based on an estimate of c.2,000 people involved in approximately a dozen large-scale community plays which are mounted in any one year, and an estimate of fewer than 2,000 people involved in regular workshops run by theatres, arts centres, and other organisations. Attendances at one-off workshops by theatre companies or visiting practitioners may involve a few thousand more. While I emphasise that these are less provable estimates than the reasonably accurate projections of amateur theatre memberships, they are informed by the numbers encountered in quite a representative sampling of different types of activity.
Children receive their cultural education from the whole community. Volunteers and voluntary groups have a valuable contribution to make.

A large amount of work done in both the amateur field and community theatre is with young people. In some cases this is through the inclusion of them in inter-generational activities, such as regular amateur theatre productions, in particular pantomimes, or in large-scale community projects such as PH2000 and community plays such as those in Eastwood and Musselburgh. (Sometimes, as with PH2000 and the Eastwood play, young people in fact make up the majority of participants.) In other cases it is through specifically targeted youth theatre activities, whether run as, or in conjunction with, amateur societies, or run by professional drama workers employed through various sources of public funds.

This study has not made youth theatre a primary focus of research: there has been considerable work done in this area already at a UK-wide level and, concurrently with our research, Sarah Argent has been exploring issues to do with arts provision for children and young people in Scotland. Given the links with both amateur and community theatre, however, it is necessary to undertake some investigation of this area and discuss some issues which have emerged.

A. **Quantity and types of activity**

As this study was beginning, the Scottish National Association of Youth Theatres ceased to exist, although discussions are on-going about setting up an equivalent organisation. The Scottish Youth Theatre, however, has a mailing list of youth theatres throughout Scotland. While this is incomplete, it does include about 90 groups, ranging from small clubs based in a particular school or community centre, to youth theatres which serve large areas of towns or cities or even a whole local authority area. Before illustrating the

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types of provision at present, it will be useful to acknowledge the categories of youth theatre which are proposed in the most recent British survey, Ripley and Canning’s 1996 report, which was commissioned by the National Association of Youth Theatres. Ripley and Canning draw distinctions between five models which have evolved over the past 40 years (definitions have been compressed or developed, with direct quotation marked):

- **National Youth Theatre Model:** Large city or county-based youth theatres which emerged in the wake of the founding of the National Youth Theatre in 1956. ‘For many years these YTs would work to produce classical productions to professional standards.’ Entry is usually through audition. A major focus is on development of theatrical skills/talent.

- **County Youth Theatre (local education authority) Model:** Following on from the founding of the Northumbria Experimental Youth Theatre in 1963, with the aim of being more experimental than the NYT, ‘the content comprising devised work and productions by modern writers.’ Again, a major emphasis is on theatrical skills, but this married to a more contemporary approach and a wider access. (YTs of this sort tend to be funded by local authorities.)

- **Community Model:** Deriving from the work of Greenwich Young People’s Theatre, in which youth theatre, community theatre, TIE work and repertory theatre operate from one base. The youth theatre work directly addresses ‘young people’s issues and cultural forms’.

- **Youth Arts Model:** ‘Initiated or supported by the youth service and youth orientated community arts/theatre groups. YTs within this model share a common philosophy of young people centred approaches to their working practices.’

- **Amateur Model:** ‘Junior sections of amateur drama societies, and other membership-based voluntary theatre provision’ usually operating on an unfunded basis. Noting exceptions, they still comment, ‘what this category attempts to define is theatre provision which has often been developed in an insular manner – without reference to other models of YT provision.’

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What these distinctions already suggest is the variation of emphasis perceived in youth theatre activity between work which may be seen as more oriented to skills acquisition and theatre production, in which aspects of personal and social development are perhaps seen as a by-product of the work but not an aim in themselves, and work which more clearly has an agenda around such issues, with the choice of what and how to perform being shaped by them. Ripley and Canning imply a strong divide between the ambitions of youth theatre work to be found in the ‘amateur’ sector and the type of work found in the public sector: the amateur sector might be seen as more likely to be concerned with putting on musicals, pantos and classics, while the public sector work, with the exception of the NYT model, might be focused on more developmental work, and usually devised productions.

In such a scenario it is not surprising to find East Glasgow YT, based in the East End of Glasgow and supported by Glasgow City Council and various charitable trusts, doing a hard-hitting devised play concerning issues of identity, *It’s Not My Accent, It’s Your Ears*. This addressed participants’ views of Scottish identity in this first year of a Scottish parliament, allowing room for each of the cast to make personal statements about his/her own identity and aspirations. In contrast, we find an amateur company, Lothian Youth Arts and Musicals Company doing a production of *Oklahoma!* But further investigation reveals both that the relationship between sector and approaches to production or workshop activity is not necessarily always so clear-cut and that the participants in activities may themselves not sense as strong a division between the different approaches or have different ambitions in terms of their participation in theatre.

When I went to my secondary school I never spoke to anyone. My mum thought this would give me confidence, so I came along on the first night – and I’ve been here ever since!

*When I went to my secondary school I never spoke to anyone. My mum thought this would give me confidence, so I came along on the first night – and I’ve been here ever since!*

_A member of East Glasgow Youth Theatre, four years later._

The sort of polarities surrounding YT approaches certainly surfaced in discussions with various practitioners. Scott Johnston whose present focus, at West Lothian Youth Theatre, is on more developmental work (which also leads to productions of a very high standard) spoke of a previous working situation:
I'd set up a youth theatre, but it had become a ‘sequinned leotard’, doing pallid representations of West End shows. I don't believe that's the kind of thing to do with youth theatres, well it can be, but it's not really challenging young people to perform theatre which is relevant to them - I don't think Annie is particularly relevant to them.

He sees the primary purpose of his present work as:

[facilitating] the social, educational, cultural and artistic needs of our participants and it raises their confidence and communication skills, thereby enhancing their prospects of employment, pathways to further education and maybe in theatre. Principally it's about confidence and communication... The other thing is that it's fun, it's a space where it's safe for them to have fun and a space for people to make mistakes and learn. There has been so much emphasis on getting things right and achieving now. We only learn by mistakes, it's the best way - we provide a structure and pour the knowledge in. It's very important that we provide a structure in the work we do. So the primary purpose is to allow young people to develop confidence and communication and have a space to talk about things, using theatre.

In contrast, the director of one children’s theatre, which auditioned a hundred young people for 25 places in a pantomime cast, described the work as like ‘an entertainment machine’ based around picking ‘high-fliers’ to put on an excellent show. Interestingly, and in conflict with what we might expect from Ripley and Canning, the long-established children’s theatre in question is supported by its local council as one of its major youth projects. Furthermore, the district Youth Theatre into which many of its members then proceed does productions such as Fame and Return to the Forbidden Planet. This illustrates the difficulties in assuming that the link between institutional support or setting and the nature of the work done is as seamlessly as Ripley and Canning’s classification might suggest. Indeed, they themselves acknowledge, ‘the categorisation of a particular YT as belonging to a specified model can be difficult as there may exist areas of overlap.’ (1996:15)

Investigating the situation in Scotland, one may observe examples of work which follow the models, but there are also many examples of activities which seem to overlap or develop the models in ways not discussed by Ripley and Canning – which were mostly based on activity in England. To begin with, while some of the institutional locations of YTs do seem to match those outlined by Ripley and Canning, others are not so clearly in
one category or another. The ‘national’ youth theatre, the SYT, was indeed inspired originally by the NYT in London when it was established in 1976, but it has evolved a long way since then. In certain respects the auditioning processes which lead to participation in the large summer school productions, their presentation in major theatres such as the Citizens and Aberdeen’s Her Majesty’s, the professional teams involved, all parallel the NYT model; but hundreds of other participants take part in regular classes in Glasgow and Edinburgh throughout the year and another 150 or so take part in other summer school activities which are more workshop based. Moreover, through its Outreach and Education officers, SYT now provides a range of education and community workshops around the country, sometimes providing pilot programmes of work which may lead ultimately to local establishment of a youth theatre. Such work might be seen as more aligned to the Youth Arts model. Even regarding the summer school, Simon Ross, SYT’s Education Officer, argues that:

The focus is much more on personal and social development through drama rather than making fantastic actors – much more so than the NYT in London, where focus is on production excellence and professionalism. SYT wants to achieve high-quality work, but it’s not the driving force... This is taken into account in the audition process and in casting. We’ve turned down potentially great performers if the workshop suggested they were going to be a problem in the groups... Part of the casting has to do with them showing themselves good people to work with – rather than just relying on being a fantastic performer or singer.

That said, there is certainly a perception abroad that participation in the SYT summer school is useful for those wanting to make a career in theatre – as exemplified by the 75% of the cast of this year’s performance of *The Glory* who want ultimately to work in theatre and the number who felt, after the event, that the benefits they gained were as much to do with theatrical skills as they were with social benefits (see below). Furthermore, the choice of plays for the summer schools and for SYT Productions, a small touring company made up of more experienced SYT members, is more in line with the NYT and County YT models: this year SYT Productions toured a production of *Macbeth*, recent summer school productions have included *The Pirates of Penzance* and

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Earlier this year, for example, the Outreach Officer, Julie Austin, undertook a series of workshops on drugs and alcohol with participants from four youth centres in Kilmarnock. She also returns occasionally to assist Langholm YT, which was established by young people after some workshops by SYT.
Cyrano de Bergerac, and this year’s main-house production was an adaptation of Stuart Paterson’s The Glory, an epic treatment of the Bonnie Prince Charlie story (albeit one that treats it in a sceptical fashion).

About 15 of the youth theatres on the SYT’s list might be seen as institutionally related to Ripley and Canning’s ‘Community Model’, attached as they are to theatres such as Edinburgh’s Royal Lyceum, Perth Rep, the Kilmarnock Palace Theatre, Cumbernauld Theatre, Eden Court Theatre and so on. But not all work in the same way. For example, the young people’s workshops run by John Batty at Eden Court, although they are quite skills-oriented, do not lead to full-scale production; instead, the groups develop short presentations which are shown, along with a range of other work by groups associated with the Starfèis project, to an audience of friends and family. In addition, through the Starfèis programme which has been funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation over the past three years, five drama workers based at Eden Court have been running workshops in schools and youth clubs throughout the Highlands and Islands. Because of the lack of drama provision in schools, much of schools work has been curriculum-related. But out-of-school workshops have varied between those which have been more oriented towards development of theatrical skills and those which have been more focused on local community stories or on youth concerns. Sometimes this work leads to public productions, but at other times it is shared with friends and families in more informal ways.

G : I like the chance to be a lot of different people. You don’t just have to be yourself. Like in a play, you feel so different being different people. Even minor parts are important. Small movements ... You learn so many things.
F : There’s great satisfaction rehearsing something for a long time and you get it right. Say, a dance routine – do it over and over, it gets boring, but then you get it right with an audience and it feels great.
G : A lot of satisfaction when you put all the effort in and the audience enjoys it. It makes you feel good.
B : You also meet lots of different people. And learn how your body works. All sorts of skills.
G : You start staring at people in the streets to see how their faces work.
B : All the exercises you do. Like the way I’m sitting now: I’d never think about it before. But now – you could put a character to it...
F : Yes, you get to know all about your own body, and changing it.
Interviewer: Do you think it affects you in daily life?
B : Say you’re in a sticky situation – it’s like the exercise you do help you, like focusing on the middle of your body: it gives you confidence in your day to day life.
It makes you feel ten feet tall when you hear the applause. You’re pleased and proud. You’re different for that whole week. You’re far more comfortable, far more outgoing. You find it easier. (Others agree)

**Three 15-year-olds from a YT workshop run by Starféis**

The youth theatres associated with Perth Rep and the Lyceum, by contrast, tend to mount large-scale shows which are advertised to the general public. The Lyceum, which runs three workshops a week for groups of 14- to 22-year-olds (as well as groups for younger children) mounted 10 productions in the past year, including devised work, plays written for them, and a play written by a 19 year old member, which was premiered on the main stage of the theatre. Perth YT’s production in 2000, *Club I Ate 5*, devised with Lilla Scott and Andy Howitt (of Scottish Youth Dance), very much directly addressed ‘young people’s issues and cultural forms’, using rap lyrics, house music, and various club-based dance routines to look at youth today. It involved about 90 young people who attend four different youth theatre workshops during the year. There was open access for participation in the project and an ensemble approach to performance. In contrast with some youth shows, the vast majority of the performers, of all shapes, sizes and ages between 12 and 18 seemed very comfortable with their bodies and the choreography. Here the long lead in time for Andy Howitt paid off. He was able to spend three months of workshops just doing body-based work with the performers before they moved towards developing choreography for the production. The performance was very vigorous and ‘in your face’ in the small Perth Studio space. While showing some of the problems and quandaries of being a teenager, it also celebrated their energy and inventiveness.

After more unsuccessful professional attempts to translate club culture on to the stage than we really deserved, the Perth posse prove we should have asked them in the first place... these youngsters have developed an astonishing vocabulary of movement which they draw on as Howitt retreats behind the sound decks. There are some superb sequences... it all flows with consummate articulacy. Some of these youngsters look like dancers of serious potential, but more remarkably – all of them move well... What’s missing, thankfully, is the earnestness that is sometimes part of the youth theatre recipe when young folk look at their own environment and aspirations. This show is not only slick without being cheesy, it is also very funny in places.

*Keith Bruce, The Herald, 9 June 2000*

There are approximately 40 youth theatres which share some aspects of either the County model or the Youth Service model. On the surface, West Lothian Youth Theatre might
seem to be aligned with the County model. Funded principally by West Lothian Council to work throughout the West Lothian area, it involves between 300 and 500 participants at any one time. Its performances have been widely praised in the national press and it has engaged in exchanges with various groups elsewhere in Britain and Europe and performed at the Royal National Theatre. Its work was frequently mentioned favourably in discussions with arts workers elsewhere in Scotland and indeed there is an appreciation in West Lothian that its reputation and performances in theatres elsewhere have added to a sense of the area’s identity beyond West Lothian. But the values which inform its work and its ways of operating are perhaps more in line with the Youth Arts model. (See the comments above by its Director, Scott Johnston.)

Employing five full-time and two part-time workers, along with sessional workers, it provides a regular programme of between 16 and 20 open access workshops a week through the year, and then brings young people together occasionally to mount performance projects. Although such productions provide a high-profile public face, the workshops programme is seen as the bed-rock of the company’s work, and not all those participating in workshops have a desire to take part in performances. The range of production work it does varies enormously: they have done much devised work, including a project last year on the Scottish Parliament and a piece on the history of West Lothian; at other times writers have been commissioned to create scripts for a group – as with John Binnie’s *Soft Boy*, dealing with the confusions and conflicting values of adolescence, which was performed successfully on the Edinburgh Fringe in 2000, and Martin McCardie’s play dealing with drug-abuse, *Love in Vain*, done in conjunction with a local drugs and alcohol project. The company has also performed plays by established authors such as Edward Bond, Peter Gill and Noël Greig. While there is an attempt to explore a range of different theatrical approaches over a cycle of about three years, what is done emerges out of discussions with the young people involved and with the various drama workers who are working with them. Beyond more immediate day by day contribution to

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*We saw a final rehearsal of Scott Johnston’s subsequent production of this with young people who attend the Highwayman Drop-in Centre in Dundee – under the aegis of Dundee Rep’s Community outreach team. It is interesting to note a new Scottish play being given a subsequent production so soon – something which does not happen much in ‘adult’ theatre. In view of the way a number of companies such as WLYT,*
discussion, WLYT also holds an annual day conference where about a hundred of the participants come together to discuss the work they’ve been doing. Furthermore, the organisation is diversifying into partnerships with other local organisations, such as Reed Kerr College. Children in Need funding has allowed them to appoint a Special Needs co-ordinator, and National Lottery funding is to be used to carry out projects with young unemployed people.

Another organisation which combines certain elements of the County and Youth Service models is Shetland Youth Theatre. In common with WLYT, its success is built on the long-term commitment of an experienced director, John Haswell, who has won sufficient support from Shetland Council to enable it to expand and diversify its activities over the years. Shetland YT evolved gradually after Haswell first went to Shetland to do some play scheme work in 1987. This led to a series of visits for three to six month periods over the next 10 years, during which he ran various youth and community projects. He was then appointed as a full-time Drama Development Officer with a wider remit to develop drama throughout the community, but a large part of his time is devoted to activities with young people. Some of this work is done in schools in conjunction with Izzy Swanson who is Drama Co-ordinator for the Education Department. Other work is with youth clubs and with Shetland Youth Theatre. In a situation where there is no resident professional theatre, few professional theatre visits, and local amateur theatres have been traditionally relatively conservative in the sort of material they present, Haswell sees the youth theatre as playing something of a vanguardist role, saying:

> My vision for the youth theatre is that it will constantly explore the boundaries of theatre in terms of content, form and presentation – providing a learning experience for the participants and audience about the content and the venue where the play is put on – whether it’s a disused cinema or a tent in a garden. This is why the youth theatre is seen as slightly avant-garde… I hope we are generating a young audience to be interested, get involved and see theatre – to see that theatre is still relevant and has life.

Theatre Workshop and Toonspeak (see below), are now commissioning leading writers, it would be good if some way could be found to disseminate information about the availability of scripts so produced.
The youth theatre has no fixed membership. Building on the workshop activities which are done in schools and youth clubs, Haswell brings young people together for two or three productions a year:

We don't meet on a weekly basis throughout the year to avoid a sense of cliquiness. We meet project by project and each project is preceded by a recruitment drive – articles in the press, posters in schools to generate new people coming in and create a fluid membership. A problem is that as soon as people reach the age of 17 they go away to college. On paper the group is for people of 12 to 21 but in practice it's more like 12 to 17 – there are a few older people and those who come back.

Young people have also been very involved in the two large-scale community productions: *Bonhoga*, an adaptation of a Shetland novel about the Clearances and *Romeo and Juliet*, done in an ‘aggressive, in-your-face production… with the young people playing all the young people’s parts, but with a large adult cast supporting them… There were motorbikes on stage, mods and rockers.’ A cast of about 80 young people have also recently been involved in developing a large-scale multi-media show to take to the Millennium Dome called *Postcards from Shetland*. Visually highly inventive and including lots of music, dance and video projections, it contrasts a tourist view of the Shetlands with the islanders’ own experience of living there.

Two organisations we have looked at, Edinburgh’s Theatre Workshop and Toonspeak in Glasgow’s Springburn area, follow more consciously a social inclusion agenda in their work, one through the nature of the activities it instigates, the other through its very location in an area which has for some time been labelled an area of multiple deprivation. Theatre Workshop’s recently completed three year Positive Futures programme of work, was funded by the National Lottery and had as its aim, ‘to provide creative opportunities for culturally and ability diverse young people’ – It worked with 90 young people in nine different groups during the period. They included patients from an AIDS hospice and a young people’s unit in the Royal Edinburgh Hospital, a disabled group, a group of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered young people, and an Asian youth group. The work was very much concerned with the issues faced by the participants in their daily lives and

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*From an evaluation carried out for Theatre Workshop by Raymond Branton, July 2000*
led to a variety of public showings or performances, including an installation in a patient’s room, a play written by John Binnie for performers drawn from the disabled group and from the gay and lesbian group, and a play dealing with racism by Debbie Isitt. Much of the work was aimed at schools audiences and accompanied by teachers’ packs. This is one of the most ambitious and diverse programmes of youth theatre work carried out in Scotland in recent years. Amongst the participants it has aroused the desire to pursue such activities further, but it remains to be seen whether Theatre Workshop, now that the dedicated funding has ceased, will be able to meet the aspiration expressed in Raymond Branton’s evaluation study, ‘The targeted participants need to be offered sustained, long term opportunities which aim to meet their wide ranging personal, social, educational and artistic needs.’

‘[I have enjoyed] meeting people, having responsibilities I could meet. Doing something I didn't think I was capable of. I have depression and am unable to work. Theatre Workshop has enabled me to do something important, fun and worthwhile.’ P.

‘I have learnt a few things about myself. It's good to try new things even if they are uncomfortable.’ A.

‘[I enjoyed] the sense of achievement when it all came together’ S.

‘I was pleased on how the racism was tackled in the play and the use of Urdu in the play. Theatre Workshop has done work of excellence.’ S.

Participants in Theatre Workshop’s Positive Future’s programme, as quoted in R Branton’s evaluation

Toonspeak was established in Springburn 10 years ago. It runs regular open access workshops for young people, as well as intensive workshops during school vacations, as with this year’s project Trackin’ Back II, which celebrated the group’s first decade with an updated version of its first show, which explored the local history of Springburn. While the group is led by an experienced director, Stephen King, it is notable for the way in which the young people in it have a great deal of say in its management through six ‘action teams’ which take responsibility for decisions around production policy, the administration and promotion of the group, employment of workers and so on. It generally produces two or three productions a year, with some being devised, others being written for it, or others, such as its October 2000 production Buzzin’ to Bits, making use of already scripted work. (In this last case, it is a Glaswegian adaptation of an

A similar difficulty has emerged from the success of the Starfèis project in the Highlands and Islands. Although demand has been created, now that the Esmée Fairbairn funding has ceased, much of the work
Irish play dealing with young people trying to get rid of drug dealers from their area.) Early this year it also produced a series of Community Connections events, in which local people were asked to write down ‘what makes them angry or sad, happy or even delirious with pleasure’ and put them in suggestion boxes around the locality. The group then workshopped ideas emerging from these contributions and presented brief performances in local community venues. These then led into discussion with the audience of the issues raised. Toonspeak has been awarded New Directions lottery grant and European Initiative funding which will allow it to expand its activities.

**What is the best part of being involved with Toonspeak?**

It's good to act.
It makes you read better when you're older.
You meet a lot of different people and get a lot more opportunities.
It's good fun.
It helps you be more confident about yourself and other people.

**When you say it makes you more confident is that away from here or is it just nerving yourself up on stage which we're all terrified of when we first do it?**

It makes you more confident all ways on stage and off.

**Does it help you when you're at school as well, or just out with friends?**

Both.

**Do a lot of people feel that?**

(Chorus of) Yes.

.....

Basically I found it through pals, and I've been here since I was 11 and I wouldn't be the person I am today if it wasn't for Toonspeak. Because it's been so influential, it's given me such opportunities, it's expanded my mind and it's led me into new things and I'd just like to thank Toonspeak basically. (A boy of 16)

**Participants (many ‘first timers’) in Toonspeak’s summer vacation project.**

Coming to the amateur model, some confirmation was again found of Ripley and Canning’s picture, along with examples of work which differ considerably. Through the SYT list and other enquiries we came across about 30 amateur youth theatres; but the existence of various Saturday morning ‘stage school’ type activities in many towns and the existence of youth activity within more general amateur companies means that there is much more amateur youth theatre activity than this number would suggest. In recent years both individual SCDA groups and its national committee have been actively attempting to involve more young people in their work. Many amateur clubs have either organised attached youth theatre activities or organised productions involving their

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will be unable to continue.
younger members. For example, a fifth of the clubs which responded to our first questionnaire ran special youth activities.

That’s how the youth thing started, I think it was at Carnoustie and I think it was at a party after their youth night, and someone else was sort of chatting away and said, ‘How come you don’t have a proper youth festival?’ And we said, ‘Well, there’s not a real interest in it.’ ‘Well, we would like one’. ‘Well, would you come to a meeting and discuss it?’ ‘Huh. Huh.’ So, we just asked around, and then we formed a youth committee and at the first meeting, every adult at the meeting brought along two youngsters from their area that were connected to a drama group. And we sat down with a blank sheet of paper and we said ‘Right, we’re free for two and a half hours, tell us what you want us to do’. And wow, did they tell us. They knew exactly what they wanted, some things were not practical, but the whole youth network that we are trying to run now, stems from that dozen to 15 young people average age 15 who told us exactly what they wanted the SCDA to do for them.

**Morna Barron, SCDA Chairman**

Since 1995 the SCDA has organised a youth theatre competition, which in each of 1999 and 2000 attracted 36 entries. In most districts the young ‘teams’ perform at the SCDA festivals alongside, and in competition with, adult groups (an issue which has caused some debate in the Association’s magazine), with those judged to be best moving on through Divisional Finals to the National Youth Final. We witnessed a number of these productions: two at the Perthshire Divisional Festival in Blairgowrie (where five of the 12 productions were by youth teams), three at the Angus District Festival, and four at the National Finals in Arbroath. Few of the productions fitted the stereotypes of what might have been expected. Lochside’s *Teen People*, written and workshopped with them by the person who directs the group, explored a dystopian vision of the future in an expressionist style. At Blairgowrie, Unmasqued Youth (mostly older teenagers) produced a futuristic piece called *Siseneg*, in which aliens visit a post-apocalypse Earth. While both text and performances were a little uneven, the production’s staging was quite ambitious, and the piece embraced a number of thematic concerns: ecological issues, conflicting views of religion and fundamentalism, and issues around how people respond to ‘others’. Some rather predictable comedy drawn from the encounter between earthlings and aliens was balanced by some astute handling of the tensions which emerge...
in any encounter between different cultures. Relations between residents of a place and incomers also appeared in the Atholl Players’ youth team’s production, involving 20 children aged between 10 and 15. Set in a Russian playground, the plot involved two young survivors of Chernobyl moving into a new area, only to be ostracised by the other children. After the early hostilities are overcome, the children mount a mock official enquiry into the Chernobyl. The play was given a simple but effective ensemble staging, with the young cast giving very committed, well-disciplined performances. They were later over the moon when they were chosen to go to the Divisional Finals. It was also interesting to note, in contrast with the rather staid image of SCDA district festivals, the atmosphere through the evening generated by the participation of both youth groups was an extremely lively one. The older ones’ outfits and hair-styles wouldn’t have been out of place in a Glasgow night-club and the younger ones were tearing about the place. Yet their responses when long-service awards were given to a couple of older people who helped out with their stage-management, demonstrated that they entertained a lot of obvious affection and respect for the adults who worked with them.

It’s a great joy watching young people who have come up through the Club now working with the younger ones. We have two youth reps on our committee and they give the youth point of view and they are appointed before the pantomime season. If any of the kids have a problem, they go to them first as it’s sometimes easier for them to talk to them than to an adult.

Member of Carnoustie Theatre Club

More in line with what might be expected in the amateur section are productions of *Joseph and his Technicolour Dreamcoat* and *Oliver!* by Young Portonians in Grangemouth. But a company such as St Michael’s Players, attached to St Michael’s Academy in Kilwinning, did both *Oliver!* and *Top Girls*, Caryl Churchill’s theatrically sophisticated and politically provocative exploration of socialist-feminist issues – a play which it would be impossible to stage without a lot of exploratory work on both the theatrical techniques employed and the issues dealt with.

What emerges then is a rather more complex picture than a simple equation of amateur youth theatre with ‘work in an insular manner – without reference to other models of YT case; in particular, some male adjudicators might reflect upon the language which is suitable for
provision’. Indeed, in some discussions with participants and the adults who work with them there was a knowledge of the type of work going on elsewhere and a desire to adopt more challenging approaches, but this was accompanied by the feeling that to do so they would need to bring in a bit more professional help.

B. Funding of youth theatre

Despite assertions of the value of supporting cultural opportunities for young people in any number of policy documents issued in recent years by government, local authorities and arts funding bodies, the financial support given to youth theatres is very spasmodic. Beyond SYT and those groups located in theatres (where, still, youth theatre is often a relatively marginal activity), some, such as WLYT and Shetland YT, have been fortunate in terms of support given by local authorities. Many others receive very little, if any, support from public funds and depend upon a mix of fundraising, membership subscriptions and box-office (which in turn may lead to a ‘product’ centred approach). More recently, some have been able to obtain funds from the National Lottery and a few have managed to obtain funding from charitable trusts, such as the Esmée Fairbairn Charitable Trust and Children in Need – but these are usually for limited periods, and unless care is taken to develop an exit strategy well in advance, projects may founder once the funding ceases. It has become clear, however, that work which is most ambitious in terms of both theatre and agendas around personal and social development and social inclusion, has tended to take place in situations where there is a solid financial underpinning allowing continuity of staffing. In such situations, as with WLYT, for example, it is possible to make more effective use of special funding applications to other bodies such as trusts and the lottery. An exception perhaps is Moffat Youth Theatre which shows how an ‘amateur’ youth theatre might develop into something which compares in scale with some of the larger YTs run by local authorities or rep theatres. Started by local volunteers in 1983, and still proudly proclaiming on its letterhead ‘administered entirely by volunteer workers’, it recently re-opened its theatre which had been refurbished thanks to a £286,000 grant from the National Lottery Charities Board.

commenting on young female performers.
It serves over a hundred young people and employs professional theatre workers to run a range of production work, workshops, summer camps, theatre visits and exchanges, and provides a local venue for theatre and film.

C. Participants: backgrounds, aspirations and attitudes

The original survey of amateur theatres resulted in the return of questionnaires from eight amateur youth theatres with a total of 336 members. Four further group questionnaires were completed for Shetland Youth Theatre, Ross-shire Youth Theatre, Borders Youth Theatre and Falkirk Youth Theatre (totalling 352 members, 252 of whom are with Borders Youth Theatre alone). Participant questionnaires (totalling 101) were received from some members of Shetland YT, Ross-shire YT, Toonspeak YT, cast members of West Lothian’s *Soft Bay* production and the SYT’s summer school production *The Glory*, and the youth teams from Carnoustie, Falkirk and Lochside which took part in the SCDA Youth Finals. (Participants in Toonspeak’s *Trackin’ Back II* and children involved in workshops in the Ardler Centre in Dundee were also interviewed.)

In examining the participants’ questionnaires it was decided to compile statistics in separate groups for the amateur youth theatres (Lochside, Carnoustie, Falkirk), the ‘community’ youth theatres (Ross-shire, Shetland, West Lothian, Toonspeak) and the national organisation, SYT, to locate whether there might be significant differences between them. A number did emerge, and these are discussed below, but in many areas there was a broad similarity of response across the three sectors of activity.

**Gender**

The imbalance between females and males is even more pronounced than with adult clubs. Of the 688 accounted for in the group questionnaires, 77% were female, with similar ratios found amongst both amateur and community YTs. A comparable ratio existed amongst respondents to participants’ questionnaires (71% female). On several occasions in discussions with youth theatre members, club secretaries and drama workers, the idea that involvement in theatre was perceived by male peers as somehow
effeminate was raised, and this old prejudice doubtless still contributes to the gender imbalance in youth theatre activity.

Age
Whilst youth theatre as a term is generally acknowledged as covering young people from 13-25, in practice few remain active in it over the age of 21. Of the sample from the group survey, 455 were below 15 and 213 between 15 and 25 (for 20 no ages were given). Amongst respondents to the individual questionnaires, there were only seven aged 19-25, with 63 being aged 15-18, and 31 aged 10-14. Unsurprisingly, therefore, 82% of respondents were at school and 12% were students or in between school and university (half of whom were taking theatre- or media-related courses). Four were in employment and three were unemployed. Several workers with whom we spoke commented on the fact that many of their members leave for further education at 17 or 18; this often leaves a small number of older members who may feel they have ‘outgrown’ the youth theatre but have difficulty finding activities for adults locally which pursue a similarly developmental approach to drama.

Career aspirations
Participants still at school were asked what they hoped to do when they left. Almost half wished to pursue a career in theatre or film and television – some simply stating that as a career, others indicating plans to study drama at either college or university. Only a small number of those involved in amateur youth theatre activity want to pursue it as a career, a sizeable number of community participants do, and the vast majority of SYT participants do. The amateur participants generally have a broader range of aspirations than the other two groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intended career</th>
<th>Amateur YT</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>SYT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theatre or other performing media</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified University Course</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science/Engineering/Vet. Medicine</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountancy/Business</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other arts/Media/Writing</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Caring’ Professions: work with disabled, physiotherapy</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know or not answered</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Career aspirations of YT members
School experience

Participants were asked to state what type of drama activity they have engaged in or still engage in at school. Obviously the responses will have depended to some extent on the level of drama provision in schools in different parts of the country, particularly when it comes to the opportunity to study the subject at Standard or Higher Grade.

Table 2: Participation in drama at school

With a relatively small sample it is difficult to draw many firm conclusions. Some observations, however, might be ventured.

- Across all three categories the number who have not been involved in any drama activities at school is very small, which would seem to confirm the findings of various studies that participatory introduction to arts activities in school is an important factor in developing longer-lasting involvement in the arts. One interpretation of the figures might also be that the youth theatres do not seem to be attracting very many participants who have not experienced drama at school. Another more positive interpretation might be that, although formal study of drama does not have a strong place in schools, many young people still have some. At a time when extra-curricular activities run by teachers have been under pressure, it is encouraging to see such a high number of participants, again across all three sectors, taking part in school plays.

- It is likely that the variable participation rates in workshop activities has something to do with the provision in different areas. So, for example, in Ross-shire the Drama Worker who runs the Youth Theatre also, through her position with Starfèis, takes workshops in many schools in the Highlands. In contrast with this, there is no formal provision for teaching Drama in the schools and none of the members are studying the subject. A similar situation applies in the case of Shetland. It is not, therefore, surprising to find a higher percentage of ‘community’ respondents have taken part in workshops at school.
• With the figures for amateur participants, there are differences between the three areas: only one of the Carnoustie group and none of the Falkirk group have taken part in workshops, whereas a third of the Lochside group have. With the SYT participants being drawn more broadly from across the country, it is likely that their workshop participation rates give more of a sense of how the imbalances between provision of this sort of activity in schools in different areas works out nationally.

• Disparity in provision of the subject at Standard Grade and Higher Level has also doubtless influenced the figures, since at present only a small proportion of schools offer the subject, as exemplified by the fact that five of the six community participants who are studying it at school are Toonspeak members – otherwise, only one respondent from the other three areas was studying the subject. What is perhaps surprising then is the number of SYT participants who are managing to study Drama: while it is clearly reflective of the high number of participants who want a career in theatre, it may indicate something about the recruitment policies, given that the recruitment road-shows often go to schools which have some form of drama provision. (Yet, interestingly, the SYT also has a slightly higher percentage of participants who have had no experience at school.)

Involvement in other activities
Respondents were asked to indicate their involvement in other activities in their communities and in other arts activities. While about a half overall engage in other arts activities, just under a third are involved in other community activities, with sports being the most popular pastime, particularly amongst the boys. Small numbers are engaged in some sort of ‘community service’ activity (helping out with Brownies, youth clubs etc). The highest incidence of non-participation in other activities in the community is amongst members of the three non-urban ‘community’ youth theatres and may reflect on a lack of many organised activities in these areas: in contrast, seven of the 16 Toonspeak members were involved in other activities, including home visits to the elderly, helping with a disabled club, membership of a citizens’ panel and a back-court tidying project. It
is noticeable that 88% of these ‘community’ respondents also said there were not sufficient activities available for young people in their local areas, whereas 53% of those involved in amateur groups and 60% of SYT members felt this. There were a large number of suggestions as to the range of activities which might be provided for young people: about half wanted more opportunities in drama, music and dance, both to see professional work and to take part in workshops; those in rural areas particularly wanted more in the way of cinemas, discos or clubs, and facilities for skating; several wanted to have more youth clubs and projects, in particular ‘realistic projects for our generation’, and one young Borderer wished there was ‘a wider variety of activities than hockey and rugby’!

### Involvement in other activities in community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Amateur</th>
<th>YT</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>SYT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community council/helping with youth club etc</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownies/Scouts/Duke of Edinburgh Award</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (including debates, cadets, charity events...)</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Involvement in community activities

### Involvement in other arts activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Amateur</th>
<th>YT</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>SYT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music and singing</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual arts/crafts</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dancing</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>_</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Involvement in arts activities

I would like to see more workshops be brought into school and youth groups. For example I went to Toronto and all the people my age were pleasant, well mannered and took pride in themselves and their surroundings, they were confident not arrogant. You never heard them swear or curse; warm personalities and they never mention the words failure or thick. They respect their elders and they have respect in relationships - that’s why you never see anyone my age with kids of their own because they respect themselves a lot... I would like to raise people’s self-esteem and teach them to think better for themselves and to never give up or submit to being called failures.

**A Toonspeak member**

### Motives for involvement

Respondents were asked the same question as adult theatre participants, regarding the main reasons for joining and staying involved with their groups; they offered very similar

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- This might be compared with the finding in Harland, Kinder and Hartley (1995) that only 23% of young people between the ages of 14 and 24 take part in some sort of arts activity, with the majority of these citing visual arts or playing an instrument as their activity.
- Here we might note the statement in Bonar Keenleyside’s *Consultation on a National Cultural Strategy*, 1999: 3.63, ‘Young people wanted access to resources with which they can engage in cultural activities. Often they do not have this access, with schools and community centres lacking in availability and facilities.’
reasons, with the exception that some are doing it because they want a career in theatre. (For SYT participants, the figures are based on the 20 respondents who are involved in a youth theatre or mixed amateur theatre in their home communities. The question was concerned with their participation in this activity rather than their participation in the SYT summer school, about which they received a different question.) The dominant reasons in all three groups are enjoyment and making friends; the next significant reason is actual enjoyment of plays or theatre. The only major difference between the groups, as might be expected from their intended careers revealed earlier, is that 30% of SYT members are motivated by the desire to assist their career ambitions, while only 3% of amateurs and 10% of community participants mentioned this motive.

Table 5: Motives for involvement in youth theatre

Regarding the SYT participants, in response to an open question asking them what they gained from participation in the summer project, the types of benefit identified by the 25 respondents included the following: self-confidence (8); friends (10); better understanding of theatre and/or stagecraft (11); improved acting skills (8); more experience (5); teamwork and working with people (5); enjoyment (2); and a range of things such as communication skills, respect, responsibility, and determination. It is noteworthy that although their general motivations for participation in youth theatre activities are more to do with fun and friends, the participants, while recognising these as produced by the experience, pay more attention to areas of skills acquisition, learning and personal development as actual results of the activity than as motives for participation.

Theatrical tastes

Participants were asked open questions as to what they most enjoyed performing in and what sort of theatre they most enjoyed attending. As with many of the respondents to adult questionnaires, there is a sense of some trying to find terms to describe work beyond broad categories of the sort used in play catalogues: musical, comedy, drama.
While there is a strong interest in musicals and comedies, some refer to ‘contemporary’ plays, usually with a rider about them being concerned with ‘real life’ or ‘issues’ or ‘providing a challenge’. In tabulating the responses they have been grouped in a way which reflects what seems to lie behind such attempts. (It should also be noted that the participants will no doubt have been exposed to very different sorts of theatre – particularly as many of the amateur and community ones come from areas not well-served by professional theatre.)

Q: What sort of things do you like performing in?
G: Something involving music.
F: I did a musical a couple of years ago and I loved it.
G: It adds so much more to the experience.
Q: Have you done much where you’re devising something about your own life? Where you’re dealing with issues from your lives?
B: I’ve been to some drama groups where you do things looking at your everyday life. But I like fiction.
G: We’ve done more fictional things. Apart from drama workshops where you do things in your own life. I prefer fiction – you get into another world. I like to get away from my life.
B: It’s good to get away from real world.
F: I like comic things. You get enough real life in daily life.

Three 15 year-olds from a YT workshop run by Starfèis

There is considerable difference in readiness to answer the questions: whereas 90 attempted an answer regarding plays they like to perform in, only 63 gave an indication of what they like to see (and 10 of these said, ‘all’ or ‘any kind’). This is perhaps not surprising since of the 94 who indicated their level of attendance at professional theatre in the past year 16% had not attended at all, and 48% had only attended between one and three times. (As might be expected, there was a slightly higher rate of attendance amongst SYT members than amongst the other groupings, but their rate of response to the second question was similar to the others.) The geographical location of many of the respondents will have limited their opportunities for seeing professional theatre and thus widening their horizons as to the variety of theatre practice today. It is not perhaps surprising then that musicals and comedies rate highly amongst their preferences. The low rate of attendance at theatre might, however, also be seen as supporting Sarah Argent’s findings that the professional theatre needs to make greater efforts to attract young people, both in terms of how venues are run and what is shown there.
Drama to participate in (90 replies) Amateur YT_Community_SYT__Musicals_19%_19%_23%__Comedies_26%_30%_23%__Pantomime_13%_11%_5%__All types_16%_30%_23%__Teenage/youth plays_10%_Serious dramas_6%_6%_18%__Contemporary plays dealing with real-life_6%_26%_18%__Festivals (Am.)/SYT_13%_9%_Classics/Shakespeare_6%_9%_Other (fairy tales, romance, ‘old Scottish’, improvisation)_11%_14%__ Table 6: Youth theatre tastes in participation

Drama to spectate (63 replies) Amateur YT (22)_Community (27)_SYT (14)__Musicals_45%_59%_50%_Comedies_27%_19%_36%_Pantomime_18%_7%__All types_4%_19%_21%_Dance/ballet_9%_4%_-_Serious dramas_9%_10%_Contemporary plays dealing with real-life_7%_7%_Classics/Shakespeare_4%_7%_7%_Other (physical theatre, suspense, mask, movement)_4%_4%_14%__ Table 7: Youth theatre tastes in spectating

Parental occupation

A high number of respondents (90) replied to the question regarding their parents’ employment. In a few cases the answer was too broad to be able to be classified. Of the 90, almost two thirds (56) indicated both parents were in employment. The others indicated only one parent’s employment: of these, one noted that she was in a one parent household. It may of course be the case that some of the others were in a similar situation. (The ratio of two parent employment to one parent employment was fairly consistent across all three groups.) Percentages of types of occupation listed below are based on the total number of occupations given in each group. Although there is negligible difference between the types of parental occupation for those involved in amateur or community groups, it is notable that a much higher proportion of SYT parents have occupations classified as social grade B. While it is acknowledged that the direct relationship between occupational grade and income is less secure these days than it once was, the high cost of participation in the SYT summer school (and the variable policies of local authorities on providing financial support for participants) presumably has influenced this result. The difference here in parental occupation may also be a factor in the higher rate of theatre attendance amongst SYT participants than in the other two groups.
Comparison with the similar table for adult participants in amateur theatre also reveals that the distribution of occupational social grades of parents of amateur and community youth theatre participants is both more diverse and much closer to national statistics found in the General Household Survey. It also suggests that the amateur youth theatres may have as great a role to play in social inclusion work as community youth theatres. It may be the case that if the SYT is to extend to Summer School participation the sort of inclusiveness to which it aspires in its workshops and outreach activities through the year, it will need to investigate ways of overcoming what is clearly a considerable financial barrier to participation.

D. Some summary points on youth theatre activity

- Although the survey has identified over 100 youth theatre groups currently active in Scotland, there are likely to be considerably more in operation.
- The institutional bases and funding situations of these YTs are very varied, as are their aims and approaches. While many are led by professional theatre workers and funded by either local authorities or run by professional theatre companies, about a third are run on a voluntary basis by amateur groups.
- Most recognise the value of YT for the personal and social development of young people, but they vary in the extent to which such a concern is balanced by a concern with development of participants’ theatrical skills, and the extent to which workshop and/or production policies reflect their different emphases.
- There is no automatic correlation between institutional and funding base and overall aims and practices, although there is a tendency for professionally-led work to
acknowledge personal and social development aims more than amateur work, which is more likely to be focused on production. Professionally-led work is more likely to lead to productions based on devising with the participants or scripts written specifically for them, while amateur groups are more likely to present previously published work. There are exceptions to this, and, furthermore, participants themselves often have different perceptions from group leaders.

- As illustration of this, a higher proportion of participants in professionally led YTs are intending to pursue careers in theatre and their YT participation is motivated by their desire to do so, while a greater proportion of amateur participants are doing it for social reasons and have no intention of pursuing theatre as a career.
- There is a greater diversity of social background amongst YT participants than in amateur theatre or community theatre generally, although this is not the case for SYT summer school participants. There is generally little difference in background between young people in amateur groups and those in community groups which are professionally led.
- There is an even higher proportion of female participants in YT activities than in adult amateur and community theatre activities.
- A high proportion of participants have previously encountered drama activities in one form or another at school, but the nature of that encounter varies considerably across the country, reflecting very different LA policies towards drama as both an activity and a curriculum subject in schools.
- The proportion of YT participants who are involved in other arts and community activities is higher than is generally the case for their age-group.
- While some YTs remain in the control of adult leaders, a number are making concerted efforts to involve the young people in the running of the organisations; a notable example of this is Toonspeak, but it is also worth noting that a number of amateur YTs, such as those in Carnoustie, Moffat, and Lochside, also actively involve the participants in development of policy and administration.
The majority of participants feel that there is little provision for young people in their local communities and would like to see more opportunities for both recreational and artistic activities.
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary Points
The preceding three chapters contain summary points about each sector discussed and no purpose would be served by duplicating them fully here. These concluding remarks are more concerned with pulling together some threads which emerge from comparative consideration of the different sectors.

We began this investigation with a general sense that amateur and community theatre had originally developed along two quite distinct paths. While occasional previous contact with amateur theatre had prepared us to be sceptical of some of the stereotyping views of it which abound, most of our previous experience had been with people involved in community arts and community theatre. Here we had first hand experience of the ways in which various sorts of community project may enhance the lives of participants and their immediate communities; but we also were aware of how, for various reasons, some work that goes under the heading of community theatre does not, in practice, live up to the more radical aims and aspirations associated with the rise of the community theatre movement. One purpose of this investigation was to examine whether, in practice, the activities and participants involved in amateur and community theatre are as different as some commentators (including the investigators) have assumed in the past.

What follows are some very broad brushstrokes identifying similarities and differences which have emerged:

- There are considerably more participants in amateur theatre than in community theatre activities. Amateur participants are generally involved for longer and more regularly.
- Where professional theatre workers are operating to an explicit agenda of social inclusion, or in the few surviving groups which are centred on particular situations, such as unemployment or single parenthood, the range of participants, with reference
to educational background, occupation, disability and (on a few occasions) ethnic
diversity, is broader in some community groups than in amateur theatre groups. Beyond a limited number of such groups, the similarities between the broad
generality of participants in amateur and community theatre activities regarding
background, aspirations, motivations and theatrical tastes, are mostly stronger than
the differences, and indeed there is now a certain degree of crossover amongst
participants. If notions of social exclusion are to include exclusion due to older age
and to living in areas remote from the cultural opportunities provided by major towns
or cities, it might be argued that, in practice, amateur theatres provide more
opportunities for participation by members of these sectors.

• The evidence of questionnaires suggests that many participants in both areas of
activity are active ‘joiners’, who are involved in other areas of their local
communities.

• Overtly radical participatory community theatre activity is quite rare in Scotland
today. More commonly ‘community theatre’ is now used to refer to what might be
seen as creative drama work, with a broad personal development agenda, sometimes
aligned with general aims around contributing to community identity or development.
Much of the work is done with young people. While some youth work is more
focused on socially investigative subjects, much work with adults has moved away
from such areas.

• While some community theatre work is more focused on workshop activities than
public production, a large amount of activity is geared around public performances
which in many ways parallel the conditions of performance found in amateur theatre.
This is sometimes attributed to the desire of funding bodies to see visible evidence of
‘results’, but it also appeared in discussion that many participants and the workers
involved with them also place considerable value on such public production.

• Community theatre groups and projects generally have an open access policy and try
to find some opportunity to participate for anyone who comes along. The production
focus and play choices of amateur groups may lead sometimes to auditioning
processes which limit opportunities for participation in performance; on the other
hand, many amateur groups clearly succeed in involving a large number of people
across the range of activities associated with theatre production. Furthermore, societies presenting larger-scale musicals and pantomimes often provide opportunities for anyone who wishes to participate.

- Generally speaking, amateur groups tend to mount productions of published scripts, and some are quite conservative in their tastes. A number, however, are interested in developing more creatively, as indicated by the number now doing more contemporary work, work by local writers or group members, and the interest they have expressed in workshop activities. Conversely, although community groups occasionally do devised work, increasingly they are presenting work written for them, often with little direct input from the participants, and sometimes they are performing previously published work.

- The very nature of the amateur movement places a premium on the involvement of participants in managing group finances, development and promotion. While some groups are able to call on the professional experience of some members in administrative matters, this not always the case. The scale of activities, both theatrical and administrative, in some organisations is very demanding. Taking further into account the way in which some groups have initiated workshop programmes and youth theatre activities, there is a sense of many amateur groups actually practising the sort of mutual empowerment and development which is associated with the aspirations of community arts.

- In contrast, as noted in the chapter on community theatre and discussed in further detail in Appendix 1, much short-term professionally-led community theatre activity, while it may provide excellent exposure to certain sorts of theatre practice not generally encountered amongst amateur groups, is not linked to broader developmental activity. In these circumstances the contribution of such activities to community empowerment must be limited.

- Both forms of activity may claim to provide entertainment for local communities. While community theatre projects often have an explicit aim of contributing to community identity through their public presentations, amateur groups, especially in smaller communities, often implicitly make a considerable contribution to community life. Moreover, in many areas amateur groups are, through their youth theatre work,
undertaking work which in other areas would be carried out by theatre practitioners employed by either theatre organisations or local authorities.

- Despite the increasing blurring of boundaries between the nature of the activities and participants in much amateur and community theatre and similarities in the benefits provided by such activities for both participants and local communities, there are major discrepancies between the way the two sectors are treated by public funding bodies. Although it is arguable that community theatre work has generally been under-funded, it has at least received some recognition and funding. In contrast, amateur theatre has traditionally received negligible support from public bodies. The two main justifications for this situation would seem to be the social inclusion agenda espoused by much community theatre work and the fact that it usually employs professional theatre workers.

**Recommendations**

The report has already included some observations by participants and theatre workers on various needs of the sectors. The following recommendations draw on these as well as our own observations. They are of an indicative kind, rather than being couched as detailed policy proposals, and are intended to encourage the interested parties to negotiate ways forward.

- The contribution that amateur groups and community theatre projects make to the national theatre of Scotland should be recognised. In particular, it should be acknowledged that many amateur groups make a substantial contribution to their local communities, in ways which often fulfil the sort of aspirations which have been more commonly associated with understandings of community theatre. Note should be taken of the opportunities they create for inter-generational cultural and recreational activity, their work with young people, their key role sometimes in sustaining local venues and their part in providing theatre in areas rarely reached by professional theatre or types of theatre not generally done by professional theatres in Scotland. It should also be recognised that some groups create work of a high level
theatrically. Ingrained prejudices about the relative artistic quality of amateur, community and professional work need to be admitted and addressed.

- Public funding bodies, in particular the local authorities and SAC, should re-consider how they view and support non-professional theatre, whether by amateur groups or by community theatre projects. They should recognise the extent to which some of the boundaries between the two sectors have become blurred and consider what implications this has for their funding policies. There needs to be a general clarification of the aims and objectives in supporting non-professional theatre, and the development of criteria for assessing applications for support which take appropriate account of the contexts of proposed projects. Furthermore, ways of assessing the outcomes of projects should be appropriate to their contexts.

- Funding bodies might usefully examine how amateur and community arts are supported in other European countries, especially those discussed below in Appendix 1.

- More attention should be paid, by both practitioners and funding bodies, to the development of sustainable, long-term work. Where funding is given to one-off projects, it should be on the basis that means are in place to use such work as the basis for longer-term activity.

- Regarding community-based work by professional theatre organisations, thought must be given to the extent to which such work is at the service of the communities in question, rather than exercises in charitable work.

- SAC should ensure the recruitment to relevant artform and National Lottery panels of people who have some experience and understanding of amateur and community theatre.

- Recognising that lottery funds are the most likely route whereby SAC is likely to be able to develop funding support for these sectors, SAC should consider whether the conditions of the Awards for All scheme need revision, in particular those relating to the annual income of organisations. Amateur and community groups should be encouraged to see schemes such as Access and Participation, Children and Young People, Creative and Technical Skills, and Audience and Sales Development as
equally open to them, since they all cover areas in which amateur and community
groups could fruitfully use assistance. While some of the onus is on SAC here, the
groups themselves should perhaps try to be less easily deterred by the lists of
demands laid out in the funding guidelines.

- To encourage groups which wish to develop their work in new directions, SAC
  should consider creating for amateur and community groups an equivalent of the
  advancement funds which are available for professional theatre companies.

- Professional theatre companies in receipt of SAC funding should be encouraged to
  consider ways in which they might develop their relationships with local amateur and
  community groups. While some are quite active in this, others are less so. This is not
  a matter of creating new projects and trying to get people involved, it is more a matter
  of being alert to ways in which they may be able to support on-going activities and
  letting people know that such support is available. Building-based companies, in
  particular, have the potential to become more active community resources, at
  relatively low cost (in terms of time and labour). Beyond the significance of such
  activity in its own right, they might also recognise that such a policy can contribute to
  local identification with a theatre and consequent commitment to attending its work.

- More support should be given to develop work with older people. Contact might
  usefully be made with Age Exchange, a company in London devoted to working with
  older people. In March 2000 it mounted an international festival of theatre
  productions by older people which demonstrated the high level of artistic work which
  can be produced as well as the individual and collective benefits such work provides.

- More needs to be done to maintain local recreational and cultural facilities in good
  condition and to make them available to amateur and community groups at affordable
  rents which recognise the role such groups often play in local cultural provision.
  Local authorities could collaborate with local groups on developing shared storage
  facilities and access to lighting and sound equipment.

- While the SCDA does provide some support services on an on-going basis, much of
  its activity is centred on the One-act Festival. Given the much wider activity of many
  of the member clubs, it might usefully explore further ways in which it could both
  support such activities and heighten their profile, and pursue resources to do so.
• Amateur theatre clubs should not underestimate the social contribution they often make and they could do more to let this be known more widely. Equally, some might do more to encourage broader participation in their activities. In particular, they might make themselves more aware of the potential contribution people with disabilities may make to their work.

• A network involving those active in community theatre and in amateur theatre might provide a useful means of exchanging information and views, help to break down some of the preconceptions which hold sway at present, and open up opportunities for productive collaboration.

• Given the short timespan and wide remit of this research project, it has not been able to enter into longer-term or more detailed studies of individual groups or projects. To gain firmer evidence about the nature of participation and social impact of amateur and community theatre activities, research might usefully be carried out in future. This research could include comparative longitudinal studies of individual amateur theatre groups and community projects over a few years; a more detailed study of the development of a large-scale community play from inception to production; closer investigation of the workings of musical and operatic societies; a longer-term study of the effects of community theatre/arts work in a community development organisation and/or SIP area.
Appendix 1

SAC and local authority support for amateur and community theatre

The two main sources of support and funds for amateur and community theatre activities are local authorities and the Scottish Arts Council. Some indications of the nature of such support have already been given in discussions of specific projects. This appendix is intended to provide some overview of how attitudes and policies have developed over time and note where recent changes have had or are likely to have effects on the two sectors.

i) The Scottish Arts Council

Historically, SAC has not been very active in providing support for amateur or participatory community arts activity, which has tended to be seen more as an area to be dealt with by local government. That this is the case owes much to a crucial shift in policy which occurred early on in the life of the Arts Council of Great Britain, well before the Scottish Committee of the Arts Council became the Scottish Arts Council. The story of how the wartime activities of the Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) paved the way for the post-war foundation of the ACGB is a familiar one. But at that time a major struggle was waged between those who wished to see the Arts Council carry on a key early policy of CEMA – ‘the encouragement of music-making and play-acting by the people themselves’ – and those (including the ACGB’s first Chairman, Lord Keynes) who wished to limit its activity to promotion of the professional arts. Robert Hutchison has traced the way in which the Keynesian argument won the day. In 1944, Vaughan Williams had painted a rather idealised picture of what might have occurred:

> The ideal of Walford Davies and his travellers was to combine the amateur and the professional. In this way the humblest amateur in a village felt himself to be part of a hierarchy which stretched upwards to those whose names are world famous. But if those two branches of the art are hermetically segregated we lose

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- From the Memorandum in Support of an Application to the Treasury for Financial Assistance by Lords MacMillan and De La Warr, 6 March 1940, cited in Hutchison, 1982:56.
that vitality in English art which comes from making it creative from the top to the bottom.

Although the ACGB did provide some support for amateur work in its first few years, by 1952 its Annual Report contained the comment, ‘To the many problems the theatre has to confront in the provinces there seems to be added nowadays the mounting strength of the amateur theatrical movement.’ This disdain for amateur work was further exemplified by Lord Goodman’s comment in the House of Lords in 1972, when he was Chairman of the ACGB, ‘I speak for the Arts; I do not speak for amateur theatricals.’ (Hutchison, 1982: 50) While the rise of community arts in the 1960s and 1970s posed a sustained challenge to such mandarin attitudes and did result in the diversion of some funds into such work, the situation was still such that in 1980:

A set of broad policy guidelines from the Arts Council advised its panels and committees to ‘avoid policies which would extend the scope or range of the Council’s present very limited support for amateur work’, and when grants were withdrawn from the National Youth Theatre, the National Youth Brass Band and the National Youth Orchestra one of the reasons given was that these organisations were amateur and that grants to them represented an anomaly. (Hutchison, 1982: 52)

It should be noted that Hutchison’s account is informed by his own work as Senior Research and Information Officer for the ACGB in the 1970s. Harold Baldry, who served on the Council itself and various panels during the same period, and who, as a Professor of Greek, is an unlikely populist, confirmed Hutchison’s picture, commenting on the effects of restrictions on funding in the 1970s:

The effect of financial pressure has been to harden the Council’s negative policy towards amateurs rather than relax it... It is difficult to find any consistency of principle in the Council’s attitude. (Baldry, 1980: 159)

After commenting on the financial needs of the sector and noting arguments that amateurs should (and, in fact, do) fund themselves, he acknowledged the need for

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*Quoted in Hutchison, 1982: 49. Cf. Pick and Anderton, 1996: 25, ‘Virtually from the start the Arts Council effectively espoused the (by then) well-established notions of the superior “higher arts”. Its remit excluded commercial showmanship, the folk arts and the bucolic traditions of rural Britain, crafts, the amateur arts, the media and of course, all religious ceremony.’
*Lest this be seen as a gibe, I should note my own academic career started as a Lecturer in Greek.
amateur groups to do more about encouraging the participation of young people, but went on to assert:

When all this is said, the fact remains that amateur practitioners of the arts are taxpayers, and if they seek help from public funds for a worthwhile object they have a right to it just as much as (sometimes more than) those who occupy heavily subsidised seats at Covent Garden. They need very little support for their activities, but when they are given a little it goes a long way: if cost-effectiveness is sought after… Nowhere is it more easily found than in a small grant to a group of knowledgeable and dedicated amateurs…

There is a lack of realistic thinking about the future in the minds of those who ignore the contribution to that future which amateurs can make...

Panels should always include someone who has some knowledge of the work of the amateurs, some understanding of their difficulties, their needs and their potential. (Baldry, 1980: 160)

It may be felt that this excursion into history is beside the point: surely SAC is a different body, times have changed. While the language of SAC reports and the nature of some of the initiatives SAC has supported in recent years suggest there may be some truth in this, especially now that National Lottery funding is available, it has taken some time for a shift in attitude and practice to occur. In SAC accounts around the time Hutchison and Baldry were writing there is little to suggest it was following a different policy from the ACGB: in 1984/85, of £1.2 million distributed by the Drama Panel, less than £30,000 was given to projects which might be seen, broadly, as participatory community theatre (and that includes £10,000 to SYT), and nothing was given to amateur societies.

SAC’s Annual Report Supplement for 1998/99 reveals that the Drama Department still gave almost nothing directly to amateur or community theatre ventures; the only exceptions were £30,000 to SYT, £3,000 to SNAYT, and £9,000 to support Borders Council’s drama artist-in-residence. Some funds will have found their way through the Combined Arts Department: it provided £51,620 to a total of 19 Minority Ethnic Arts Projects (averaging less than £3,000), some of which included a drama element, as did some of the 37 community-based projects which received a total of £178,000 from the Combined Arts Development and Project Fund (many of them were festivals, such as the Highland Festival, Perth Festival and so on; ie a small amount of the money may have ended up supporting drama activities). Furthermore revenue grants to organisations such
as Theatre Workshop and Cumbernauld Theatre will have helped support their community or outreach projects, and some of TAG’s work does involve participatory activities. Of the combined budgets of £7.3 million for Drama and Combined Arts in 1998/99, something between 3% and 4% was devoted to participatory theatre activity.

SAC was, of course, also instrumental in providing support through the National Lottery programmes which it manages. In 1998/99, through a variety of schemes, such as Capital Projects, Awards for All, New Directions, and the Advancement Fund, it distributed almost £13 million to Drama or Combined Arts projects, but most of this was devoted to professional work. As indicated in the discussion of amateur theatre, the amounts which a small number of amateur companies have received are relatively small. In 1998/99, for example, Awards for All disbursed approximately £127,000 to 43 theatre projects, including £1,000 to Eaglesham Music and Drama Group (for artistic and musical director fees), £4,253 to Cumnock and District Musical Theatre (for costumes, make-up, production expenses and publicity materials) and £5,000 to Stranraer Drama Club (storage space). The New Directions Programme and New Works scheme provided existing professional companies such as Borderline (£200,000), TAG (£98,266), the Royal Lyceum (£15,000), Day Oot Theatre (£13,406) and Stray Theatre (£7,331) funds for youth work; apart from £92,963 for Toonspeak Young People's Theatre Project and £4,987 for One in a Hundred Theatre (a group of adults with learning difficulties supported by Cumbernauld Theatre), there was nothing given directly to amateur or community based groups. In total then, approximately 4.3% of the Lottery funds given to Drama and Combined Arts projects were distributed for the direct purpose of encouraging amateur and community participation in theatre activity, and 60% of this went to professional companies aiming to expand youth activities. To this figure one might also add some of the £274,000 given by the Millennium Festival Fund to Benchtours, Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association and Eden Court (for PH2000), for multi-arts projects involving a strong element of drama participation by amateur and community groups.
Inevitably, given the hundreds of grants provided by SAC in 1998/9, one or two have probably been overlooked, or perhaps one or two schemes which will indirectly involve participation have been missed. (Also, the lottery grants do not include National Lottery Charities Board funding, which, for example, contributed £55,000 to Dundee Rep’s outreach work.) But the important point which emerges from such an investigation is that, although the rhetoric of funding bodies now places much emphasis on participation and access and many small organisations around the country have been grateful for the opportunities opened up by the National Lottery, in practice the professional theatre receives the overwhelming majority of funds distributed. To modify this even a little further could bring immense opportunities since, as Baldry argues, even a small amount of funding for amateur (and one might add community) ventures often stretches a long way.

It should be noted that the way in which government support has generally been channelled overwhelmingly towards professional arts in Britain is not necessarily replicated in other European countries. In Sweden, for example, ‘support for amateur and community activity remains one of the distinctive features… and around a quarter of central government funding (on the arts) is spent in this sector.’ (Feist et al, 1998: 118) Other Scandinavian countries, France and the Netherlands are amongst countries which devote a more significant portion of public support to amateur and community arts than is the case in Britain.

That things are changing at more than a rhetorical level is shown by some of the grants mentioned above, by SAC’s initiative in creating Links Officers in local authorities (see below), by its involvement in Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs, discussed in Appendix 2), and by its recent announcement of the Local Authority Partnership (LAP) scheme. Through this scheme, to which £1 million is being devoted over the next three years,

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Feist et al (1998) include detailed figures for Finland, France and the Netherlands, illustrating this. We were informed by the Danish Ministry of Culture that last year it provide the Danish Amateur Theatre Service (DATS) – the Danish equivalent of the SCDA, with £309,130 annual revenue support; this was supplemented by a further £81,350 from combination of Danish Youth Council and Ministry of Education.
SAC is attempting to redress the situation acknowledged by its Chairman, Magnus Linklater:

There are areas of Scotland that have benefited less than others from arts lottery funds. These areas also tend to attract lower levels of SAC, government, and local authority funding... there are communities in Scotland which are not benefiting from new funding and development opportunities.

In the initial round of funding LAP grants have been awarded to East Ayrshire (£120k), East Renfrewshire (£94k) and Scottish Borders (£105k), along with Development grants to another four councils. It is encouraging to note that award of the grants takes into account the partnering authorities’ plans to, ‘increase access to, and participation in, the arts particularly where there are social, physical or geographic barriers.’ Elements of all three authorities awarded LAP funding do indeed include educational and participatory activities. Given that the awards are to be matched by similar amounts of local authority funding, local amateur and community theatre participants might hope to see some opportunities to benefit from the new initiative as it evolves over the next three years.

As noted above, National Lottery funding, in particular the Awards for All scheme, has also opened up fresh opportunities for both sectors. While these are to be welcomed, our research did reveal that a number of voluntary sector organisations have initially found difficulty in applying for lottery funds. SAC has recognised this and has over time streamlined some of the application procedures and does provide advice and support for organisations planning to apply for funds. As our recommendations suggest, in view of the way some people have been deterred from applying after early setbacks, it may be necessary to consider further ways of encouraging voluntary organisations to consider applying again for support.

ii) Local authorities

In an interview with John Batty at Eden Court Theatre, he told the following story:

DATS and individual amateur theatre groups (of which there are about 600) are also eligible for further specific project grants from central ministries and local government.

Before local authority re-organisation, Ross and Cromarty was one of the most enlightened authorities in Scotland, because it took the view that culture and arts were as important as housing and sewage, all the other District Council functions. So it took initiatives to commit money and resources to build provision. We had a team with a writer in residence, a dance artist, a visual artist, a traditional music artist, a general music artist and me as drama artist. We provided participation activities for the whole area. It was obviously easier to develop work in that size of area than for the Highlands as a whole (which Eden Court has to serve).

But the effects of cutbacks (in the mid-90s) is epitomised by an anecdote. When the team was just at its strongest, a local fire sub-station was proposed for closure as part of cutbacks. At the meeting councillors who had been in forefront of previous policy were found voting in a situation where another councillor, who had no interest in the arts, said, ‘If my home in Tain catches fire, I don’t want a dance artist in residence to come to put it out.’ They then voted to cut the arts. Having had a forward-looking policy, seeing all these things as equally contributing to standards of living, suddenly, when it came to the backs against the wall, it was blown up in the press and they couldn’t be seen to support the arts against a fire station.

The story touches on many issues which emerge in any discussion of local authority support for the arts in recent years. Although local authorities are the largest funders of arts activity in Scotland, cutbacks in their funding and the reorganisation which occurred in 1996 have contributed to a difficult environment for arts workers, for those in the authorities themselves who are attempting to support the arts, and for local participants in arts activities. Government policy and various research publications may sustain arguments for the importance of the arts’ contribution to the standard of life in local communities, but when there is no statutory duty for local authorities to fund the arts at a specific level and the decision to continue funding an arts worker may be presented as a decision to discontinue fire service provision, then councillors may find it difficult to resist arguments to focus funding on ‘life or death’ services rather than those which many still regard as a luxury rather than a necessity.

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1. In 1997/8, for example, LAs made a net contribution of £37.2 million to visual and performing arts. (SAC/COSLA, *Arts Expenditure in Scotland 1997/8, COSLA/SAC Survey, 1999:* 9)
2. Cf. the COSLA report, *Promoting Learning: Developing Communities, 1998:* 12, referring to community education provision, ‘while these services have developed imaginatively to address community needs, particularly amongst some of the more excluded, over many years, it is argued that throughout this period they have been more vulnerable to cuts in expenditure than services which have a stronger statutory base. It is clearly evident that when faced with hard financial expenditure decisions Councils have found it less difficult, however, reluctant, to cut community based provision.’
At the 1995 COSLA/SALVO conference in Glasgow, on the eve of local authority reorganisation, Sir Hector Munro, then Scottish Officer Minister with responsibility for the Arts, said that he saw no reason why the arts should suffer from the reorganisation and it was the responsibility of the new authorities ‘to ensure adequate provision’ in their areas. The same year SAC stated in *The Arts and Local Authorities*:

> The arts are essential to a civilised society. They have a role to play in all communities large or small, urban or rural, deprived or affluent. Scottish local authorities have recognised this and collectively are the biggest funders of the arts in the country. April 1996 heralds a huge change to the way in which local services are delivered. the challenge is to build on past successes, develop new approaches, and offer a public service of the highest quality.

A few bald statistics from the COSLA/SAC survey of local authority expenditure on the arts in 1997/8 suggest that, despite these pious wishes, the decision described by John Batty has become not unusual. It notes, for example, that here was a 22.1% reduction of local authority direct provision for the arts between 1994/95 and 1997/98 - from £30.406 million to £23.686 million, and a reduction of 21.7% in grants and support in kind for arts organisations – from £17.293 million to £13.543 million. (1999: 4) The percentage reduction does not take account of intervening inflation, which led to an even larger real terms reduction. The figures include a reduction of 14% in funds for drama provision. (1999: 20) The survey shows wide variation in funding by different authorities during the period, and indeed some authorities were spending more on the arts. But examples of two areas where drastic cutbacks occurred in the space of one year, from 1996/97 to 1997/98, include Glasgow and Aberdeen, where arts funding dropped 20.3% and 15.5% respectively. (1999: 26)

Such reductions and some of the structural confusions which have accompanied LA reorganisation have contributed to the situation noted by Bonnar Keenleyside’s Consultation on the National Cultural Strategy:

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* The situation has been compounded in the community arts field by massive reductions in community education budgets in recent years, as noted in *Promoting Learning: Developing Communities*, 1998: 7. ‘The number of professional staff lost across Scotland ... stands at around 120 full-time and 1,000 part-time posts... This reduction has been compounded by a significant reduction in expenditure upon temporary and sessional staff and financial support towards the voluntary sector.’
The role of local authorities in supporting culture was debated, with people complaining that their own local authority did not value cultural activity sufficiently. There was a request to clarify and strengthen the statutory requirements for local authorities to provide cultural activities and facilities. All sorts of cultural activities were believed to have suffered since local authority reorganisation, and museums and art venues not to have recovered.

In confirmation of the sentiments expressed at these meetings, SAC’s *Scottish Local Authorities Area Profile Sheets*, published in June 1999, reveals great disparities between different Authorities’ spending on arts per capita. It also reveals the sort of disparities between SAC funding for different areas alluded to by Magnus Linklater. Some examples (referring to 1996/97 spends) include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Council (pop. in 000s)</th>
<th>LA spend per head</th>
<th>SAC spend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen City (217)</td>
<td>£12.57</td>
<td>£2.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeenshire (227)</td>
<td>£0.63</td>
<td>£0.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angus (110)</td>
<td>£1.85</td>
<td>£0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll &amp; Bute (90)</td>
<td>£5.66</td>
<td>£0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’fries &amp; Galloway (148)</td>
<td>£2.07</td>
<td>£0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundee City (150)</td>
<td>£8.66</td>
<td>£4.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Ayrshire (124)</td>
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<td>City of Edinburgh (449)</td>
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<td>£12.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk (142)</td>
<td>£4.97</td>
<td>nothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow (618)</td>
<td>£16.61</td>
<td>£6.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland (209)</td>
<td>£5.58</td>
<td>£2.28</td>
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<td>Scottish Borders (106)</td>
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<td>Shetland (23)</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Dunbartonshire (96)</td>
<td>£1.97</td>
<td>£0.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Obviously, such figures need to be read with some care. The higher investment in the cities illustrates the much-stated case that they are often, in effect, subsidising nearby councils, whose residents use the arts facilities of their adjacent cities without contributing to them through their rates. Some of the disparities in SAC funding clearly reflect this: funding for Glasgow, for example, is supporting work which will be regularly seen by residents from nearby council areas, as well as visitors from further afield. When it comes to residents beyond the Central Belt, however, with the exception of Shetland, Aberdeen and Highland (to a lesser extent), the per capita spends are very low. Hundreds of thousands of people who are not within reasonable access of one of the major cities

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*Bonnar Keenleyside, 2000: 3.13 and 3.14.*
enjoy very little publicly funded arts provision. What access they do have for participation also tends often to be dependent on voluntary sector activity or on professional projects organised for the most part on an ad hoc basis. (The report does note exceptions, such as the work of Shetland Arts and Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, but other projects such as the Starfēis programme, PH2000 and various community plays have depended on trusts, foundations or the National Lottery for their funding.) What follows must then be read in the light of the pressures placed on local authorities by the reductions they have faced in their income in recent years.

**Organisational matters**

Broadly speaking, after district and regional councils were brought into being by the 1973 Local Government (Scotland) Act, Community Education departments in regional councils embraced responsibility for a lot of the work which was beginning to occur in the fields of community arts and community theatre. Their work was supplemented at times by the activities of regional Social Work departments, most notably when Strathclyde Regional Council’s Social Work Department supported an extensive programme of arts work in 1990, and by district council Arts and Leisure departments, although the last named were mostly concerned with support for professional theatre activity. Support for community arts work was sometimes through direct provision, as with Strathclyde Regional Council’s Glasgow Arts Centre, discussed in Chapter One, and sometimes through the network of Community Education Centres; in these Community Education workers either ran drama activities themselves, if they had a drama background, or employed sessional workers to do so, while at times local amateur or community theatre groups used the buildings for rehearsals or performances. There was also, of course, a variety of other independent activity of the sort discussed in Chapter One, but those involved were sometimes able to access funds or support through Community Education departments. Chief Executives’ departments would also be involved at times, particularly through support for Urban Aid funded projects and similar work aimed at community development. There were also local grants committees which might provide small grants to activities in tightly focused areas. The range of different
routes by which support might be sought for a proposed project was often confusing for people on the ground and, while sometimes there was good communication between departments across the Regions and Districts, there was often a sense that there was little co-ordination of policy or practice. This was the background for the suggestion by the Charter for the Arts in Scotland (1992: Recommendation 6.2) that:

local authorities develop arts and museums policies which are based on an holistic approach to cultural policy involving strong inter-departmental co-operation and, where appropriate, inter-authority co-operation.

When the 33 new district authorities came into being in 1996, responsibility for the arts, and in particular amateur or community theatre, came to be located in a variety of differently named departments. Five authorities locate responsibility in Community Services Departments, three in Education and Community Services, two in Cultural and Leisure Services, two have Arts Units in their Education Departments and three have franchises which were in existence before reorganisation: Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association, Shetland Arts Trust and HI Arts. Other authorities have each placed the arts within their own unique service location with such examples as Economic Development, Tourism and Leisure (Argyll and Bute) and Environmental Protection and Leisure Services (West Dunbartonshire). We might note that by June 1999, a third of the district councils still had no arts strategy document, while several were working with strategies which were prepared before reorganisation.

The way in which some authorities have organised their service provision is an attempt to implement a more ‘joined-up’ approach, to think more holistically, but the process has not been an easy one. As Andrea McMillan, Community Arts Development Officer of Glasgow City Council, told us, ‘the only thing that’s been constant is change.’ She is located in the Arts and Events Section of the Cultural Services Department, which also includes officers for Visual Arts, Performing Arts, Cultural Diversity, and Literature Development, and is responsible for programming and operational management of Council owned arts venues such as Tramway and the King’s Theatre. The section is also responsible for management of the cultural grants budget, for letting a number of

\[ \text{Cf. McCabe and McVicar, 1991.} \]
Council-owned halls, providing information services on the arts, and organising festival events such as Maydaze and the Hogmanay celebrations. These various responsibilities and some of the people who came to fill roles in the new Department, had prior to reorganisation, been located in diverse Regional and District departments, such as Social Services, the Finance Department, Community Education, Leisure and Recreation, and Performing Venues. At one level, bringing them together under the one roof has led to a capacity for greater collaboration between people. So, for example, those organising events at Tramway will consult with Harminder Berman, the Cultural Diversity Officer, about possible links with the local Asian community, or with Andrea McMillan about potential inputs for Community Development work.

But the situation is still not without contradictions and confusing practices. So, for example, an amateur or community group wishing to present something in a Council venue will still be charged a full rental cost, while at the same time it may be applying for an award from cultural grants to cover the costs. There are also organisational hangovers from pre-reorganisation days. For example, some community centres are run by local management committees with very little input from Cultural Services, beyond basic building costs (while janitorial staff are covered by a different department); although Cultural Services monitors the centres’ financial management, it is not involved in direct provision of work. Others are directly managed and staffed by Cultural Services. But limitations on the budget mean that there is far less direct provision of activities than there was when such centres when they were run by Strathclyde Regional Council’s Community Education Department. Beyond direct organisation of events such as...

- Although there have been a series of strategy documents and reorganisations in the past few years, the section is at present undergoing a further Best Value Review, which may lead to yet further changes.
- An important issue here, beyond the organisational matters discussed, is that a number of LA interviewees described how the various processes whereby different departments’ activities and personnel have been thrown together has also led at times to a collision of different values systems which have been developed under different departmental headings; for example, when workers with a community empowerment model of working have been put together with those whose previous experience has been based on a service provision model.
- By way of illustration, attempts were made to contact 34 community education centres throughout the former Strathclyde Region (including areas beyond Glasgow) which in my 1985 report are recorded as having some sort of drama activity, whether amateur or community. Several had been demolished or no longer operate, the phone was not answered at several (despite repeated attempts, suggesting skeleton
Maydaze and regular contributions to projects such as the Glasgow Mela, and some support for youth organisations such as East Glasgow YT and Gorbals YT, much of the work has had to be limited to providing funding support or collaborating on one-off or pilot projects. While some projects, such as Dance Asia (a girls’ dance group) or the Dhol Foundation (a young people’s drumming group), have managed to continue, Andrea McMillan acknowledges that a number of projects, while arousing a strong interest, have not been sustainable beyond their pilot events. Although she is able to offer some advice on ways of developing further and seeking funding support from other sources, she recognises in some instances people do not have the administrative skills and experience to take over and develop the projects further.

This clearly relates to a major issue confronting those involved in community arts work as they have evolved in the past 30 years in the way described in Chapter One. While some work has embraced a wider community development role directly and been concerned with empowering participants beyond their involvement in a particular arts activity, much work which has been carried out as the movement has been accommodated by funding agency and local authority models of activity has followed a service provision route; this may take for granted (and, indeed, contribute to) development of broader individual skills, self-confidence, and powers of expression, and even provide a focus for some sort of community identity, but if it neglects to develop the skills necessary for collective self-management much of the work proves to be ephemeral once service provision is taken away.

In contrast with attempts to operate more holistically in some local authorities, another issue which was raised in discussions with some local authority personnel is the continuing existence of inter-departmental rivalries or lack of communication. Where, for example, support and funding might be provided through a few different departments such as Arts, Education and Social Work, it is sometimes the case that different agendas are being pursued, resulting in duplication of efforts at times, or even direct rivalry. We
found ourselves on a couple of occasions informing officers in different departments of the same council of activities in their area of which they were ignorant.

In such circumstances, it is to be hoped that the SAC Links Officers' programme which is aiming to create links between education and the arts proves effective in overcoming such rivalries. The programme offers part funding to local authorities and is negotiated with each authority on its own terms. As Sylvia Dow, Senior Education Officer with SAC explained:

Their function is, using a policy driven strategy in the Education Department of the local authority, to widen access to all arts for children and young people in their area, using local and national arts resources.

There are currently five Links Officers in Aberdeen, Dundee, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, and South Lanarkshire. Some Links Officers have budgets and some do not. While the posts clearly offer potential opportunities for expanding links between arts and education, it is important that the ‘policy driven’ nature of the appointments does not lead to the danger of ignoring already existing work which might intersect with the underlying aims.

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Sylvia Dow, Senior Education Officer, SAC, telephone conversation 11 August 2000
Appendix 2

Social Inclusion

A significant area of policy direction which has begun to be implemented recently and is already having an impact on those involved in community theatre initiatives, and may potentially have ramifications for some amateur theatre groups, is the Social Inclusion Strategy adopted by the Scottish Executive. It aims to develop a more inclusive society.

In *Social Inclusion - Opening the doors to a better Scotland* the phrase ‘social exclusion’ is described as:

> a shorthand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown.

Social exclusion is complex: its causes are connected, and its effects themselves become causes of further exclusion; for example, poverty is both a key cause of social exclusion and a key effect. Action to promote social inclusion therefore needs to be both comprehensive and co-ordinated: it must address the full range of issues facing an individual, a family or a community.

To illustrate the need for a more concerted policy to tackle social exclusion the report notes that:

- 31,000 people in Scotland have been unemployed and claiming benefit for more than a year
- 4,000 people aged under 25 have been unemployed and claiming benefit for more than a year
- 4,000 young people leave school every year without any Standard Grades
- 1.2 million people in Scotland, 25% of the population, live in households whose income is less than half the national average
- an estimated 34% of children and 41% of under-5s in Scotland live in such low-income households
- 25% of Scottish houses suffer from dampness and/or condensation.

The report lists many ways in which different agencies need to combine to confront the deprivation exemplified by such statistics. Many of these concern specific aspects such as unemployment, housing, and health, but others are to do with the wider cultural and educational environment which contributes to a cycle of deprivation in many areas. It suggests the need then:
to widen participation in and demand for lifelong learning
to tackle specific barriers to participation individuals face, including ill health,
low self-esteem, homelessness and drug misuse
to eliminate discrimination and inequality on the grounds of gender, race or
disability
to tackle inequalities between communities by empowering and regenerating
deprived communities
to promote a culture of active citizenship, in which self-development,
participation in community and civic life and caring for our disadvantaged
neighbours are key features.

To develop a strategy to tackle the complex issues which contribute to social exclusion,
47 Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs) have been established across Scotland, with 33 of
them based in defined geographic areas and 14 targeted at specific patterns of deprivation
amongst groups of people seen as particularly vulnerable to exclusion. (Ten of these are
in fact to do with young people, while two concern ethnic minorities, and the other two
focus on health and prostitutes.)

Although these documents to do with Social Inclusion make very little reference to the
way in which arts activities may contribute to the sort of regeneration envisaged, anyone
familiar with the development of community arts over the past 30 years will recognise
similarities with the sort of language used in arguing for the role of community arts in
community development. Accordingly, in its Response to the Consultation on National
Cultural Strategy, the Scottish Arts Council called for holistic planning for arts
development and identified the potential role of the arts in the social inclusion strategy:

An example of where such holistic planning would be beneficial is the
Government’s work on social inclusion as culture must be central to any effective
strategy for social inclusion. Work in this area is already proving highly
beneficial. There is a need for the Government to acknowledge the role of culture
and the arts in social inclusion policies to ensure that they are used to contribute
to urban and neighbourhood renewal and community cohesion in deprived areas.
Examples of what might be required could include:

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Social Inclusion - Opening the door to a better Scotland, The Scottish Executive 1999.
- For further details of the areas and themes, see Scottish Executive publication Guidance note on
interaction between Social Inclusion Partnerships and the European Structural Funds (1999).
• all Social Inclusion Partnerships encouraged to have an arts and cultural policy
• evaluation methodology of social inclusion interventions developed to take account of ‘soft impacts’.–
• SAC and other cultural agencies encouraged to work to ensure every SIP in Scotland has at least one arts project during its lifetime.–

In support of such aims, SAC has awarded £150,000 to the SIP in Easterhouse and earmarked £300,000 for such awards in the 1999/2000 financial year. Thus far, it has to be admitted that, while a few existing SIPs already have included some arts activities within their programme, not many have specifically incorporated theatre. But the socially inclusive nature of much community theatre work was a topic which recurred frequently in discussions with practitioners, both amongst those who were not formally involved in SIP programmes and those who were, such as Jill Bauld:

I’m employed as a Community Arts Officer and my specific role at present is to co-ordinate various arts activities within the Great Northern Partnership (GNP) for small areas of Aberdeen which receive social inclusion funding... They’re in the North of Aberdeen and it’s an unusual SIP. I know in Glasgow the SIPs are enormous housing estates. In Aberdeen we have very small pockets of high deprivation, often in areas of great wealth – it makes that deprivation worse. Children who are malnourished are in the same school as those who have everything - it really is quite acute deprivation... The GNP is trying to work with the agencies and parts of the council to bring those four pockets together and to work to change how these people can access everything, boost ability to get employment and children’s attainment levels. It’s quite an important piece of work and the arts have been integral to a lot of things happening.

Murray Dawson, a Community Arts Officer with Aberdeen City Council, has been closely involved with developing video projects in the GNP. He has been involved in projects which, responding to issues raised in local residents’ forums, have led to groups

For further consideration of measuring impacts of the arts, using drama based methodology, see Listening to Ourselves, Gerri Moriarty's background reading paper for the Arts Research Digest Seminar, University of Northumberland, June 2000. We note that in the Scottish Executive’s final document, Scotland’s National Cultural Strategy, it suggests on p1 of the section, Maximising the social benefits of culture, that the ‘evidence remains dominated by “soft” measures’ and asserts that there needs to be a ‘better balance between “soft” measures, such as perception and anecdote, and “hard” measures such as objective evidence, third-party observation and data collection.’ While not denying the desirability of some such “hard” measures, we hope that a proper ‘balance’ is indeed struck in setting out guidelines for evaluation. Because “soft” benefits of participation in the arts are sometimes difficult to calculate and articulate, there is a danger that they can too easily be brushed aside, even though for participants in arts projects they may often be seen as the primary benefits of their participation.

SAC: Response to the Consultation on National Cultural Strategy, 5.1.2, at www.sac.org.uk
making their own documentaries on specific local issues, such as vandalism and school exclusion. But he also sees a significant role for encouraging people to work in more fictional narrative modes, both on the grounds that ‘you can be far more factual in fiction than you can be in a documentary, because it’s not you, it’s someone else’, and because it creates further opportunities for those involved to develop a voice and confidence to express themselves. The GNP will also allow the opportunity to develop co-operation between the film-making groups and youth theatre participants in the area. As a further example of the attempt to tackle issues of exclusion more holistically, negotiations are under way with Aberdeen College to develop ways to certificate training which is being done in the video groups, so that the experience people gain in such work may also enhance their employment prospects. Such moves are very much in line with the thinking behind Community Learning Partnerships which are discussed in the next section.

Although not the product of a Social Inclusion project, inclusiveness was also a significant concern in *The Moon over Musselburgh* project which was developed by Benchtours in partnership with East Lothian Council and the Brunton Theatre Company (as discussed in Chapter 3). It included participants from four local centres for people with various disabilities or mental health problems, as well as participants from a local school, local amateur societies and other members of the East Lothian community. Commending this in her report on the project, Lesley Smith notes:

> such was the success of the creative process and final performance that the Council highlighted the project to COSLA as an example of good practice demonstrating the positive impact that the arts can have on social inclusion._

The importance of social inclusion agendas is also found in Arthur Watt’s discussion of the work of Shetland Arts Trust (SAT), even though this, also, is not formally part of a SIP. Significantly, however, Watt, SAT Arts Officer, emphasises the need for the work to have its own integrity as arts work:

> With Shetland Enterprise they have agendas to do with economic development, to do with building communities, social inclusion... The work of Shetland Arts Trust can enhance that. Rather than saying what can those agencies do for us, it's what

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Lesley Smith, Principal Arts Officer, East Lothian Council. Written communication, July 2000
can we do for those agencies. Again it's about building that trust and showing we're in a position to deliver.

If you take drama development for example, my job is to set the overall framework but with the people who are operating in the specific areas, it's ensuring that you achieve the right outputs within that. It gives a huge amount of scope for that individual to bring their own personality, own creative solutions and feeling a sense of ownership for the direction of that work. For me it's absolutely crucial that you achieve that because it then provides motivation and ensures the best possible results, particularly when you have highly creative individuals that basically have a huge amount to offer. You don't want to be stifling that, you want to be continually pushing forward the boundaries and my Drama Development Officer is continually pushing against those boundaries, to the extent that sometimes you burst into a serious sweat with some particular project you think my God how's he going to do this? But that's what develop, we have to embrace and accept everyone in that community. There is a big incoming population, but we don't have racial issues in terms of colour. We have racial issues in that anyone who isn't from Shetland is 'Sooth'. But what makes the vibrancy of the community in some ways is that historically it's always been at a nautical cross-roads, with influences from the trade routes. Lerwick is quite cosmopolitan. Although we have to accept and celebrate traditional culture, we also have to develop it and it needs to be living culture - the inclusion of everyone for me is vitally important. With the oil industry, there has been a huge influx of people and we are all Shetland based and should be part of a developing Shetland culture.

Regarding special needs, my philosophy is rather than having a dedicated group, I would rather have groups with an inclusive policy - everyone supporting everyone else. We need to do more work to get that message across, that theatre is there for everyone and anyone and that we can not only accommodate but celebrate those special needs.

Among Community Arts Workers and Community Theatre Workers, therefore, the ideas of inclusive practice are not new – they have their origins in the paradigm of cultural democracy which developed in the late 1960s, as discussed in Chapter One. Despite this commitment to the aims of social inclusion, however, there is debate emerging amongst some practitioners over how the government-defined strategy is being implemented – whether in demarcated SIPs or through the adoption of social inclusion as a concern in
other funding decisions. While strategies concerning social inclusion espouse the need to involve targeted communities and groups in defining and responding to the ways in which they are excluded, some would argue that, in practice, the identification of the ‘socially excluded’ and the nature of their exclusion sometimes lies too much in the hands of agencies and politicians, rather than being the product of negotiation between these and those who are notionally ‘excluded’. (One product of their exclusion is often that they have little opportunity to say how they perceive their exclusion and what they feel may be the causes of it.) The temptation then is to devise top-down schemes where the ‘excluded’ are only brought in at the point of delivery as recipients of policies which others think will benefit them. This may open up the dangers of opportunism on the part of various agencies and authorities which naturally want to be seen to be ‘doing their bit’ by the social inclusion agenda, with the result that schemes may be devised which are inappropriate to the circumstances of their implementation, but which have taken on a shape and momentum which it becomes difficult for the ‘excluded’ themselves to modify in any substantial way. In such circumstances there may sometimes be the danger that, in pursuing new schemes, what is brought in fails to take full account of already existing activities which may have a potential role to play.

This was felt to be the case, for example, in the way one local authority scheme which has recently been awarded lottery funding has incorporated youth theatre into its strategy:

> I just put my head in my hands. Aren’t we lucky, we have £200,000 given to the shire and city to do youth theatre and what it’s doing is annihilating all the youth theatre set up already. Because it’s money to do something new, all the projects that are struggling and facing extinction are getting told that there is no more money. We have this £200,000, but we can’t give it to anything that’s already happening. They’re going to set up youth theatres in schools and only in schools. As a parent I’ve been closely involved with a youth theatre in the shire which has just had to close. It’s been going for two years and the closure is a direct result of that £200,000, because their application went to the lottery at the same time as the £200,000 bid. Of course, they’re going to give the money to a nice umbrella project that looks as though it’s going to do all things for all people. What it’s doing isn’t tackling social inclusion because what they’re going to set up in the

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*Cf Social Inclusion - Opening the door to a better Scotland*, ‘Government and others should not and cannot sit at the centre and plan people's lives. Individuals and communities should be supported to express their needs and aspirations and to influence decisions made on their behalf.’
shire hasn’t even got a transport budget - if you’re working in a rural community,
you’re only going to get people in that small area where the school is or if their
mum and dad drive... My own children probably won’t have the opportunity of
accessing youth theatre and I think that’s incredibly important.

While the scheme’s proponents may challenge some of the assertions here, in some ways
their absolute accuracy or not is almost beside the point. What is to the point is that these
sentiments, which were echoed in other conversations, reflect a grassroots sense that a
‘grand scheme’ is going ahead in a way which apparently takes no account of already
existing activities amongst young people and the impact that it may have on them.
Unfortunately, this is a not uncommon experience elsewhere.

The problems involved in creating a genuine dialogue between those on the ground and
agencies concerned with developing programmes was also an issue highlighted by Faye
Milligan in Craigmillar. Milligan was introduced to theatre through her participation in
Craigmillar Festival projects as a teenager, became a professional actress, and now works
in community theatre, running Handrolled Productions. She says:

The people who run the drama here are not paid and Peter and Linda are doing it
in their own time. Ideally what you would have is five workshops – adults,
youths, children, special needs, and the other arts. That’s the people to talk to and
the staff that work here, especially the ones who live and work in this community.
It’s okay to talk to folk who just work in the community but they don’t know half
of what goes on... But someone who lives and works in the community, they
know what’s going on... The most important thing is talking to people in
communities – because they’re the ones with the problems – and listening to
them. So many do not listen. It’s a massive thing – listening. We can talk till
we’re blue in the face but they will not listen, they ignore it.

A further problem associated with the structures for implementing social inclusion in arts
funding which was raised by several practitioners was the risk of it being seen in purely
instrumentalist ways, which may then either limit what sort of arts work may be done or
ghettoise the work as not actually ‘art’, not something which has a real place which
should be recognised within mainstream arts infrastructures. Jan-Bert Van Den Berg,
Director of Artlink argued for the importance of retaining a sense of the arts as an

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From an interview with an Aberdeen parent in June 2000.
expression of who you are, rather than just being a means of fulfilling predetermined social or economic criteria:

  It is important that it isn't confined only to ideas of ‘arts lead to employment, arts lead to training or arts are education, arts are this or that’. Art is for me – it is part of how I express my identity. For me arts have led to employment in a particular direction, it may lead out of that into the voluntary sector and employment that is not necessarily arts-related. That is not necessarily different for someone with complex learning difficulties. Arts lead to understanding yourself better, how you relate to others, and they provide opportunities to make relevant connections.

Appendix 3

Questionnaires

As explained in the body of the report, a number of questionnaires were sent to groups and group members. Initially, amateur groups received a questionnaire asking for basic information about their activity (3.1); subsequently, members of a number of groups were given questionnaires to complete, which sought information about their background, involvement and aspirations (3.2). Variations on these basic questionnaires were then developed for use with youth theatre groups (3.3) and the SYT (3.4). Community groups and their members also received questionnaires which were fundamentally similar, but included a few further questions about how they are organised.

(To save space in publishing these, the room allowed for answering questions has been compressed in the following sample questionnaires. Considerable space in the originals allowed plenty of opportunity for participants to develop answers.)
Appendix 3.1:

Questionnaire for Amateur Groups

Name and Address of Group : ...........................................
Name and position of contact : ...........................................
Telephone No : ...........................................
E-mail : ...........................................
Fax : ...........................................

1. Year group founded : ............
2. Current number of members : i) ........... Females ii) ........... Males
4. Does the group run separate youth theatre activities? i) Yes ii) No
If so, please give details:...........................................
5. Estimated annual budget : ...........................................
6. Membership fee? : .............
Concessionary Rate? : ............

7. Other sources of funding (Please circle any applicable answers. If you are happy to do so, it would be helpful if you could insert actual amounts or percentages):
i) box office ........... ii) local sponsorship ........... iii) local authority ............
iv) Arts Council ........... v) fund-raising events ........... vi) other ............

8. What sort of venues do you use for productions and rehearsals?
9. Do you pay hire charges for these venues? i) Yes ii) No
10. If premises are owned by local authority, do you pay a reduced rate? i) Yes ii) No
11. Does the group own or hire (please circle):
i) lighting and sound equipment : a) owns b) hires
ii) sets : a) owns b) hires
iii) costumes : a) owns b) hires

12. Does the group share resources with other similar groups? If yes, please give details.
13. How many productions does the group mount each year?:
i) ........... one-act plays (or equivalent) No. of performances : ............
ii) ........... full-length plays No. of performances : ............
iii) ……… Pantomimes No. of performances : ………

14. Which of the following has the group done in the past five years? (please circle; give examples if you wish):
   a) modern Scots writers (post 1945) ……………………………………………………………
   b) earlier Scots writers (pre-1945) ……………………………………………………………
   c) modern comedies …………………………………………………………………………..
   d) modern ‘serious’ drama ………………………………………………………………………
   e) musicals ………………………………………………………………………………………...
   f) classic texts ………………………………………………………………………………………
   g) Pantomimes ………………………………………………………………………………………
   h) plays by local writer ……………………………………………………………………………
   i) play by member of the group …………………………………………………………………
   j) group-devised shows ……………………………………………………………………………
   k) other ? : …………………………………………………………………………………………

15. Please list productions done in the past year:

16. Approximate total audiences per year at local performances : ………………………

17. Do you take part in the SCDA festivals and competitions: i) Yes ii) No

18. Apart from rehearsals for productions, do members take part in any other workshop/training activities through the year? : i) Yes ii) No

If so, could you please give an idea of what sort of activities:
Are these led by a) professional practitioners b) SCDA advisors c) other…………

19. Does the group bring in professional practitioners to contribute to productions?
   i) Yes ii) No

If yes, please give examples ………………………………………………………………………

20. Is there a local professional theatre company which provides your group with support or resources? i) Yes ii) No If yes, please give examples:

21. If funds were available, would members like to have guest workshops in any of the following areas? : a) acting b) directing c) movement d) voice e) designing f) lighting g) sound h) devising i) writing j) leading a workshop k) other (please state) ………………………………………

22. Does the group have any members with disabilities? i) Yes ii) No

If yes, in which areas of activity are they participating……………………………………

23. How does the group encourage new members to join…………………

24. Is your group part of a network of local and/or national organisations?:
   i) Yes ii) No If yes, which ones…………………………………………………

25. Has your group ever applied to the Scottish Arts Council or the National Lottery Fund for support?  
   i) Yes  
   ii) No  

   If yes, please give details: …………………………………………………………………………………………………

26. Please give details (titles & dates) of any productions you are staging in the next six months:

27. After collating the initial results of this survey, we will be approaching a number of groups to do more in-depth study of their activities. (This will probably involve meeting with members of the group and visiting one of its productions.) Would your group be interested in participating in this further stage of the research?  
   i) Yes  
   ii) No

Appendix 3.2:

**Amateur Group Members’ Questionnaire**

1. Name of theatre group …………………………………………………………………

2. In what age bracket are you? Please ring.  
   a) 15-20  
   b) 20-30  
   c) 30-40  
   d) 40-50  
   e) 50-60  
   f) 60-70  
   g) over 70

3. What is your occupation? (If retired, please also state what it was before retirement):  
   …………………………………………………………………………………………………

4. What level of educational qualifications do you have? Please ring appropriate answer:  
   a) Secondary School  
   b) Further Education (college)  
   c) Higher Education (university)  
   d) Post-graduate

3. Do you participate in other organised activities in your local community besides amateur theatre?  
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   If yes, please give examples:…..

4. Do you do other arts activities beside amateur theatre?  
   a) Yes  
   b) No  
   If yes, please give examples: ….

5. How many times have you attended a professional theatre production in the last year?  
   a) 1-4  
   b) 5-8  
   c) 9-12  
   d) More than 12

3. What professional theatre do you like? Examples of companies you like:  
   Types of Plays/Performances:

4. How would you describe your annual household income?
a) £1 - £10,000   b) £10,000 - £20,000  
c) £20,000 - £30,000   d) £30,000 - £40,000  e) Over £40,000

5. How long have you been involved with your theatre company?

6. How did you become involved with your group?

7. Did you have any previous experience of taking part in drama activity before joining the group?
   a) Yes    b) No  
   If yes, please say in what way: 

13. What do you think are your main reasons for joining and maintaining involvement with your group?

14. Please ring three of the following as principal reasons for being involved in drama activities:
   a) It’s fun  
b) It provides me with a creative outlet  
c) I enjoy the social interaction it provides  
d) I enjoy plays  
e) It provides different challenges from daily life  
f) The group fulfils a need in the local community  
g) Other (please specify) ……………………………………………………………

15. Approximately how many hours a month do you devote on average to drama activity?
   a) 5-10 hours   b) 10-20    c) 20-30    d) more than 30

16. Apart from rehearsals does your group organise other workshop activities?
   a) Yes    b) No  
   If so, have you taken part?
   a) Yes    b) No  
   Would you like to see it organise more such activities?
   a) Yes    b) No

17. Do you think public funding bodies such as the Scottish Arts Council and local authorities could do more to support amateur theatre activities?
   a) Yes    b) No  
   If yes, in what ways would you suggest they should do so?

18. Any other comments you would like to add?
Appendix 3.3:

Youth Theatre Group Members Questionnaire

Name of theatre group ……………………………………………………………

1. In what age bracket are you? Please ring.
   a) 10-14      b) 15-18       c) 19-25

2. Are you a) female    b) male

3. i) Are you still at school?
    a) Yes        b) No

   ii) If yes, in what year? …………………………………………………..

   iii) If no, please state what employment you are in or if you are unemployed : …………………………………………………..

   iv) If you are taking a further or higher education course please state what you are studying………………………………………………

   iv) If still at school, what do you hope to do upon completing school?

3. What sort of drama activity do you or have you done at school?
   a) none     b) drama workshops - but not studying drama      c) school plays
   d) studying Drama for Standard Grade   e) studying Drama for Highers

5. Do you participate in other organised activities in your local community besides theatre?
   a) Yes       b) No       If yes, please give examples........

6. Do you do other arts activities beside theatre?
   a) Yes        b) No       If yes, please give examples........

7. How long have you been involved with the theatre group?

8. How did you become involved with your group?

9. Apart from school did you have any previous experience of taking part in drama activity before joining the group?
   a) Yes        b) No       If yes, please say in what way: ........

10. What do you think are your main reasons for joining and staying involved with your group?  ………………………………………………………………………………...
11. Approximately how many hours a month do you devote on average to drama activity? a) 5-10 hours b) 10-20 c) 20-30

12. Please ring statements which seem applicable to your group:
   a) it is mostly concerned with workshops for participants
   b) it is mostly concerned with creating pieces for public performance
   c) it mostly uses already scripted plays
   d) it mostly develops scripts through devising, with participants contributing
   e) performances play to the general public
   f) performances mostly play to selected audiences
   g) performances are mostly attended by friends and relatives of the participants

13. Please ring what you see as the TWO major aims of the group:
   a) it aims to develop participants’ theatre skills
   b) it aims to develop participants’ general self-confidence and self-expression
   c) it aims to explore issues of concern in the participants’ lives
   d) it aims to explore issues of general social concern
   e) it aims to raise issues of concern in the local community
   f) it aims to provide entertainment for the local community

13. How effectively do you think the group achieves these aims?
   a) Very effectively b) Quite effectively c) Should do better d) Poorly

14. What best describes the way your group is run?
   a) A committee organises activities
   b) General group discussion
   c) A drama worker organises activities
   d) A drama worker develops activities in response to group ideas or requests
   e) Other (please describe) .................................................................

15. Apart from rehearsals does your group organise other workshop activities?
   a) Yes b) No

   If so, have you taken part?
a) Yes    b) No
Would you like to see it organise more such activities?
  a) Yes    b) No

17. Have you been involved with other youth theatre groups, such as a regional youth theatre or Scottish Youth Theatre?
  a) yes    b) no    If so, which?

18. What sort of drama / plays do you most enjoy taking part in?

19. How many times have you attended a professional theatre production in the last year?
  a) none    b) 1-3    c) 4-6    d) more
  What professional theatre do you like? Examples of companies you like:
  Types of Plays/Performances:

20. Are your parents in employment? ...........
  If so, what do they do? .................................................................

21. Do you think there are enough activities for young people in your area?
  a) yes    b) no
  If no, what else would you like to see happening?

22. Any other comments you would like to add? .................................................................
Appendix 3.4

**S.Y.T. Questionnaire**

Name of Project : .................................................................

1. In what age bracket are you? Please ring.
   a) 10-14   b) 15-18   c) 19-25

2. Are you  a) female   b) male

3. i) Are you still at school?
   a) Yes   b) No

   ii) If yes, in what year? ....................................................

A. If no, please state what employment you are in or if you are unemployed :

iv) If you are taking a further or higher education course please state what you are studying.................................

B. If still at school, what do you hope to do upon completing school?

3. What sort of drama activity do you or have you done at school?
   a) none   b) drama workshops - but not studying drama   c) school plays
   d) studying Drama for Standard Grade   e) studying Drama for Highers

4. Outside your participation in this project, are you a member of EITHER
   a Youth Theatre group? :   a) Yes   b) No

   OR

   a mixed ages amateur theatre group?   a) Yes   b) No

If you answered **YES** to question 5, please answer questions 6-13 before moving on. If you answered **NO** to question 5, please move on to question 14.

5. How long have you been involved with your youth theatre or amateur theatre group?
   ........................................................................................................

7. Apart from school did you have any previous experience of taking part in drama activity before joining the group?
   a) Yes   b) No     If yes, please say in what way:

8. What do you think are your main reasons for joining and staying involved with your group?
   ...............................................................................................……...

9. Approximately how many hours a month do you devote on average to drama activity?
   a) 5-10 hours   b) 10-20   c) 20-30
10. What best describes the way your group is run?
   a) A committee organises activities
   b) General group discussion
   c) A drama worker organises activities
   d) A drama worker develops activities in response to group ideas or requests
   e) Other (please describe)……………………………………………………..

11. Please ring statements which seem applicable to your group :
   a) it is mostly concerned with workshops for participants
   b) it is mostly concerned with creating pieces for public performance
   c) it mostly uses already scripted plays
   d) it mostly develops scripts through devising, with participants contributing
   e) performances play to the general public
   f) performances mostly play to selected audiences
   g) performances are mostly attended by friends and relatives of the participants

12. Please ring what you see as TWO major aims of the group :
   a) it aims to develop participants’ theatre skills
   b) it aims to develop participants’ general self-confidence and self-expression
   c) it aims to explore issues of concern in the participants’ lives
   d) it aims to explore issues of general social concern
   e) it aims to raise issues of concern in the local community
   f) it aims to provide entertainment for the local community

13. Apart from rehearsals does your group organise other workshop activities?
   a) Yes   b) No
   If so, have you taken part?
   a) Yes   b) No
   Would you like to see it organise more such activities?
   a) Yes   b) No

14. What do you think are the main things you have gained from participation in this project?
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………………………………………………………………………………………

15. Please ring what you see as TWO major aims of the project :
   a) it aims to develop participants’ theatre and other arts skills
b) it aims to develop participants’ general self-confidence and self-expression  
c) it aims to explore issues of concern in the participants’ lives  
d) it aims to explore issues of general social concern  
e) it aims to raise issues of concern in the community  
f) it aims to provide entertainment for the community  
g) other (please specify)…………………………………………………………

15. Do you think you are more or less likely to take part in other drama / community arts activities as a result of participating in this project?  
a) More likely    b) Less likely    c) Unsure  

17. Do you participate in other organised activities in your local community besides theatre?  
a) Yes    b) No    If yes, please give examples.................

18. Do you do other arts activities beside theatre?  
a) Yes    b) No  
If yes, please give examples ..............................................................

19. Are your parents in employment? ...........
    If so, what do they do? .................................................................

20. What sort of drama / plays do you most enjoy taking part in?  

21. How many times have you attended a professional theatre production in the last year?  
a) none    b) 1-3    c) 4-6    d) more  
What professional theatre do you like? Examples of companies you like :  
What types of Plays/Performances :

22. Would you like to see more provision for activity of this sort in your local area?  
a) Yes    b) No    c) Satisfactory as is  

23. Do you think there are enough activities for young people in your area?  
a) yes    b) no  
If no, what else would you like to see happening?  

24. Any other comments you would like to add?
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Arts Council of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACGB</td>
<td>Arts Council of Great Britain</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEMA</td>
<td>Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CFS</td>
<td>Craigmillar Festival Society</td>
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<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Cultural Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>NODA</td>
<td>National Operatic and Dramatic Association</td>
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<td>PH2000</td>
<td>Pan Highland 2000</td>
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<td>SAC</td>
<td>Scottish Arts Council</td>
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<td>SCDA</td>
<td>Scottish Community Drama Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>Social Inclusion Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>SYT</td>
<td>Scottish Youth Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIE</td>
<td>Theatre in Education</td>
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<td>WLYT</td>
<td>West Lothian Youth Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YT</td>
<td>Youth Theatre</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 5

List of interviewees

We would like to express our thanks to the following who gave up valuable time to be interviewed by us. We apologise to anyone whose name has been omitted.

Antonine Players, Bishopbriggs
Ardler Drama Group, Dundee
David Atherton, Cultural Services Education Officer, Aberdeen City Council
Atholl Players
Julie Austin, Outreach Officer, Scottish Youth Theatre
Morna Barron, Chair of SCDA
John Batty, Drama Artist in Residence, Eden Court Theatre
Marslie Baxter, Shetland County Drama Committee
Jan-bert van den Berg, Director, Artlink, Lothian
Rosina Bonsu, Dance Artist and Choreographer
Jill Bould, Community Arts Officer, Aberdeen
Harminder Berman, Cultural Diversity Officer, Glasgow City Council
Carnoustie Theatre Club
Norrie Coulson, Arts & Heritage Manager Dundee City Council
Clark Crystal, Benchtours Theatre Company
Murray Dawson, Community Arts Officer, Aberdeen
Arthur Deans, Manager, Aberdeen Arts Centre
Phil Denning, Community Learning Scotland
Dunlop Players
Eastwood Theatre Users' group
Sian Fiddimore, Arts Agency Manager, WHALE
Jon Gray, Access Cultural Industries, Wester Hailes
Henry Halluch, Senior Community Education Worker, St. Bride's Centre, Edinburgh
Siobham Harkins, Lone Rangers Community Theatre, Glasgow
John Haswell, Drama Development Officer, Shetland Arts Trust
Noel Henderson, Assistant Manager Isles Burgh Community Centre & Garrison Theatre and Arts Tourism Manager for Shetland
Graham Hewittson, Angus Council Officer with responsibility for developing community based arts and member of Forfar Dramatic Society
Highwayman Youth Theatre, Dundee
Pip Hills, PH2000
Guy Hollands, Theatre Director and Director of Community Projects at the Citizens’ Theatre, Glasgow
Isles Burgh Drama Group, Shetland
Annie Inglis, Chair of Aberdeen Arts Centre and Workshop and Project Leader
Scott Johnston, Artistic Director, West Lothian Youth Theatre
Letham Drama Group
Robert Livingston, Director, HiArts
Mary McCluskey, Artistic Director, Scottish Youth Theatre
Kate McColl, Director, Red Road Young ’Uns
Fiona McFarlane, Chair of Church Hill Theatre Users' Forum, Edinburgh
Kirstin McIver, Drama Worker, Positively Unemployed Group and Springwell Autumn Players, St. Bride's Centre, Edinburgh
Muriel Ann Macleod, Director, Highland Theatre
Andrea McMillan Community Arts Officer, Glasgow City Council
Lorenzo Mele, 7:84 Outreach Director
Frank Millar, Pearce Institute Youth Theatre, Govan and CRAN
Faye Milligan, Hand Rolled Productions, Craigmillar
Moon Over Musselburgh Community Theatre Project participants
Gary Morton, Arts Development Officer, East Renfrewshire Council
Open Door Theatre Company, Dundee
Colin Peter, Church Hill Theatre Users' Forum and SCDA youth development
Perth Drama Club
Robert Rae, Director Theatre Workshop, Edinburgh
Alison Reeves, Starfeis drama worker, Eden Court Theatre
Simon Ross, Education Officer, Scottish Youth Theatre
Lilla Scott, Community Arts Service Perth & Kinross Council
Simon Sharkey, Artistic Director, Cumbernauld Theatre
Stephen Stenning, Associate Director - Community Dundee Rep. Theatre
Izzy Swanson, Drama Co-ordinator for Education Department, Shetland and Open Door
Amateur Dramatic Company
Toonspeak Youth Theatre participants and Stephen King, Director
Arthur Watt, Arts Officer, Shetland Arts Trust
Jenny Wilson, Director Dumfries and Galloway Arts Association
Robin Wilson, Theatreworks, Glasgow

We are grateful for written contributions from:

Jane Garvie, Community Programme Coordinator, Aberdeen Alternative Festival
John Haswell, Drama Development Officer, Shetland Arts Trust
Pip Hills, PH2000
Fiona McFarlane, Chair Church Hill Theatre Users' Forum
Brian McGeoch, Arts Links Officer South Lanarkshire Council
Lesley Smith, Principal Arts Officer East Lothian Council

Thanks also go to the dozens of people who talked with us on the telephone and provided much valuable information and advice.
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