

David C. Purdie

Twa Poems & a Story

The Assembly Haa

For Irene McGugan, founder MSP

Ilka simmer, sae suin's the Treds wis ower,
us jyners wad pit thegither, an pit up,
the muckle apron stage o the Assembly Haa.

The Kirk maun hae been jimp o siller i thae days,
ti thole a mardle o thespians scriftin aff atap the Mound,
an struttin in its Halie Haa, whaur the Lord expectit
ainerlie his Ain Ordeint ti dae ony siclike thing.

Onywey, for the thrie weeks o the Embro Ploy,
the Haa becam a Temple o the Deil,
we'd tae mak it fettle
for His Satanic Majesty's bit theatric splore.

The stage wis huirdit aa wunter in a concrete howf at Hillend,
in hivvy wuiden sections at haed bauld bleck nummers
pentit on ilk, sae's they'd gang thegither
the samen wey they'd duin a towmond syne.

It tuik a day or twa o larry vaigs gettin aa the bits
til the Mound. An it wais a steive humph gettin thaim frae
the plainstanes o Ramsay Gairden, intil the coortyard,
unner John Knox's neb, up the steps, an intil the Haa.
We wis gey forfochan, an John Knox juist stuid gruppin his bible,
nivver thinkin tae sclim doun an gie's a bit heeze.

As July tirt intil August, an the Ploy got nearer han,
thair wis rowth o overtime, sweit, an sweirin,
afore thae nummers aa cam thegither, an the stage wis
stellt intil its bit.

Thair wis rowth o glamour forby, whan they stertit in rehearsin.
A kirn o classy lassies, aa skin an bane an cut-gless accents,
an a when cockapentie cheils, that wis faur abuin puir
scuffie jyners.

Braw it wis, tho, i thae lang lowderin simmers o ma youthheid,
tae be, for a twa'r thrie weeks ilk year,
a pairt o showbiz, an tae kid on ma bib an brace
haed tirnt intil dooblet an hose, or aiblins
a maillyie semmit an airn breeks.

Better nor aathin tho, wis the denner time fitba
in the stane coortyard o the Kirk's Halie Haa,
whaur ma dungarees becam, for hauf an oor,
a sark o wine-warm Gorgie Maroon, abuin snaw white shorts.

An til this day, I dinna ken whit wey
Auld Knox nivver aince lowpit doun
for a bit keepie-uppie,
or a shottie at thrie-an-in wi the boys.

*(Winnin Sangschaw poem,
awardit the Hugh MacDiarmid Scotsoun Tassie)*