

## Education Pack

### INTRODUCTION

Prime Productions first toured **Sunset Song** in 2001. The current production, touring in autumn 2002, is a revival of that production in an enlarged and improved version.

Prime Productions decided to produce **Sunset Song** after a questionnaire sent to Scottish schools clearly revealed that the play was thought by teachers to be the work their pupils would want to see. The first stage production of the play by TAG in 1991 was clearly still in the memory of those who had seen it. The momentous changes in Scottish society since then, and the establishment in 1999 of the Scottish Parliament, meant that the novel's relevance, and particularly its close connection with Scottish identity, resonated with Scotland today.

The 2001 tour was a great success, playing to well over 15,000 people over thirteen weeks in thirty-seven venues throughout Scotland. The resonance we hoped the play would find was clearly there. New aspects of the story became important: the Foot and Mouth outbreak was raging during the tour and the effects of the changes in agriculture since the crofting days became ominously apparent.

Prime Productions trusts that many more pupils and older students will be able to share and enjoy seeing and hearing Lewis Grassie Gibbon's characters come to life on stage. He was a man ahead of his time, with prophetic vision.

### 2002 Tour

The 2002 tour will visit Glasgow, Dundee, Aberdeen, Inverness, Edinburgh, Kirkcaldy, Stirling and Pitlochry, mainly playing the cities which the original tour missed out. It will be a larger and slightly revised version of the original production, with a larger cast, some new cast members and a slightly rewritten script, but the majority of the production will be the same, but enhanced for the larger stages and larger cast. The conceptualisation, design, music and overall production will remain the same. However, theatre always exists in the present and the interpretation by the new cast members and the current events surrounding the production will unquestionably affect the revival and the audience's perception of it.

The 2002 tour is sponsored by Lloyds TSB Scotland.

### Education Pack

This education pack is aimed mostly at people studying **Sunset Song** as a literary work and those with a general interest in the book and Lewis Grassie Gibbon. For students of drama, or those interested in the dramatic presentation of the work, the website produced by Learning & Teaching Scotland may be useful. The address is [www.svtc.org.uk/resources/sunsetsong](http://www.svtc.org.uk/resources/sunsetsong). The website gives details of how the production was conceptualised and created and has interviews with the director, designer, actors and lighting designer about their work on the show and about themes that students of Higher Drama particularly may find useful. It also includes photos of the production and set and lighting, costume and set designs. A small amount of material is repeated in this pack and the website.

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## NOTES ON LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON AND **SUNSET SONG**

By Ian Campbell, Department of English Literature, University of Edinburgh

LEWIS GRASSIC GIBBON (James Leslie Mitchell, 1901-35) was born in Auchterless in Aberdeenshire, but spent his childhood largely in the area of Arbuthnott in the Mearns, where his father rented a croft (Bloomfield) and where he and his brothers attended the local school. A shy and fastidious boy, Mitchell loathed farm work and preferred reading and amateur history and archaeology: encouraged by his schoolmaster he developed an early talent for writing, but after a disastrous year of secondary education in Stonehaven (he expelled himself) left home for journalism in Aberdeen, then Glasgow, then a number of years in the armed forces which sustained him during the Depression. While he found services life unpleasant he was able to travel (to the Middle East) and to write, which he did with relish, short stories, fiction, articles -- until finally he was accepted, published, and was able to leave the forces, marry his childhood sweetheart from Arbuthnott, and settle in London then in Welwyn as a professional writer. A period of intense productivity gave rise to 16 books and a mass of articles, but the price was ill health which culminated in Mitchell's sudden death in 1935 of peritonitis. His widow, Rhea Sylvia, buried him in Arbuthnott and brought up his son and daughter in Welwyn Garden City, where belatedly attention is being paid to the writer who produced in those leafy southern streets the wonderfully nostalgic *A Scots Quair* (1932-34) for which he is most remembered today. His grave, with Rhea's, is in Arbuthnott where also is a thriving Grassic Gibbon Centre (Arbuthnott Parish Hall, Arbuthnott, Laurencekirk AB30 1YB telephone 01561-361668) and his books -- for decades all but impossible to buy -- are steadily coming back into print from Polygon and from Canongate in Edinburgh.

### The Mearns

From Montrose to Aberdeen lies a fertile plain, cut off from the sea in the south by low hills, but tapering to a point near Stonehaven where it meets the sea. Here the Highland Line marks the beginning of more rugged territory, but there are hills enough round Arbuthnott, many of them marked with remains of Roman and pre-Roman times which fascinated Mitchell. **Sunset Song** is set on such a hill, near the real-life Bloomfield, the Pictish Standing Stones on its summit one of the links to that far-off past which fascinated the author, before modern civilisation (which produced the Great War as well as the Depression) marked the country, before officialdom stripped the hillsides of their forests for the war effort, before the march of 'progress' emptied the small farms and the bothies, and horses gave way to tractors and mechanised farming. Growing up in Arbuthnott Mitchell felt the shifting tide of history during the War, and the sunset of a way of life which he captures brilliantly in the decline of Kinraddie -- Arbuthnott -- in **Sunset Song**, a song which celebrates what was beautiful and neighbourly and Scottish -- but a sad admission that the sunset had finished that old Scotland and the country now had to move forward. The sequels *Cloud Howe* (1933) and *Grey Granite* (1934) complete the story of Scotland's transformation in Mitchell's lifetime, through small town to city life, the eclipse not only of a centuries-old farming tradition but of the influence of the Kirk (*Cloud Howe*) and the countryside itself, elbowed aside by the urban squalor of Duncairn in *Grey Granite*, an unlovely jumble festering in the

Depression. Mitchell did not flinch from the Depression and the troubles it brought to Scotland even though the picture makes the second half of *A Scots Quair* less attractive than **Sunset Song**, and much less read for that matter. But the author believed passionately that Scotland was for living in here and now, not for preserving in the past: as a committed socialist and Marxist, and a committed enemy of that civilisation he saw rotting around him, he writes in *Grey Granite* (and several of his other novels) about the need for revolution to sweep away the grim past and bring back something living, and free, and anarchistic to Scotland -- without snobbery, without class distinction, without Scottish/English rivalries, without dogma or Church. He died before his vision could be resolved one way or another; he did not live to see the rise of Hitler, or what followed.

### **Speech**

At the time Mitchell wrote there was fierce debate about whether Scottish literature should be in standard English, or in the Scottish languages -- Scots and Gaelic -- still spoken in declining numbers both in Scotland and, to a surprising degree, overseas among emigrant communities. Some Scottish writers, like MacDiarmid, fiercely pushed the cause of writing in Scots to stimulate an interest in the language and stem the advance of standard English from radio and film. Mitchell, realising that the difficulty of reading a page of Scots would put many off, hit on a subtler strategy of writing his Scottish novels in a unique style which looks like English, but in fact uses Scottish words but spells them as if they were the nearest English-sounding one. The word "quean" for girl will be spelt "queen": the word "braw" for fine will be spelt "brave", and so forth. The word order will be unfamiliar, and a clear attempt to re-order speech the way Scots might speak it, and the vocabulary will be disguised by the spelling. There is no need for glosses (Mitchell resented it keenly when publishers asked for one) for the unfamiliarity very soon disappears, and readers fall into the rhythm and intonation of Scots and feel more keenly the sense of being there. Significantly, the style of the *Scots Quair* becomes less Scottish, and more English, as the trilogy enters the 1930s and city life: Mitchell knew from experience the country was where Scottish traditions and speech lasted longest. Mitchell's English fiction is very characteristic too: a lot of little stylistic quirks mark him out as an experimental writer, and he is fond of putting into the mouths of his characters pidgin English in the case of his Middle East figures, or Cockney in London. Most readers find the Scottish fiction the easiest, but the science fiction in particular is grippingly well told, and he has a talent for the occasional action scene which sustains the reader through the frequent brutality -- alas, all too true to life -- of his magnificent historical novel *Spartacus*.

### **Truth to life**

During his lifetime Mitchell published a great deal -- he even assumed his pen-name (his mother was Liliass Grassie Gibbon before marriage) to help disguise the quantity he was writing. Like other Scottish authors, he drew heavily from experience, and like other Scottish authors he was not always popular as a result. *Arbuthnott* is very clearly the source of *Kinraddie*, and there are even end papers to the early editions of the three parts of the trilogy which show the layout of the real-life Mearns -- with details cunningly altered here and there to protect the author

should anyone go so far as to sue him for libel. In fact no one did, but a lot of people (including his own family) resented the accuracy with which he incorporated real-life people and incident from memory -- often very unflatteringly, sometimes cruelly. His mother complained he had made them 'the Speak of the Mearns' -- which he had. But not in the way they wanted. People found themselves caricatured, and old scandals dredged up, and they resented it keenly. Some found the love scenes, the childbirth scenes, the politics of the novel distasteful and many tried to have it banned from public view. Incredibly, the Aberdeen City Libraries had it in a reserved case until quite lately, available only on special request.

In the *Speak of the Mearns*, a posthumous collection, an unfinished novel is published for the first time in which he draws heavily on recollections of the next parish -- Kinneff -- plainly showing he had plenty of material still to hand for further fiction, had he lived to complete it. The *Speak of the Mearns* also has his magnificent short stories (some of which, like parts of the *Quair*, have been televised) and splendid essays on his childhood, and on his writing, and on his views of history and Scottish culture past and present. The essay on Aberdeen, where he lived, is an acerbic gem. Glasgow, which he remembered in the stinking days of the Depression, is a darker essay, but a powerful indictment of a society which lets its poorer members starve.

#### Literary value

Few would dispute the stature now of the Gibbon novels, and with republication the Mitchell stories are also steadily gaining in critical recognition. What did he achieve in that hectic brief writing career?

#### The Scottish fiction.

In the *Quair*, in his other autobiographical pieces (notably *Stained Radiance*) and in the splendid short stories set in Arbutnott and its area, he fixed a period in time when the old country was disappearing, the new slowly emerging and yet to find its character. Vanishing people, customs, speech were incorporated in thoroughly well-told stories: the Scottish style which was not obviously or threateningly Scottish drew in those who had no first-hand knowledge (he was published and popular in the USA in his lifetime, and has been translated since into several languages) and **Sunset Song**, in particular, is now recognised as a classic of 1930s fiction by critics of British literature, not merely Scottish fiction. Closest to his own childhood in recollection, and coloured by the disappearance of a town he had loved even while he longed to get away to a wider world, **Sunset Song** has as its central character his best creation, Chris, a farmer's daughter who becomes a farmer's wife, and survives her husband Ewan's death in the Great War to see his Scotland, her Scotland, their farm all but obliterated. Chris and her son Ewan move through Cloud Howe and Grey Granite to form the backbone of the trilogy, and Ewan at the end follows his creator South, to London, to political involvement, while Chris returns to the Aberdeenshire where Mitchell was born in real life. Nostalgia in these Scottish books is beautifully captured, but not wallowed in. A sunset of a past age is there to usher in a new dawn, and Mitchell the politically active writer wanted Scotland to wake up to the 1930s, not take refuge in the 1900s. Now, with the whole *Scots Quair* available and in print, people can see the message as a whole, and even though the author's Marxist and revolutionary politics may have few supporters, the passion with which he lambasts the sick and tired Scottish institutions of his time still wins him many admirers.

### **The non-Scottish fiction.**

Mitchell's interest in history and archaeology led him to write with great speed, and professionalism, studies of explorers (Nine against the Unknown, Hanno (a life of Mungo Park), the historical Spartacus, science fiction alternative societies (Three Go Back set in the past, Gay Hunter in the far future), fiction of Cairo and the Middle East (The Calends of Cairo, the Lost Trumpet) and the superlative short stories in The Speak of the Mearns. His autobiographical novels, Stained Radiance, The Thirteenth Disciple chart not only his Scottish roots but his early experiences in London (where he and his wife knew poverty, frustration and much ill health) and in the army. His articles, many of them all but forgotten, are like his books: neat, tidy, well organised, produced at speed. A wonderful oddity is Scottish Scene, a collection of articles, poems, short stories and press cuttings produced in tandem with Hugh MacDiarmid and published in 1934, largely through Mitchell's efforts. Neither man saw the other's contribution, and the book is a glorious muddle.

### The legacy

The Grassic Gibbon centre's opening, and the celebrations planned for 2001 to mark the centenary, are some indication that the years of neglect are past. The fact that Penguin have A Scots Quair in print and in wide circulation, that Canongate have published the three parts of the trilogy separately and together (and have more republication in the pipeline), and that Polygon plan to have all the work except the Quair in print shortly, the fact he is taught very widely at every level of secondary and higher education, the fact he is known through television and radio adaptation -- all point to an enduring fame and legacy. Most of all, he needs to be read. More people need to come to this marvellous evocation of a Scottish past that has nothing sentimental or sticky, but that brings back to life for a while something which is definitely of the past -- that challenges today's audiences to respect that past, though the Scotland waiting outside may be in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If Chris, in **Sunset Song**, found it hard to love her own country -- she admitted she 'loved and hated in a breath' when she thought about it -- people today find it hard to think of what they mean by Scotland. They can hear the words spoken in the theatre, on TV, even though the legacy of spoken Scots of the kind Mitchell knew in the Mearns in the early years of the century may have thinned down a great deal. They can see the dramatic adaptation, and be drawn to the originals as many were by the televised version. Lewis Grassic Gibbon weaves his own spell on his readers. At last, his work is there to be read. Once read, it does not allow itself to be forgotten.

### Bibliography

#### 1.1 Works published under the name of James Leslie Mitchell

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Stained Radiance: A Fictionist's Prelude (London, 1930)  
The Thirteenth Disciple (London, 1931)  
The Calends of Cairo (London, 1931)  
Three Go Back (London, 1932)  
Persian Dawns, Egyptian Nights (London, 1932)  
The Lost Trumpet (London, 1932)  
Image and Superscription (London, 1933)  
Gay Hunter (London, 1934)  
The Conquest of the Maya (London, 1934)

#### 1.2 Under the name of Lewis Grassic Gibbon

**Sunset Song** (London, 1932)  
Cloud Howe (London, 1933)  
Grey Granite (London, 1934)  
A Scots Quair (London, 1946)  
Scottish Scene: or, The Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn (London, 1934)  
Niger: The Life of Mungo Park (London, 1934)  
A Scots Hairst: Essays and Short Stories ed. Ian S Munro (London, 1967)  
Smeddum: Short Stories and Essays ed. D M Budge (London, 1980)  
The Speak of the Mearns ed. Ian Campbell (Edinburgh, 1982)

1.3 Under the name of JLM and LGG combined  
Nine Against The Unknown: A Record of Geographical Exploration  
(London, 1934)

Thanks to Ian Campbell for his permission to include this material in the Prime Productions education pack for the production of **Sunset Song**.

## NOTES BY ALASTAIR CORDING, ADAPTOR OF THE BOOK INTO THE STAGE PLAY

### How do you adapt a novel to stage? Why?

At its most basic, I adapt novels in order to bring people to the theatre. The shared experience of seeing a novel compressed and retold in theatrical terms can be very powerful. I hope that those in the audience who don't know the novel, will be sufficiently impressed by the story to read it for themselves. But above all, I aim to make a satisfying piece of theatre.

### The process of adaptation

The first, very basic, consideration is time. A modern stage play for touring normally lasts no more than two and a half hours – including a fifteen-minute interval. Cast sizes are limited: many small-scale touring companies cannot employ more than five actors.

With these constraints in mind, I work out the bare bones of the plot. I try to identify the main themes and concerns. Then I search for features that are specially suited to the stage. In **Sunset Song** the novel's narrative voice readily turns into a very effective chorus. However, the constant presence of the Standing Stones, and Chris's affinity with them, is not nearly so useful theatrically. Some characters and incidents are indispensable, others can be dropped without major damage to the main story – for example, Chris's younger brothers are easy to lose, and in the end so is John Brigson. Sometimes several characters can be made into a single composite figure.

I try to create possible patterns of character-doubling for the actors, to exploit this necessity in a way that make theatrical sense, either by deliberate contrast of personalities, or by implying an underlying association. A suitable point must be found to place the interval in the play, at a moment of dramatic change and decision, and which makes an audience want to know what will happen in Act 2.

I believe language is very important. I try to use the rhythms and imagery of the novelist wherever possible, the special features of language which bring colour and life via speech. I try to build dialogue, conversation, argument and commentary from these. I try to avoid the trap of merely quoting lengthy descriptions of scenes, incidents and individuals: I prefer to show action and activity, and to employ non-naturalistic theatrical "short-hand" - multiple images of overlapping realities (see the treatment of Daftie Andy's rampage). I don't shy away from inventing dialogue "in the style of" the novelist, if it's theatrically just; and I am interested in coaxing verse or at least a consciously heightened and lyrical speech, from descriptive narrative. These sometimes become songs.

Sometimes it makes theatrical sense to shift the order of incidents to make a stronger impact – or simply to make things more easily understood. The play uses an open, fluid stage to travel freely and instantly in time and place, from Blawearie's kitchen to the moor by the loch to Kinraddie Kirk and anywhere else that the story has to go.

Theatre is collaborative: it's vital that all involved understand this, and that nobody's contribution is beyond discussion and comment. Adapters - writers - must be ready to be flexible and open to suggestion and requests; prepared to explain in small detail what you're aiming for, and to deal with other contributors whose skills are not literary - but whose creative instincts can be very powerful.

A large part of an actor's work is in the space between the words, and behind the words. A writer should recognize that possibility.

## **SOME MAJOR ISSUES RAISED BY THE NOVEL**

### **Community**

The sense of community in the novel is very strong. It is a constant presence in the voice which narrates the story, and its value is made clear in a number of set-pieces, in which the folk of Kinraddie gather either to help one another with work or celebration: the threshing, the fire, the funeral, the wedding, the sermon at the Stones.

The community is explored, warts and all, positive and negative, at Chae's threshing, and at the disastrous fire which follows; at John Guthrie's funeral, at Chris's wedding, and finally at the service amidst the Standing Stones to commemorate the fallen. The picture is a negative one only in the Kirk, when attendance in the congregation is seen to bring out the worst in people.

Grassic Gibbon is ambiguous in his view: he clearly has a strong belief in the community he depicts, but at the same time he shows how powerless it is in the face of economic change, political duplicity and war.

### **Religion**

Grassic Gibbon believes institutionalized religion distorts and represses natural instincts. He depicts a congregation who attend church regularly, but without any religious sense. They are gloatingly censorious, and ignorantly dismissive of their preachers. Their response to the Reverend Gibbon's sermon is comic in its salacious glee – like overgrown children sniggering at "rude" words. A less comic aspect of repression and distortion is seen in Gibbon's drunkenness and adulterous longings. In John Guthrie's tormented sexual drive, his blasphemous justification of his lust for Chris, and his brutality towards Will, we see the destructive possibilities of his harsh religious belief. The Standing Stones which Chris finds so attractive and peaceful remain ambiguous. They dominate the landscape and connect it to its past, they embody a sense of timelessness, yet their original meaning is lost. They represent a forgotten religion which once dominated as much as contemporary Christianity and modern certainties.

There is sympathy for the Covenanters murdered at Dunottar, for their terrible plight, and for their courage. For Grassic Gibbon their Presbyterian belief is far less significant than their oppression by a ruthless and brutal ruling class.

### **Impact of the outside world**

**Sunset Song** depicts the steady economic decline of the small farm. Huge forces are at work, beyond the control or understanding of the individual peasant farmers struggling to make a living for themselves and their families. One reflection of this is that Will is not only denied an education, he has to work at Blawearie more or less for nothing. Politicians appear once: their treatment says that they are utterly remote from the people they represent and rule. The First World War, which in a few short years destroys the land and ends the community, is a distant event. The reality of its suffering is barely grasped in Kinraddie, news of it relayed through blatant propaganda and a jingoistic press, its short-term economic benefits unquestioned. Chae and Rob are virtually alone in recognizing the ruin being worked – and Chae was himself misled by the newspapers to volunteer for the army in 1914. Grassic Gibbon presents a chillingly realistic portrayal of the meaninglessness of the tragedy for those left behind to grieve and cope with the consequences of war.

### **Response to change and the notion of progress**

In the end Chris recognises that the old way of life is finished. Her father also recognised the change in the times, but was unable to change with it. Others in the community, who have seen only short-term advantage, are ruined by the slump which follows the war. The large farms swallow the small, the land has been ruined by the removal of its sheltering trees, and instead of growing crops is fit only for grazing sheep. The promise of revival through new farming techniques based on new machine technology proves hollow. The final image of the community is of ruin: old men, widows whose husbands have been killed in the war, and awkward youngsters working for hire on the larger farms, with no personal connection to Kinraddie.

"Progress" is frequently depicted as a phrase used to justify thoughtless destruction. Chris herself has a very deep response to the idea of change, a response both emotional and imaginative. At school she learns about an ancient Greek philosophy, that all things change and nothing endures forever. The idea occurs to her repeatedly, often associated with strange visionary perceptions of her former selves vanishing into the past as accident, time and chance alter the course of her life. Even the land changes – although somehow there is a sense that deep underneath it has an eternal stability.

### **Symbolism**

**The Standing Stones** are a major symbol in the novel, and yet they are very ambiguous. They are an obvious link with the past, but at the same time an example that nothing endures forever. However, the variety of human responses to them provides clues about character: John Guthrie is unsettled by them, even afraid; Chris and Robert Colquhoun - and to some extent Long Rob - are attracted and curious. For Chris they are a special place of retreat and peace.

**The Land** Chris has a conscious affinity with the land, which she shares with Rob: it is in Ewan, Chae and Guthrie too, as a matter of instinct. The land seems to represent a continuity; connection to it, positive, natural and healthy.

**Cats** Strong active men are several times likened to cats. This a minor but interesting detail, a reflection of the physicality and dexterity required for labour-intensive farming.

**The horseman, and the plough** These are presented with a deliberate mystical association with male energy and the taming of the land to produce crops. Horse and plough are very specifically identified with Guthrie, Rob, Chae and Ewan. The ancient mythological image of the Corn King is evoked at the ploughing-match where Guthrie meets and wins the heart of Jean: in the image of Guthrie harvesting with the scythe; and the description of Ewan as the first farmer to plough the land in the first Spring of his marriage.

**Cars** are always negative. The car that frightens Guthrie's horse, prompts the outburst which causes his eviction. A car which nearly kills Chae's son, lands Chae in court for assaulting the driver. A car returns the half-crippled Rob back to the Mill. The car Chris sees on the night of Ewan's disappearance is a portent of how he is stolen from her by the War, and turned into a brute.

### **Education**

Education is the way to a larger world, both geographical and imaginative. Marget Strachan is an example of a positive imagination and an uninhibited natural energy, encouraged by a forward-thinking father, who when the opportunity for escape comes, takes it instantly and without regret. The speed of her choice and her lack of sentimental attachment is significant. The loss is felt keenly by Chris, as a portent of

her imprisonment. There are only a few educated people in the country community, and most are shown to be flawed and frustrated by the narrowness of rural life: the local teachers, the Reverend Gibbon, and even the lawyer, Semple.

Education is also seen as alien, and alienating. Its language is English, its possession makes you a stranger amidst your family and community.

Chae, Rob and Guthrie all value education: Chae and particularly Rob are self-taught independent thinkers. All those who oppose education (more than a few) are portrayed as stupid, negative, selfish and brutal: at Chae's threshing: Mutch and Munro.

Immediately after her father's will offers Chris the chance to resume her education, there is a complex, deeply felt and very moving passage in which Chris realizes that she cannot now choose that path. Her final acceptance of this is both frightening and comforting to her, as she realizes the full truth of her position.

### **Language**

Language is a major symbol for the central conflict in Chris's life: the rural Aberdeen Scots of her family and community, strongly identified with the land, endurance, strong communal values ; versus English - books, free imagination, learning, independence, opportunity, choice.

Scots language helps to bind the community together. Spoken English is always depicted as odd and difficult: the school inspector, the visiting politicians, Ellison's music-hall song. Scots who attempt English are soundly mocked: Mrs. Gordon and Maggie-Jean, the grocer at the conscription board, the Reverend Gibbon.

And yet: Grassic Gibbon writes in English, only using Scots when there is no equivalent. Sometimes this produces interesting results "braw" becomes "brave", usefully ironic describing Gibbon's uniform. But "chiel" as "Childe" is not quite so successful. The great achievement is the use of Scottish rhythm-patterns in the narrative, combined with the brilliantly conceived narrative voice, the Speak of Kinraddie, a personification of local gossip and rumour, satire, comedy and commentary. It is simultaneously perceptive, plain-spoken, intimate, ignorant and untrustworthy. The Speak's identity shifts constantly and effortlessly: sometimes it is Chris herself. It brilliantly exploits the Scottish use of the 2nd. person singular/plural - ie."you", sometimes in a very direct address to the reader, implying a shared set of values and understanding; sometimes it is the inner voice of a character speaking to themselves. The English equivalent, "one", has the opposite effect, distancing and depersonalizing

English used in Literature and poetry are frequently treated with marked suspicion: "What Katy Did" and "Rienzi" fire Chris's imagination: "Religio Medici" and "The Humours of Scottish Life" plainly do not. When Chris's school is impressed by her essay-writing, she is encouraged to write poetry - but in the style of Mrs.Hemans, a fashionable but not conspicuously talented writer.

### **Music**

At the heart of **Sunset Song** is "The Flouers O The Forest" a great lament, regularly played at Scottish funerals. Chris as a schoolgirl is greatly moved by it, sings it at her wedding, and it is played at the very end in the Stone Circle memorial to the dead of the War. Long Rob's enthusiastic singing is a joyous background to life in the community. The music and song at Chris's wedding is seen as an affirmation of community and tradition. People offer a song for the occasion without inhibition or pretension, and each song is taken seriously by the hearers, and honest praise

offered to the singers. It should be noted that much of the Kinraddie community's music is not Scottish traditional: Ellison sings "Dinah and her Villikins", at Chris's wedding, and it is not belittled. And Rob's theme song "Ladies of Spain" is English. Song in the novel is connected to community and continuity, and to the past. It has a healing function, as in the snatch of song which stops Daftie Andy from harming Maggie-Jean Gordon, and in the final playing of "*The Flowers o the Forest*".

### **Gender**

The novel provides a depiction of a society with very rigid gender divisions, based on traditions of labour-intensive work and the large families normal in a world without widespread birth-control. Without electrical or petrol driven machinery, potential muscle-power defines most of the tasks allotted to men and women.

Powered agricultural machines are few and far between: the threshing machine is the only example in the book. All other work is powered by horses or by men's muscles. The men therefore must have a great understanding of horses and how to work with them, as well as being physically very strong and resilient, and capable of endlessly repetitive very heavy labour with hand tools.

The women run the household and bring up the children. This must be achieved without the electrical machines we take for granted today - water had to be boiled over a fire, food cooked in ovens heated by wood or peat fires, clothes washed by hand in tubs, floors swept with brooms. Kitchen gardens would be tended to provide a small variety of vegetables, and bread was baked in the farm kitchen. Without modern refrigeration and supermarket distribution systems, there was no convenience food ready-prepared for quick and easy cooking. As with the men and their outdoor work, women are faced with a repetitive, time-consuming, sometimes intricately complicated, and frequently physically exhausting, work.

Chris has to abandon her education after her mother's death, to take over the farm household. Her growing mastery of the skills required is recognized in the praise she receives while helping Kirsty at the threshing.

Opportunity for independence in such a society is very limited. Most peasant-farming families need their teenage children's muscle-power to help work the farm. Education beyond the early teens is restricted to those who are conspicuously bright, and who might find a future in the professions. To become a doctor or a teacher is particularly respected, as the importance of these professionals is obviously beneficial to the community.

### **Sexuality**

The society depicted is very repressed about sexuality. The entire subject is normally taboo, a source of embarrassment in mixed company, of fear and of salacious sniggering. John and Jean Guthrie are driven into enmity by their inability to discuss sex and its consequences. Ultimately this inability leads to Jean's suicide. The strictness of the Scottish Church's doctrines wrap all sexuality in shame and guilt - John Guthrie despises himself for his natural instincts, which he thinks of as "the sins of the flesh".

### **The two Chrisses**

The notion of the "two Chrisses" is the central and never-resolved tension within Chris. Beware taking it as an issue of nationalism: "English" should be understood as the language of education and the world beyond the small farms. The idyllic vision supplied by Jean may be attractive evocation of natural physicality, but it is also a vision of childhood.

### **Scottish identity**

**Sunset Song** is an unrepentant and unsentimental celebration of Scottish identity, and a confident deployment of Scottish idioms and icons. Grassie Gibbon brilliantly turns Scottish forms of speech into a uniquely direct but highly flexible choric narrative. He has a persuasive “insiders” accuracy when describing landscape, weather, society and individuals. He identifies the virtues of self-sufficiency, hard work, independence, generosity, neighbourliness, respect for education, lack of pretension; but he is clear-sighted about the vices of narrow-mindedness, meanness of spirit, callousness, ignorance, salaciousness, and hypocrisy. He is also honest enough to see that vice and virtue can co-exist: Long Rob sometimes beats his horses in uncontrollable rage; and the unpleasant Mistress Mutch sings with simple beauty at Chris’s wedding.

## Director's Note

I moved to Scotland when I was 19 and very quickly came across **Sunset Song**. It had an immediate effect on me and within months I had used part of the novel in a dramatised reading event I took part in. It continues to thrill me and I jumped at the chance to direct a production of the adaptation when it arose. However, I found myself asking why the story still seems important at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The last thing I wanted to do was direct a nostalgia piece. The society Lewis Grassic Gibbon writes about and the events that affect it are now part of history. How is this story still relevant?

Lewis Grassic Gibbon shows that life was hard in rural Scotland at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but he has strong views about 'progress'. It is clear that the advent of the modern age after the First World War brings about the destruction of the type of close community that he and Chris Guthrie grew up in. But it is also clear from his writing that the life in that community could be described as 'nasty, brutish and short'. It is perhaps unsurprising therefore that Grassic Gibbon's view of the passing of this way of life is mixed. Chris Guthrie's view sums up the important point: change happens, it cannot be avoided. She learns that she has to live with change, accept it and make the best of it. Change means that evils pass as well as good things and new evils as well as good things come to pass because of it.

This might be a good reason to look again at **Sunset Song** as we enter a new period in Scottish history. The First World War wrought great changes in British and Scottish life and society, although probably few understood this at the time. In 2002 we are facing another set of changes, brought about by such diverse factors as the electronic/information technology revolution, the devolution of power to the Scottish Parliament, global warming, the BSE and Foot & Mouth crises and the movement of people and refugees around the world. These industrial, political, ecological and social revolutions may change Scottish society and life as much as those described in the book and the play. Telecommuting *might* encourage the re-population of rural Scotland. The Scottish Parliament *might* change the way politics works in Britain today. The ecological crises *have already* drastically affected farming and mining communities and *may* continue to affect us all in unforeseen ways. It is difficult to foresee the changes ahead, but what we can be sure of is that change will happen.

Lewis Grassic Gibbon's view of 'progress' is connected to his politics. He was an ardent communist at a time when communism seemed to be a positive force in the world. In the late 1920s The Russian Revolution seemed to have succeeded, Fascism was rife in Western Europe and the capitalist countries were going through terrible economic troubles. Marxist communism accepts that societies do go through various stages before they become communist. Lewis Grassic Gibbon would have believed that the almost feudal system of landlord and tenant of the crofting society of North East Scotland would have had to change in order to bring about progress towards a fairer society. This may have involved the loss of some aspects of the lifestyle of the peasants, but it would have led to a better society overall.

Gibbon was also strongly influenced by the Diffusionists. This school of thought amongst anthropologists and sociologists considered human civilisation to have developed in the Nile valley in Egypt from the hunter-gatherer communities into communities based on agriculture – the growing of crops using the fertile flood plains of the great river. The Diffusionists believed this changed the nature of the free, small groups of people who led an easy and unfettered life roaming the countryside in search of just enough food to sustain them, without armies, religion or rules. The development of agriculture meant that the people had territories to defend, static homelands that required maintenance and improvement, they needed rules to allow

possession of land to be passed from one to another and so on. The success of agriculture meant that populations grew. Armies became necessary to defend the land against other hungry groups, religion became necessary to control the home population and justify the new divisions that grew up. Class and wealth divisions became commonplace. The so-called civilisation of man had led to the fall from the golden age into an age of strife, difficulty and hard work. Gibbon relates the hard, relentless life of the Scottish peasant to this fall from a golden Scottish age – into a 'civilisation' with a dour church that oppresses the peasants, the terror of war that interrupts the normal way of life and class divisions where the few hold the many in thrall.

How Gibbon reconciles his diffusionism with his communism is hard to untangle and it leads to some interesting struggles on his part in **Sunset Song**. But it is possible to see both strands in his work and they contribute to the rich and not totally consistent attitudes he has to the lives and values of Chris Guthrie and others. At any rate it is clear that he felt that change was necessary and inevitable. Far from being a Scottish nationalist, or bemoaning the loss of the way of life of the smallholders of Kinraddie, Gibbon seems to embrace change, even though he is lucidly sharp sighted about the pain of the process.

**Sunset Song** perhaps indicates a way to view change: Chris Guthrie survives because she accepts change. She fights to ensure that the best outcome is found in the changing world, but she doesn't try to stop change happening. Contrasted with this is perhaps Long Rob Duncan, who is finally unable to accept the change that the war has wrought upon his world. I believe that when he decides to enlist and go to war, it is because Rob knows that his world has changed forever, he cannot live his old life in the new one, and he chooses to die rather than fit uncomfortably in it.

Preparing for the production I also realised that the most important reason for working on **Sunset Song** is simpler. It is a great story. It has enormous emotional impact and characters that get under your skin and seem wholly real. The central story of Chris Guthrie growing up from a girl into a woman is a story that is in some basic way important and true and still has the effect on me that it had when I first read it. It bears retelling time and time again. Like any great story or indeed great song, it has new resonance each time it is heard afresh.

Benjamin Twist

## **PRODUCING THE PLAY**

### **Collaboration and the adaptation**

Directing an adaptation of a novel is a strange business. The book may be the basis for the adaptation and the reason for doing the show, but you must leave it behind and focus on the play. There are always things from the novel left out of adaptations that cannot be accommodated – maybe because of the number of actors, the limitations of the stage or the time available. But members of the audience may not ever have read the book, so you can't assume they know anything other than what you present. It is necessary to concentrate on what you have in the playscript.

However the advantage of having the novel in the background is that it allows for collaboration between the various artists involved – the writer (adaptor), actors, designer, director and so on. All have equal access to the source material – the novel – so all can contribute to the creative process of transferring its meaning to the stage as fully as possible. During rehearsals I referred everyone to the book from time to time so that we could all apply our imaginations to how to get across a particular feeling or a particular moment in a completely different medium. Lewis Grassie Gibbon had to use language to do it, as that is all he had to work with, but we had lighting, music, stage pictures, acting and words at our disposal. Already the adaptor has economically worked with words, so we had to fill them out with the other means to express more thoroughly the story and emotion of the book.

### **Ensemble playing**

**Sunset Song** is scripted for an ensemble company. This means that a large number of characters are played by a small number of actors. Some characters appear very briefly, some throughout the play. This is partly a matter of economics - it would be costly to employ a different actor for every character – but also a matter of style that reflects some of the concerns of the piece (see *Work and Community*, below). The convention is therefore be set up in the production that an actor playing a character will briefly take on other roles before returning to the original major character.

Ensemble playing makes it easier for an actor to take on performing music, moving the furniture and other stage business without interfering with the theatrical reality of the show – the audience knows they are actors performing and accepts that they will step in and out of character regularly. Similarly there may be moments of non-naturalistic staging where actors are not playing particular characters but creating images of rural life or work.

Ensemble playing means we had to find a way to give the audience the information they need to know who an actor is playing at any time. Repetitive costume changes can quickly become tedious. Vocal or physical change that is necessary, but generally the context provides the necessary information for the audience.

### **Work & Community**

One aspect of **Sunset Song** that ensemble playing helps us present is the continuous work that goes on in Kinraddie. Chris Guthrie and her neighbours and family never stop working. The ensemble nature of the production allows us to suggest this endless toil, with actors breaking off from work to create a scene and then continuing with their tasks once the scene has finished. This also enhances the sense of a small and claustrophobic community, constantly overlooking each other's lives and work, breaking off a job to join in a conversation or comment on someone

else's behaviour and then smoothly resuming their labour once the discussion has finished.

An important part of the book **Sunset Song** is the 'Speak', the continuous village gossip that passes word around, tells and embroiders stories. In the script the adaptor has used this to represent the community, its morality and its views. This is where the use of ensemble playing helps marry the form and the content of the play. No one actor is given the lines of the Speak, but they are shared amongst all the actors, thus representing the whole village.

### **Design and setting**

The design of the original production of **Sunset Song** was influenced by a number of factors. A basic was the ability to tour a set to fit into very different venues from medium sized theatres to small halls: it had to be flexible and able to create a complete look in spaces that might have a chequerboard floor or mustard yellow walls. The set also had to represent a wide variety of locations from the hills of the Mearns to the farm kitchen. It had to create a world where the fluid, ensemble playing could work easily, moving swiftly from one scene to another. The designer and I wanted the land to be a strong feature of the visuals, as it is such a strong concern of Chris Guthrie's. Change was another important aspect of the story that we hoped to express in the design. Very importantly, it had to look good: theatre is a visual artform and we wanted a design that was not just functional but also beautiful.

The resulting set was simple and clean. A wooden floor expressed the simplicity of the lives of the characters. A separate element represented the land as it changes through the seasons and through the passage of time. Nothing was too specific and so changes of location could be quickly effected by acting or the introduction of simple props.

The visual look of the production was one of its great successes. The production looked modern, somehow bringing up to date the story without removing it from its setting in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The design helped remove any sense of nostalgia, while focusing on elements of Scotland that remain important today – the land, the sky, the connection of people to the land. The simplicity of the design helped to express the simplicity of the characters' lives, with a few, basic possessions. The design has therefore been retained for the larger scale production, although the constraints of touring for the smaller scale no longer apply.

### **Language**

Lewis Grassie Gibbon wrote beautifully and the adaptation is generally faithful to the book, occasionally transposing passages to a new place in the story where they can be used to better effect. The novelist wrote at a time when Scottish words and dialect were seldom used in literature, but he wanted to portray a particular Scottish world. He ended up creating a semi-Scots, where few Scottish words are used but a strong sense of Scots speech – and more particularly the speech of the North East of Scotland – is given by the rhythms of the language and the use of the Speak. He was writing for a readership that might well not have understood North Eastern dialect.

Some of the same constraints apply to this production. The show will tour to the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh as well as Aberdeen. To produce it in authentic Aberdeenshire accents would make it difficult for many audiences to understand and would alter the linguistic style of the book. We need to create a theatrical equivalent of Grassie Gibbon's work, understandable by a wide audience. This also universalises the story the play tells. Much of Chris Guthrie's story could be replayed

in many parts of rural Scotland where ruined cottages and war memorials tell the same story of crofting, death and change. One important consideration however is the need to retain the North Eastern quality of the language. Much Scottish theatre makes use of Glasgow and West Central Scotland accents. The recent history of those areas is generally urban and industrial and the use of that voice is quite alien to the story of **Sunset Song**.

### **Music and song**

The 'song' in **Sunset Song** could be understood as the story, in the form of a ballad or a saga, as the language of the Speak, or as the music that the characters enjoy and use at moments of emotion. Certainly music plays an important part in the piece. At its heart is the lament 'The Flouers o' the Forest', which brings together the old and the new by connecting the dead of the First World War with the warriors of an older Scotland. But there is also the song that Chris sings about her father at the end of the first half of the play, other songs at the wedding and the constantly repeated singing by Long Rob of Ladies of Spain. Music is a powerful way to present strong emotional ideas, ideas that perhaps can't quite be expressed by words alone.

During the song about her father Chris develops: she grows to love and understand the passions of the father that previously were hateful to her. Because Chris grows up through the song, it doesn't become a static moment in the play, when the plot stops and a song begins, but continues the action and development of the character and story. Similarly, when The Flouers o' the Forest is played at the end, it means something different to when Chris sang it at her wedding. Then she sang it easily, perhaps unaware of its meaning, but when she hears it at the end she understands all too clearly its power and story.

## **PLOT**

This is a brief account of the plot of the play, not the book. Although I have given the plot in terms of scenes, the action of the play actually follows continuously. There are no 'black outs' or other traditional scene divisions in the playing of it.

### **Act One**

**Scene 1** Chris introduces us to her father, Guthrie, and the village. She explains why her family had to move to the Mearns. We learn what Guthrie thinks about gentry and we see his relationship with others in the village. We understand that a convention of the play will be playing of other roles by the main characters in the village.

**Scene 2** Guthrie and the audience are introduced to the main characters in Kinraddie and their hard working lives. It is hinted that Guthrie and his wife Jean disagree about having further children. We see and hear the Speak in action. This scene relates to The Unfurrowed Field in the book.

**Scene 3** Family life centres on Chris studying and Guthrie's desire for her to do so.

**Scene 4** Guthrie proudly challenges a poacher on his farm.

**Scene 5** Jean worries about Guthrie's influence over Chris, his insistence that she studies, his offer of 'an education' if she does well. She identifies the 'two Chrisses' – one wanting education, the other more closely allied to the land. Chris feels confusion about the two sides to her character. She wins a bursary and goes to study at college, as her father offered.

**Scene 6** Chris learns from her older school friend, Marget Strachan, about the possibilities of education for women. She grows to understand that change and temporary sensations can be good and pleasurable and has her first experience of her own sexuality. Marget leaves to study in Aberdeen and Chris is left behind.

**Scene 7** Guthrie and Jean argue about his lust. Chris is uncomfortable.

**Scene 8** Chris takes her father's side, preferring books to courting. But Jean offers her another view, pointing out the pleasures of work on the land and noting that Guthrie was once a ploughman who also enjoyed courting.

Guthrie and Jean play out their life story together. We see them happy and in love and then watch that happiness sour as childbirth and his religious beliefs embitter them both. She resents his lust and his intolerance. He beats his son viciously for an innocent mistake. She suffers at childbirth and he regrets his sexual desires.

Chris learns that her father is responsible for her mother's suffering. She is shocked.

**Scene 9** An interlude shows us how close the farming life is allied to the cycle of procreation and fertility. Misbehaviour is brutally punished.

Chris is chased, probably with sexual intent, by Andy the Daftie. She is untouched, but her father's attitude seems to blame her for the event.

**Scene 10** The Reverend Gibbon wins the job of minister of Kinraddie Kirk by pleasing the village with a sermon based on the Song of Solomon with its sexual overtones that appeal to the congregation – except Long Rob.

**Scene 11** As Chris helps her mother with energetic housework she strips to her underwear to keep cool. Her father enters and is outraged at the sight of his daughter 'near naked'. He sees her for the first time as a woman.

Jean realises that Guthrie has seen his daughter sexually, and she is horrorstruck. She part explains to Chris, but hides some of her fears.

Guthrie enters furiously in search of his gun. Jean tries to confront him with her concerns. He punishes Will viciously, taking out his frustrations on his son.

**Scene 12** Chris longs for an escape from the farm through education. Jean kills herself.

**Scene 13** Chris has to give up college. Will challenges his father.

**Scene 14** At harvest time Will resents his father's use of old, backbreaking techniques. Guthrie uses them to exert his control over his children.

**Scene 15** A tinker who has worked with Guthrie offers to sleep with Chris. Although she resists she is tempted.

**Scene 16** Will and Guthrie argue. Chris feels nervous alone in the house with her father. Will tells Chris he is planning to go to Canada and urges her to find her own way out of the situation.

**Scene 17** A montage scene of the Speak commenting ironically on the villager's sexual goings on.

Guthrie challenges Will about his girlfriend. Will stands up to him and Guthrie loses face.

**Scene 18** Will introduces Chris to Ewan Tavendale. Chris regrets how little time she has for education now that she is working all the time.

**Scene 19** Chae Strachan's farm burns down. Chris is kissed but she doesn't know by whom. She half enjoys the experience.

**Scene 20** Will tells Chris he is leaving but not that he is going to marry his girlfriend and go to Argentina. Chris is left alone with Guthrie, who falls ill in his anger at Will's desertion.

**Scene 21** Chris has to nurse her father, who treats her like a slave. Her dreams of an escape have turned to nought.

**Scene 22** Chris fears her father's lust will lead him to turn to her. She prays for a release from her prison. He dies.

**Scene 23** The funeral. Chris first cannot mourn for her father, then discovers that she does indeed feel for him.

End of Act One

## Act Two

**Scene 24** At the lawyer's, Chris learns that she has inherited all Guthrie's substantial savings. She can leave the farm. The lawyer encourages her to return to college and the teaching career. Aunt Janet wants Chris to live with her.

Chris finds herself free for the first time in her life, but realises that she cannot leave the land to be a teacher. She arranges to stay on at the farm.

**Scene 25** Chris meets Ewan Tavendale and discovers that she loves him.

**Scene 26** In a storm Ewan helps Chris rescue her horses. He asks her to marry him. She decides to do so.

**Scene 27** Chris prepares for the wedding and is helped by Long Rob and Chae.

**Scene 28** Before the wedding, Chris experiences a moment of loneliness, but recovers, thinking of her love for Ewan.

**Scene 29** Chris and Ewan are married. Chris sings *The Flowers o the Forest* at her wedding and receives advice, including an offer of help whenever she needs it from Long Rob.

There follows a short 'honeymoon' period during which Ewan and Chris live in an isolated world of young love. Then the practical world returns.

**Scene 30** Chris discovers she is pregnant. She fears the delivery, remembering her mother, and argues with Ewan. But she recovers and looks forward to the future.

**Scene 31** Chris and Ewan live in a narrow world bounded by their own domestic happiness. The outside world means nothing, despite the outbreak of the First World War. Ewan reaps his first harvest and Chris gives birth to a son.

**Scene 32** Chae goes off to war. Chris and Ewan ignore it, focussing on their domestic and work life. Long Rob is called a traitor when he argues against the war.

**Scene 33** Chris and Ewan become slightly uneasy about how the war might impact on their lives. Chae returns from the war, now cynical about its aims and outcomes. He sees that the people at home are making money from the war and have ruined the land he loves.

**Scene 34** Conscription is introduced, but Ewan is exempt as a farmer. Long Rob refuses to go to war and is imprisoned as a conscientious objector. Ewan feels the pressure of other people commenting on his staying at home. Chris decides she wants another child, but will wait until spring. Ewan surprises her by leaving suddenly to enlist.

**Scene 35** Chris and the other women have to work the fields. Long Rob returns from the prison an invalid after mistreatment for being a conscientious objector.

**Scene 36** Ewan returns from training, brutalised and harsh. He abuses Chris, ignores the land and his son, drinks heavily and uses her sexually. She fights back by refusing to sleep with him and threatening him with a knife. She ignores him as he leaves without saying goodbye.

Chris regrets ever having loved him, but realises what she has lost.

**Scene 37** In revenge, and in search of comfort, Chris makes love with Long Rob. He leaves to join up, knowing he will probably never return.

**Scene 38** Chris receives a telegram saying Ewan is dead. She is inconsolable.

In an image, the men who used to work the fields are shown on the battlefield.

**Scene 39** Chae returns to tell Chris that Ewan was shot as a deserter. In a flashback we see his last conversation with Ewan. Ewan tells Chae that he deserted because he suddenly knew he had to return to Chris to make up with her. He goes to the firing squad thinking of her and of Blawearie. Chris tells his ghost that she forgives him and understands.

**Scene 40** After the war the worthless goods and gear of the old farms are sold off cheap in a farm sale. There is much talk of who made money and who died in the war. The farms are being turned over to sheep because of the slump. A new minister appears and is engaged to be married to Chris.

**Scene 41** At the service of dedication of the war memorial, the new minister makes an impassioned speech with clear communist leanings. The bagpiper plays *The Flowers o the Forest* to end the service and the play.

**The End**

## **SUNSET SONG TOUR DETAILS**

**Glasgow Theatre Royal** Monday 26 – Saturday 31 August 2002  
**Dundee Rep Theatre** Wednesday 4 – Saturday 14 September  
**Aberdeen His Majesty's Theatre** Tuesday 16 – Saturday 21 September  
**Kirkcaldy Adam Smith Centre** Thursday 26 – Saturday 28 September  
**Edinburgh Royal Lyceum Theatre** Tuesday 1 – Saturday 19 October  
**Pitlochry Festival Theatre** Monday 21 – Wednesday 23 October  
**Stirling MacRobert Arts Centre** Thursday 24 – Sat 26 October  
**Inverness Eden Court Theatre** Tuesday 29 October – Saturday 2 November

## **COMPANY DETAILS**

### **Cast**

<b>Chris Guthrie</b>	<b>Cora Bissett</b>
<b>Ewan Tavendale</b>	<b>Douglas Russell</b>
<b>John Guthrie</b>	<b>Paul Morrow</b>
<b>Jean Guthrie</b>	<b>Estrid Barton</b>
<b>Will Guthrie</b>	<b>James Mackenzie</b>
<b>Chae Strachan</b>	<b>Alan McHugh</b>
<b>Long Rob Duncan</b>	tbc
<b>Ensemble</b>	tbc
<b>Ensemble</b>	tbc

<b>Director</b>	<b>Benjamin Twist</b>
<b>Designer</b>	<b>Neil Warmington</b>
<b>Lighting Designer</b>	<b>George Tarbuck</b>
<b>Music Director</b>	<b>Dougal Lee</b>

<b>Production Manager</b>	<b>John Wilkie</b>
<b>DSM on the book</b>	<b>Jo Spooner</b>
<b>ASM</b>	tbc

<b>Graphic Design</b>	<b>Emma Quinn</b>
<b>Publicity</b>	<b>Liz Smith</b>

<b>Prime Productions</b>	
<b>Artistic Director</b>	<b>Martin Heller</b>
<b>Directors</b>	<b>Joyce Heller</b>
	<b>Hamish Wilson (chair)</b>
	<b>Edward Argent</b>
	<b>Martin Milne</b>

**Production sponsored by Lloyds TSB Scotland**

## **PRIME PRODUCTIONS – TAKING THEATRE TO AUDIENCES ACROSS SCOTLAND**

Prime Productions began life in 1985 as a small-scale touring company specially formed to stage three previously unperformed short plays by Scottish playwright Ena Lamont Stewart under the title **Will You Still Need Me?**

This was followed by a commissioned piece on the life of Sheridan by John Cargill Thomson, **Uncorking Old Sherry**. A wide variety of productions followed, including Shakespeare (**The Merchant of Venice** and **Hamlet**), Shaw, Chekov and an adaptation of Compton Mackenzie's **Whisky Galore** presented as a radio play. **Herr Bach and Mr Handel**, a new play for two actors, proved instantly popular and toured in England as well as across Scotland. A double bill by John Cargill Thomson featuring Garrick and Macklin won a Fringe First award in 1992.

Other Festival performances have been **From Where I'm Standing** by John Ringham, writer of **Herr Bach and Mr Handel**, and an adaptation of a work first heard on radio about the holocaust, **Search Through The Ashes** by Djordje Lebovic, which was also invited to play in London, Holland and at Leicester University.

The company tours extensively to places as different in scale and facilities as Skerry Village Hall in Caithness, Perth Theatre, Shetland, the Western Isles and the Borders. For every audience our policy is to provide a full theatrical experience.