

# DRÀMA | GAELIC GÀIDHLIG | DRAMA



In 2013, year 2 of Glasgow Life's Gaelic Arts Strategy we commissioned 6 new Gaelic Drama works-in-progress which were performed at the Victorian Bar, Tron Theatre, Glasgow. Our aim was to develop new Gaelic Drama opportunities for professional Gaelic speaking playwrights, directors and actors. This was achieved by producing a series of exciting new short pieces all at different stages of development. We have now collated details of the projects, responses and data from audiences and the artists who took part.

The success of these projects is shown by the many new collaborations, relationships, additional funding and professional developments that have emerged during the process. The works-in-progress have continued their development since these initial presentations at the Tron, some in partnership with Glasgow Life and others have succeeded in attracting independent funding and a profile in their own right.

341 people attended the events [35 being non-Gaelic speakers] and a further 1207 people interacted with sònaSonas, Street Theatre [the majority non-Gaelic speakers]. These figures are a demonstration of the demand for professional Gaelic Drama in Glasgow. Our audience feedback forms showed that all the performance achieved an approval rating averaging between 82-100% and our associated post show discussions proved to be a key audience engagement tool.

Glasgow Life is now looking at their Gaelic Drama activity for 2015-2018. Our plans will be informed by our evaluation, successes and challenges, of this project as well as those of our broader arts and drama programme. Further consultation with other agencies and practitioners will ensure that we continue to grow and produce exciting and innovative Gaelic drama projects in the city of Glasgow in the years to come.



*"It has been a real challenge for me to direct a Gaelic text, but I have loved exploring the rich language of this translation, and it has made me approach the play afresh. Although it is a work in progress I hope we can show that Shakespeare can work in a contemporary setting in Gaelic"*

Liz Carruthers

*"I've translated many kind of texts, from poetry to dry minutes of meetings, but Shakespeare has to be considered the ultimate challenge! while the two languages are utterly different, the underlying iambic rhythm of the original helps to keep the translator on track. I hope that some at least of the wonderful quality of the original has come through into the Gaelic"*

Ian MacDonald

*"I appreciate the support from Glasgow Life at each stage of developing MacBheatha and it has helped me to develop my work in a different direction"*

Daibhidh Walker

*"There is a sense of intimacy at play here which is crucial to a re-telling of the story that taps into a spit and sawdust contemporary reinvention of the oral tradition. Whatever happens next in the project's development ... it is important that this sensibility is retained in a version that makes Shakespeare look like a very local lad"*

Neil Cooper, The Herald (work-in-progress, Tron)

## MacBheatha

Performed 29th November 1.30pm, 8.30pm

Duration 25 mins

Post show discussion

A short version of Macbeth in Gaelic

Translated and adapted by Ian MacDonald

Performed by Daibhidh Walker

Directed by Liz Carruthers

A man has stumbled into the Tron bar in Glasgow with wild stories about power, obsession, guilt, ghosts and treachery. Fending off phone calls and facebook messages he grows more and more paranoid, before his ambition and madness lead him to his undoing. This one man contemporary version allowed Daibhidh Walker to develop his work as an actor with a classical text in Gaelic. Text clues in English were projected on the walls to signal significant monologues throughout the piece and Shakespeare's scenes were linked by contemporary Gaelic language devised by the company.

### Some Stats

- Attendance: 50 Matinee / 50 evening performance
- 82% of audience completed questionnaire
- 100% enjoyed the performance
- 100% rated their experience as either good or very good
- 100% would like to see the performance developed to a full production



### Next Stage...

Following on from the success of the first work in progress Daibhidh Walker's company successfully secured funding to develop the piece to include the character of Lady Macbeth, extend the piece to a hour long performance and develop a visual design for the new version. The funds from Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Open Gaelic Drama Fund, with on-going support from Glasgow life enabled the company to produce the latest stage of the work at the Circle Studio at the Citizen's Theatre, September 2014. The six performances attracted to a large extent full houses as well as exceptional reviews in the national press. The company hope to take **MacBheatha** to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and there has been interest from various agencies for a national and international tour.

## Beasts of Holm

February 27th 2013

Performance duration 30 mins

Post show discussion

Written & Performed by Mairi Morrison

Directed by John Binnie

Music from Mòilidh NicGriogair & Sarah Lang

MacDonald, Sgoil Gàidhlig Ghlaschu

The piece opens with a young Lewis woman preparing for the return of her father and sweetheart from the First World War in the early hours of Wednesday 1st January 1919. They are sailing home on the HMY Iolaire which is carrying 280 triumphant seamen. Tragedy struck when just yards from the safety of Stornoway harbour in Lewis the boat hit rocks known as the beasts of Holm and 205 men perished. The audience are given an insight into the impact of this key catastrophe in island history, where few were left unaffected by the tragedy and entire villages were left without fathers, husbands and brothers.

**Beasts of Holm** was written by Mairi whilst she was studying at RSAMD. Glasgow Life invited her to revisit her original work for this project. John Binnie directed the original play for the Edinburgh Fringe Festival and helped devise the Gaelic extract of the play for the work-in-progress. Following the performance there was an after show discussion, with performances of poetry and song influenced and inspired by the event in 1919. The audience included relatives of men who had been on the Iolaire that night.



### Sample of Audience Comments...

*"Would have given a standing ovation - it deserved it!"*

*"Emotionally powerful, even for a non speaker - good subject, little known"*

*"I think it's important that people understand the significance of the event. The future production hopefully will bring it to a wider audience"*

### Some Stats

- Attendance: 50
- 82% of audience completed questionnaire
- 100% enjoyed the performance
- 100% rated their experience as either good or very good
- 100% would like to see the performance developed to a full production



### Next Stage...

Mairi would like to bring this work to a national and international audience and she is seeking funding in partnership with Glasgow Life and other agencies.

*"I've approached it in Gaelic this time and that was an interesting process as it's been great to explore the effects of another language on the piece. Never underestimate the power of a good Lewis Gaelic phrase – it can just hit the spot."*

Mairi Morrison



# Mac an-t

Performance Duration 35mins  
Matinee Performance & Evening performance  
Post show discussion

Written and Performed by Iain Macrae  
Directed by Liz Carruthers  
Music by Jim Mackay

Legend has it that Mac an t-Sronaich was a notorious robber and murderer who terrorised the population of Lewis and Harris, committing no fewer than 15 murders before being hanged. The piece flitted between the fantasy and reality of this story and Iain's physical and sympathetic performance showed a new dimension to the notorious yet vulnerable character. This performance attempted to use lighting and music to illustrate **Mac an-t's** gruelling love quest, encountering (and possibly killing) various characters on the way, leaving the audience to question the validity of the legend.

*"It was useful to have an opportunity to have the time and space to write a story that has always fascinated me. I think it is the gap between legend and fact that most interests me about Mac an t-Sronaich. There is little of substance known about the man. This story is only an echo in the gap."*

Iain Macrae

### Sample of Audience Comments...

*"Iain is a talented actor and it's a compelling story for a one-man piece"*

*"Superb performance, enjoyed greatly"*

*"Hope Gaelic drama can remain active and accessible as this one was"*

### Some Stats

- Attendance: Matinee 36 / Evening 38
- 69% of audience completed questionnaire
- 100% enjoyed the performance
- 83% rated their experience as either good or very good
- 72% would like to see the performance developed to a full production [the remainder stating that they like the performance as it was]



### Next Stage...

Iain and Liz are looking for funding to develop the piece into a full length play with three actors and a musician with a view to a nation wide tour. Iain has been invited to further develop **Mac an-t** at Leabhar 's Craic on Saturday 28th March.

Iain will be developing three new pieces as part of the Urlar project in partnership with The Playwrights' Studio Scotland, with a presentation of the work on Thursday the 16th January 2014 at the CCA.



# As an Dorchadas (From the Darkness)

25th APRIL 2013, 2pm, 8.30pm  
2pm Matinee & 8.30pm Evening Performance  
Post show discussion

Written & Directed by Catriona Lexy Campbell  
Performed by Beth Frieden, Catriona Lexy Campbell and musician Dòmhnall Alasdair Campbell.

Catriona Lexy used her childhood experience of living on the Isle of Lewis, where there would often be power-cuts with the stormy weather, to write this piece. Unable to use their electrical appliances, people had to find other ways to pass the long dark nights. Although it was always a bit scary at first, it wouldn't be long until telling stories, playing games and singing together had filled the void and there was always some element of disappointment when the electricity was restored. This short work aimed to recreate a little bit of that magic.

*"For myself, it was very beneficial to have the opportunity to see how an audience would react to the concept and also to identify the difficulties in a show that has very little external light. I was also pleased to have the opportunity to perform on-stage at such a prestigious theatre after a fairly long period away and it gave me a great confidence boost in the run-up to other acting projects."*

Catriona Lexy Campbell

*"I think giving emerging artists a chance to work with more established artists and giving established artists a platform to explore new writing is a great idea, because new writing and more artists is what Gaelic drama needs. I would also love to see a program bringing Gaelic writers together with actors to produce new work"*

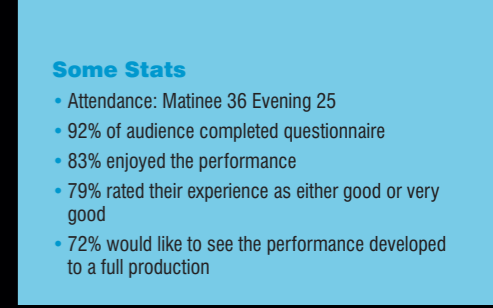
Beth Frieden

### Sample of Audience Comments...

*"Modern drama, especially with a sense of humour is always good"*

*"Loved it, reminded me of childhood power cuts at home"*

*"Very good, loved how it was staged, nice atmosphere"*



### Some Stats

- Attendance: Matinee 36 Evening 25
- 92% of audience completed questionnaire
- 83% enjoyed the performance
- 79% rated their experience as either good or very good
- 72% would like to see the performance developed to a full production



### Next Stage...

Catriona Lexy hopes to work with Glasgow Life and other national agencies to develop the piece into a full scale site specific work which would tour to Gaelic communities exploring story, song and music – in the darkness.

As a result of her performance in this piece Catriona Lexy was cast as Lady Macbeth in MacBheatha.

# sònaSonas

May 22th Presentation of work to Street theatre representatives followed by a discussion

May 23rd, Two street performances on Buchanan Street, Glasgow

15th June, Mela, Kelvingrove

26th & 28th July, Merchant City Festival

Post show discussion

Artistic Director Ariel Killick with performances from Beth Freidman, Catriona Lexy Campbell & Dòl Eoin MacKinnon

sònaSonas, the Gaelic street theatre company were invited to developed performances in Gaelic bilingual street theatre for Glasgow Life's main festivals in 2013; The Mela & Merchant City Festival. The development period was held at Trongate 103 and master classes with one of Britain's leading street theatre companies, the Natural Theatre Company, were incorporated into the development period. The aim of the work was to raise awareness around Gaelic within the wider context of mass participation festivals and to gently encourage the public to reconsider their view of Gaelic, inviting them to enjoy the language in an open & interactive way. Two pieces were developed:

**Pop Up Gaelic Café** - The café where Gaelic's on the menu! Free tea, shortbread, live music and a selection of tasty topics on the Gaelic Menu, with the 'Naughty Bits' for Dessert being especially popular... and **The Great Gaelic Ferry...on tour!**

The Gaelic-speaking ferry crew came to Glasgow to test their ferrying skills on the busy streets of Glasgow... Passengers received their own bilingual ticket but the crew can't take any responsibility for sudden onsets of seasickness, shark attacks and random outbursts of Gaelic-speaking!

*"I had a great time working with Mark Bishop of the Natural Theatre Company. He really helped me to understand the philosophy and the aims of street theatre in an enjoyable and creative way – we discovered many area of commonality in our joint practice"*

Ariel Killick

## Sample of Audience Comments...

*"Fabulous experience a good way to promote our heritage and language"*

*"What a great introduction to a new language! Fun! Fun! Fun!"*

*"I've done Polish and Italian and this is way more fun and a great way to learn a language"*

## Attendance Figures

- Presentation & Discussion (14)
- Buchanan Street (450)
- Mela (280)
- Merchant City Festival Gaelic Café (107) and Ferries (90)



## Next Stage...

Following the development of this work the pieces were performed in SkainosFest, East Belfast and at Rights and Revelry, the Ulster Hall, premier Irish Language Festival in Northern Ireland.

SònaSonas will be working with Glasgow Life during the Commonwealth Games 2014's Cultural Programme where Gaelic Ferries will sail the streets. There will be opportunities for drama practitioners in Glasgow and beyond to get involved.



# Hallaig

Performance 28th June 2013, 8.30pm

Duration 35mins

Post show discussion

Writer **Iain Finlay MacLeod**

Director **Kath Burlinson**

Performers:

Eimear **Mairi Morrison**

Somhairle **Martin MacIntyre**

Sorcha **Maeve MacKinnon**

**Hallaig** was a work in progress written by Iain Finlay Macleod with story and characters inspired by two of Sorley MacLean's best known poems - *Hallaig* and *The Choice*. The piece explored the small moments and choices we make all the time, and the different fictions that can spin out of one such choice. Iain Finlay took some aspects of Somhairle's own poetical story and used them to build a new story. These new characters echo those things which appear regularly in his work - unrequited love, his lack of bravery in not facing up to his main test (in his case, the Spanish Civil War), and connection to place.

*"I enjoyed working on the piece a lot, a great director and cast. It was great to be doing some Gaelic drama, and know that an audience would come and see it. It was also an important stepping stone in developing further work and a company structure for Robhanis. Without this as something to aim for, I doubt I would have developed the Gaelic Theatre Company idea, so it was very good in that sense."*

Iain F MacLeod

*"I very much enjoyed the challenge of directing a 'scratch' version of Iain Finlay Macleod's 'Hallaig' and working to make it accessible for both Gaelic and non-Gaelic speaking audiences. I felt my own creative development was enhanced by thinking and working in non-verbal theatrical languages."*

Kath Burlinson

## Sample of Audience Comments...

*"Great night, enjoyed the music and performances"*

*"I'm a great fan of Somhairle's work and loved this new play"*

*"Can't wait to see the full play"*

## Some Stats

- Attendance: 42
- 73% of audience completed questionnaire
- 89% enjoyed the performance
- 100% rated their experience as either good or very good
- 82% would like to see the performance developed to a full production



## Next Stage...

The **Hallaig** script is currently being developed with the National Theatre of Scotland with funding from Creative Scotland. Iain Finlay's theatre company Robhanis has recently received charitable status.



*“It would be difficult, though, to find a more vivid and tightly focused version that this powerful new one-hour adaptation for two actors, translated into a sinewy and richly atmospheric Gaelic”*

**Joyce McMillan,**  
Scotsman on performance of MacBheatha  
at Circle studio, Citizens Theatre



For information on Glasgow Life's Gaelic Arts & Drama programme contact  
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