

Citadel Arts Group newsletter 4

Autumn 2010

Involving people of all ages in the arts

A very warm welcome to all our readers! As always we bring the past to life for people of all ages and create surprising drama in the present. We hope you've been following our successes on our new website.

New website address

We have changed and updated our website. So click on our new address below, enjoy the photos and keep up with Citadel events at www.citadelartsgroup.co.uk

Siege of Leith Show - Four stars and lots of fun

Cannons, guns, pikes and battleships. Smoke in the air and roast rat for dinner. Walls all round and an endless siege. Leith, 1560.

Inspired by the 450th anniversary of the Siege of Leith this summer, our playwrights from the Workers' Educational Association Playwrights' Workshop banded together to produce a drama around the 1560 siege. We were lucky in getting help from local Leith historians John Arthur and Jim Tweedie, who walked our writers round the battle sites. Four writers then collaborated to script the story of the events that ended the Auld Alliance between France and Scotland forever.

The script linked Tudor days to the present by means of a time-travelling war correspondent, Malky McMorrان from Leith FM. Malky travelled back to the past from 2025 to report on the siege, but when he found a lot more action than he bargained for, he found himself face to face with both royalty and regular folk and right in the middle of trouble.

In advance of the performance our rehearsed script reading in Out of the Blue in Leith brought a capacity audience. Feedback was positive and we used it to reshape and refine the script. From this event we also recruited six local volunteers to help with the show - and several have stayed to work with Citadel in future productions.

Onstage

The play was staged in June under the bright lights of the Leith Festival. The venue, South Leith Parish Church, stood at the heart of the siege and still displays the cannonball that crashed through its window in 1560. The hall buzzed with near-sellout audiences including Leith legend Mary Moriarty and MP Mark Lazarowicz. 'I welcome the idea of marking the 450th anniversary of the siege with an event like this involving local people in the production,' said Mr Lazarowicz. 'It's a great way to bring our past alive.'

Live period music, colourful costumes and vibrant acting held audiences enthralled. Audience feedback was very positive: 'Great local history. The actors were without exception excellent.' 'Particularly enjoyed the music and singing.' 'Entertaining and informative.' 'Taught me about Leith!'

Reviewer Alex Eades of EdinburghGuide.Com agreed. 'It is a rare thing you come out of a theatre with a beaming smile to light your face,' he wrote. 'There is a definite air of fun about the whole production. A time-travelling journalist and a cunning rat catcher are used to wonderful comic effect...All of the characters are gifted with smart and funny dialogue. Performances are all bright and dazzling...[it] is an absolute joy.' He awarded the play four stars.

Performers were Mark Kydd, Caroline MacKellar, Ian Watt, Mairi Jayne Weir, Rob Flett with local actor Leo Reid and Laure Paterson playing live music. The production was funded by Awards for All and Leith Neighbourhood Partnership.

Leith FM

Leith FM took our tribute to their news staff in good spirit, inviting us on air twice to talk live about the show - and even to play a few Tudor tunes. Our thanks go to Leith FM for their unflinching support over two summers of stage productions.

Leith writers' workshop

In conjunction with the play Citadel organised a Playwrights' Workshop with Lillian King. She encouraged participants to use personal memories and local history as a starting point for writing, and had cast members from the show improvise around what participants wrote. 'Really exhilarating,' said one. 'It gave me lots of ideas.'

2009-10 Living Memory projects

Citadel's work with older people in residential homes has received a boost in the form of funds from the Robertson Trust for further projects in Midlothian. We have now started a ten-week series of sessions in Archview Lodge Care Home, Dalkeith. Residents meet with us weekly to collect and compile memories for a booklet to be illustrated with their own photographs from the past. Performing one of our specially written plays in the home proved a stimulant to discussion. *Gold in Them Thar Hills*, by Laure C Paterson, tells the story of a Scots family who braved the sea voyage to California in 1850 to pan for gold - but found quite a different challenge. Actors Caroline MacKellar, Mairi Jayne Weir and Ian Watt infused the play with tremendous energy and the residents responded with laughs and smiles. So did the class of primary 6 pupils from a nearby school who had been invited to join them and compared notes with people nine times their age on favourite characters!

Also for older people, *Jimmy and the War*, a short play by Cecilia Rose, was staged in June in Jameson Place Sheltered Housing. The play shows the challenges of life on the Home Front as young Leither Jimmy and his mum deal with sirens, bombs and a Dad

away fighting. Afterwards, over tea and chocolate biscuits, residents recalled events in their own lives including the bombing of a local school and how to survive rationing. Actors Karen Douglas and Iain James Monteath received warm thanks from the audience, as did Director Mark Kydd. 'Funny, down to earth and true,' said one resident. 'Bringing back memories.' Funding for the event came from Awards for All.

Good practice - Conferences

London, July 2010

In 2008 Citadel was short listed for our reminiscence work in Penicuik with vulnerable people. As a result Lemos & Crane invited Citadel to London to deliver a paper to a conference on 'Meeting Older People's Aspirations'. Citadel Director Liz Hare spoke on using living memory work and live theatre to stimulate older people in care. Conference delegates were practitioners in the care sector from all over the UK. Speakers included strategy and development professionals, managers and practitioners in commuNHS invited Citadel to give a presentation at Edinburgh's Engine Shed showcasing our work on combating inequalities. Cecilia Rose and Liz Hare spoke on our Living Memory work in Penicuik and performing plays to older people.

IALS, Edinburgh University, June 2010

The Institute of Applied Language Studies hosted an interactive session by playwright Laure Paterson on Scottish history and music in Tudor times, using the research done for the *Siege of Leith Show*. International language students got a chance to read Scots voices from the script, and hum along with live Tudor music. Several students attended the show and IALS has invited Citadel back.

Partnerships for the future

Stella Dimitrijevic of Stellar Quines has extended an invitation to Citadel to work in partnership to develop new scripts. The focus is on developing new older writers. Read more on our website as the project gets going.

And Louise Paul, Senior Occupational Therapist working with dementia sufferers in Bonnyrigg Hospital, is discussing future partnership with Citadel

Thanks to all our sponsors and partners

Leith Neighbourhood Partnership, Awards for All and the Robertson Trust for financial support. The WEA for encouragement. Everyone in Leith including Leith Library which allowed us to display an exhibition for the *Siege of Leith Show*. And special thanks to Mary Moriarty, leading light of Leith.

And of course we extend heartfelt praise to all our actors, writers, designers, engineers and stagehands who have given our productions such energy and high production values.

REMEMBER TO CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE!!

www.citadelartsgroup.co.uk

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