

Vote Craig Dalzell to be your Lord Provost

By Craig Dalzell, head of policy and research at Common Weal

HOW would you feel if I, personally, had total control over the strategic direction of several key areas of public services that affect you?

The odds of me being able to make a successful bid to win an election as a Scottish “metro mayor” are not zero. I’ve been in politics long enough to become well known at least in political circles, I have a few friends and hopefully not many more enemies. It’s even possible that you’d like some of my policies.

And if I win, I get to decide whether or not houses are built in your community. I would have the final say over planning issues of “strategic importance”. I would have powers over justice and what happens to former convicts and how prisons are run. And it would be me who decides if mass transit should be privately owned, publicly owned or even if it should exist at all.

And if I don’t win, it’d be someone else who gets to do all of that.

Don’t worry. This isn’t the launch of my campaign into elected politics but is a warning against bringing the “metro mayors” to Scotland.

This isn’t to say that we need more

local powers. The UK as a whole – and Scotland in particular – are incredibly centralised countries – the worst in Europe with only Ireland (which largely patterned its local government model from the UK) coming anywhere close. While Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland managed to partially address their lack of local power via devolution and the creation of their parliaments, England remains the only nation of the UK that doesn’t have a parliament to call its own (brief dalliance in the Commons with “English Votes for English Laws” aside).

The feeling was that some areas – especially the urban sprawls – weren’t adequately governed by their multiple interlocking local authorities, so the concept of the “metro mayor” arose to govern a council of mayors as a kind of quasi-regional intermediate layer of government between the local and the national.

This has resulted in those metro mayors (especially the likes of Andy Burnham, above) becoming well-known personalities even outwith their regions and therein lies the danger of directly electing singular

positions of office. By definition, one cannot use proportional representation to elect a single seat – the victory can only ever be all or nothing. This results in the elections very rapidly becoming more of a personality contest than any idea of collegiate governance based on consensus.

There remains a question of how the metro mayor proposal would even work in Scotland. A metro area with the same population as Greater Manchester’s 2.8 million would cover both Glasgow AND Edinburgh and would take in more than half of the entire population of Scotland. Limiting the metro areas to the urban chunks of our cities would merely cover the areas already covered by our local authorities and would, in effect, merely act to directly elect our (largely ceremonial) provosts and hand them powers largely already held by those councils.

I also worry for the chunks of Scotland that – like vast swathes of England at the moment – would not be covered by their own metro mayor and therefore could lose out as political focus and prestige (as well as leverage) cause more funding

to flow to those regions with mayors than those without.

More likely, there would be some kind of middle way which, applied to Scotland, could look something akin to the restoration of the pre-1996 districts and regions but would centralise the power of those councils into the office of one person. Powers might come down from Holyrood (or maybe even Westminster) into the metro mayor but would more likely move up from the existing local authorities. Again, this is a centralisation plan more than a decentralisation one.

So why is there even a push for metro mayors in Scotland? It’s largely a policy of the Labour Party but more than that I believe it’s largely a policy of UK Labour (now the UK Government) and is being imposed on Scottish Labour rather than being developed by them.

The hint is in the name. The historic and traditional name for the leader of a town council in Scotland has never been “mayor” (from Latin via French maior, “superior”) but “provost” (from the Latin praepositus, “one who is placed at

the front”). One might not think there’s much in a name but I do see the linguistic significance of leading by example rather than by authority.

More importantly, if the designers of the policy can’t even get the name right, then I have even less hope of them designing a system of governance that can be appropriately imposed on Scotland.

The second aspect is one, of course, of power. The UK Labour Party won massive power based on a minority of votes in the General Election and would struggle to replicate that in our more proportional voting systems in Holyrood and local authorities – but in a winner takes everything contest for metro mayor? That equation changes dramatically.

Scotland needs much more power held much more locally and this applies to all of the levels of government that currently rule us but the solution is not to centralise that power into a single office but to spread that power out among many hands at all levels. Even if you’d like what I, personally, might do with those powers, would you be equally welcoming of my successor from the other side?

(don’t really...)



Scotland’s own Andy Burnhams would not aid decentralisation efforts

Celebrating the arts, from the Tagus to Galway Bay

As Edinburgh gears up for its Festivals, across Europe the summer arts festival season has already begun



By Mark Brown

ALMADA, which sits across from Lisbon on the south bank of the great River Tagus, is a fairly typical, overwhelmingly working-class Portuguese city of fewer than 180,000 souls.

It is, in other words, an urban conurbation that is slightly bigger than Dundee, and a tad smaller than Aberdeen.

To many tourists, Almada is best known for its huge statue of Jesus Christ (the Cristo Rei), which stands, its back to the city, looking across the Tagus to Lisbon. However, those with a more cultural bent know that the municipality can also claim – in Festival de Almada – the biggest and best theatre festival in Portugal.

I am fortunate to be an old friend of this extraordinary showcase of live drama from throughout Portugal and the world. I’ve been attending editions of the festival since the days when its founder, the great theatre director Joaquim Benite (who died in 2012), was still around.

I’m glad to say that, under Benite’s successor (and former deputy) Rodrigo Francisco, the Almada showcase has maintained all of the key characteristics that make it one of the most impressive (and most welcoming) festivals in Europe. For instance, at what other festival can one find oneself standing in line to be served at the communal, al fresco restaurant (which is located in the car park of a secondary school) only to see the great Serbian-Hungarian choreographer Josef Nadj walk by, followed soon after by the legendary German theatre director Peter Stein?

Under Francisco’s leadership, Festival de Almada has maintained the sense of egalitarianism, a kind of municipal socialism, that was part of Benite’s original plan. Here, everyone – from audience members to actors, great playwrights and humble critics – eats together (while, each evening, they are treated to a live set by a different group of musical artists).

In maintaining his festival’s welcome, Francisco has also maintained its standing in the world. That’s why he is able to continue to attract work of the calibre of (my favourite show during my nine days in Almada) Nadj’s *Full Moon*. Dance should, the choreographer’s official website avers, be considered “above all” as “a site for encounter”.

Performed on the large stage of the outdoor auditorium at D António da Costa Secondary School, this extraordinary piece – in which the 67-year-old Nadj appears, masked, alongside 10 Black African dancers – is one of the most compelling, moving, humorous and deeply intelligent dance works it has been my privilege to see. We know that our human species began (approximately 200,000 years ago) in East Africa (yes, that means you are of African descent, Nigel Farage).

Nadj’s piece – by way of its superb African performers – explores notions of an essential African dance. However, inevitably, it encounters the arrested development in African culture created by European colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade and subsequent post-colonialism.

All of this and more is encountered by the piece with a lightness of touch, a depth of thought and a satirical comedy. Primarily, however, this inventive piece encounters culture, history and politics by means of exceptional, wonderfully varied and often breathtakingly virtuosic movement.

Full Moon is a genuinely complete choreography, a dance work that enriches the mind and the soul.

Another highlight in Almada was *A Nervous Breakdown – three one-act plays* by Anton Chekhov. Directed in Italian by Stein for Tieffe Teatro di Milan, these knowingly comic short plays were presented in the splendid Teatro MunicipaI Joaquim Benite in the heart of Almada.

Death, loss, love, passion and greed are, in the hands of Stein and his fine Italian cast, treated as impostors all the same. It is an approach to Chekhov that, in its subtlety and humour, could teach British directors of works by the Russian master a thing or two.

This year’s Almada programme also included the return of the famous American theatre-maker Robert Wilson. *Relative Calm*, created by Wilson and choreographer Lucinda Childs, (presented by the Festival at the impressive Centro Cultural de Belém in Lisbon), boasts often exhilarating dance and stunning costume and lighting design.

However, one is less impressed by its juxtaposition of projected video (of stampeding wildebeest, for example) with self-consciously poetic, but surprisingly ungenerous text.

The Portuguese element of the programme included a strong production of *Beyond Caring*, English playwright Alexander Zeldin’s 2014 play about low-paid shift workers in a meat factory. Directed in the studio of Teatro Municipal for Companhia de Teatro de Almada by Francisco himself, the production succeeded in expressing the numbing, menacing mundanity and the bleak comedy of the play.

Also a Portuguese highlight was a good and faithful outing for *Medicine*, the superb, absurdist play about mental health care by Irish dramatist Enda Walsh (which had its world premiere at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2021). Directed by António Simão for the Artistas Unidos company of Lisbon, the production (staged at Fórum Municipal Romeu Correia in Almada) showed a real understanding of the deep pathos, underlying anger and Ionesco-style absurd humour of Walsh’s drama.

Indeed, when – shortly after leaving Almada – I got to the west coast of Ireland, Paul Fahy, the excellent artistic director of the Galway International Arts Festival (GIAF) told me that Walsh had been over to Portugal to see Simão’s staging of *Medicine*. I’m pleased to report that the Irish playwright expressed himself happy with the production in Almada.

Medicine (which transferred from Edinburgh to Galway in 2021), was, like all of Walsh’s theatrical work, co-produced by GIAF. Indeed, this year in Galway (where the festival ends today) there are two of the playwright’s drama installations, known as *B&B*.

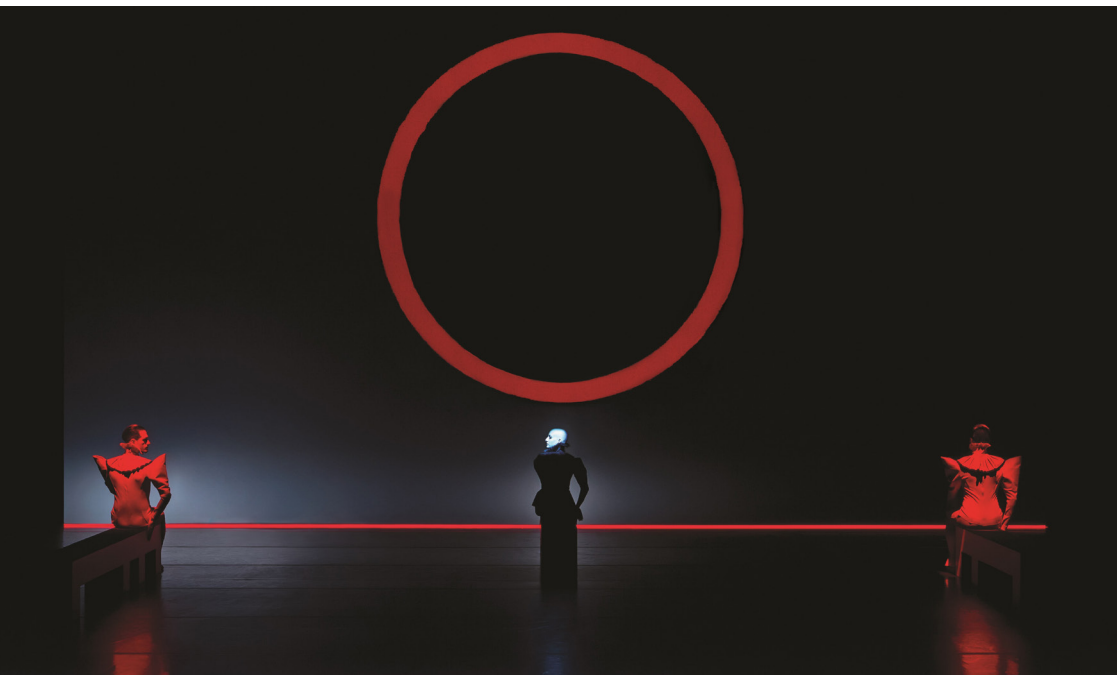
In a converted shed on Galway docks, audiences are offered the world premiere of *Dining Room*, in which the recorded, disembodied voice of the superb Aaron Monaghan offers us a comic monologue about a vengeful B&B owner who has been one-starred on Trip Advisor. There’s also a deserved revival of *Changing Room*, a powerful reflection – voiced beautifully by Marty Rea – on bereavement, brotherhood, regret and homosexual self-discovery in an Ireland that was, then, emerging slowly from under the cloak of religious prohibition.

However, the undoubted highlight of my four days in Galway was the staging of Samuel Beckett’s great play *Endgame*, directed by the great Garry Hynes for her famous Druid Theatre Company. Performed at Galway’s Town Hall Theatre, the production boasts an exceptional set by designer Francis O’Connor.

Much has been said about how the play’s site of post-apocalyptic refuge – which is circular with two windows on the world placed high above the action – is reminiscent of the inside of a human skull. In this case, that similarity is striking, with the humanoid interior also taking on the grey, solid appearance of a nuclear bunker.

Endgame is written like an exquisite string quartet – something by Béla Bartók or Leoš Janáček, perhaps. One bad note threatens to overturn the entire apple cart.

As ever with the exceptional Druid company, however, Hynes has assembled a magnificent cast. Aaron Monaghan (again) is gloriously comic and more than typically sympathetic in the role of Clov, the limping servant, who



cannot sit and does not know why he continues to wait on the blind dictator Hamm.

Hamm himself is played with more than usual energy, a touch less grumbling self-pity, by the fabulous Rory Nolan. The result – assisted by the bleakly comic double act of Bosco Hogan and Marie Mullen as Nagg and Nell, the unfortunate ancients who are confined to bins – is an *Endgame* that engages (of us, of itself) with an uncommon degree of humanism.

There was, in Galway, more – much more – humanistic enquiry in *Unspeakeable Conversations*, a superb new work that had its world premiere at the Druid company’s lovely Mick Lally Theatre. Played by disabled English actors Liz Carr and Mat Fraser – who have, respectively, muscular dystrophy and

thalidomide-induced phocomelia – the piece was inspired by a New York Times Magazine article from 2003 in which the late American lawyer, author and disability rights activist Harriet McBryde Johnson wrote about her Princeton University debate with the Australian philosopher Peter Singer.

Singer, famously (or infamously), argues in favour of what Johnson (accurately) described as “selective infanticide” of certain categories of disabled children (an opinion that is widely considered to pollute his progressive views on a raft of other issues). Unsurprisingly, his appointment as professor of bioethics at Princeton led to protests by disability rights campaigners.

In the play (which was created by Christian O’Reilly in collaboration with Carr, Fraser



and Olwen Fouéré) Carr and Fraser alternate between performing the roles of Johnson and Singer, and reflecting on their own experiences as disabled people. The piece is, by turns, generous (not least to Singer, despite his eugenicisim), very humorous and (justifiably) angry.

Carefully calibrated and superbly performed, it is a brilliant, highly original theatre work of which we will, I suspect, be hearing a lot more.

As I travelled back from Galway, I reflected on my experiences both there and in Almada. I realised that, were the Edinburgh International Festival programme to include the works I had just seen by Nadj, Stein, Hynes and O’Reilly et al, Edinburgh audiences would consider themselves very blessed indeed.

Main: Josef Nadj’s Full Moon at Festival De Almada
Photograph: Arbre E Saldana

Far left: Robert Wilson’s Relative Calm at Festival De Almada
Photograph: Lucie Jansch

Above: Garry Hynes’s take on Samuel Beckett’s Endgame at the Galway International Arts Festival
Photograph: Ros Kavanagh

BACK IN THE DAY



Aviation expert Frank Barnwell Photograph: Bristol Aeroplane Company

Scotland’s pioneering aeronautical brothers

By Hamish MacPherson

THOUGH other pioneers’ claims have been advanced, it is generally accepted that siblings Harold and Frank Barnwell were the Scottish equivalent of America’s Wright brothers and were the first men to get a powered aircraft off Scotland’s soil.

Before them, Glasgow ship designer and academic Percy Pilcher pioneered controllable gliders but never succeeded in getting a powered aircraft to fly – his Hawk glider is in the National Museum Scotland in Edinburgh – while the claims of Preston Watson of Dundee that he beat the Wright brothers with a sustained controllable flight over a distance is not accepted by aviation historians.

So it was on this date 115 years ago that Scotland saw its first flight by a heavier-than-air flying machine, initiating a long history of achievement in the air by Scots and Scottish aircraft.

In my opinion, the Barnwell brothers should be more celebrated as great Scottish innovators, even if they were born in London, Harold on April 3, 1879, and Frank on November 23, 1880.

They were taken to Scotland as infants and raised and educated here. Their father Richard brought them to live in Balforn when he became director of Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Company on the Clyde.

Harold and Frank were both educated at Fettes College in Edinburgh after which Frank had a six-year apprenticeship at Fairfield, during which he studied at Glasgow University, graduating with a degree in naval architecture.

The two brothers were able to travel widely and Harold had an extended trip to the USA where he is said to have met the Wright brothers after their historic flight. Frank would follow him to the USA and spent a year as a shipbuilding draughtsman.

They both became hugely interested in aviation and were determined to be Scottish pioneers of flying.

Returning home to Balforn, they built their first glider in 1905, and a year later they opened one of Scotland’s first motoring garages, the Grampian Engineering and Motor Company at Causewayhead in Stirling. All the time they were working on building an aircraft and an engine to power it, starting with a motorbike engine and developing it.

Their first prototype built in 1908 had insufficient power to get off the ground, but the second was a biplane similar to the Wright brothers’ Flyer. It was on Wednesday, July 28, 1909, in a grassy field in the shadow of the Wallace Monument that Harold clambered aboard and started the engine.

This time the aircraft took off rapidly under its own power and such was its velocity that it tilted upwards. It flew about 80 yards at a maximum height of 13ft before a crash landing in which Harold was unhurt apart from a few cuts and bruises though the aircraft itself was damaged but able to be repaired.

According to aviation history writer Robert Jeffrey in his book *Scotland’s Wings*: “Unlike many claims of flight which, according to one, perhaps cynical, historian I spoke to, consisted of a lucky

bounce or two over a bumpy grass strip that launched the test craft a couple of feet in the air before a swift return to terra firma, there is no doubt that the Bramwells’ effort took to the air.”

In 1910, the brothers set about building their third aircraft, this time a monoplane similar in design to the Type XI flown by Louis Blériot across the English Channel the previous year. The difference with this new aircraft was that it had an engine that produced 40bhp which the brothers were confident was enough power.

In January 1911, during a period of mild weather, Harold again took off at Causewayhead and this time piloted the monoplane for a flight of more than a mile, winning the £50 price offered for such an achievement by the Scottish Aeronautical Society.

Later that year, the brothers were tempted south of the Border by an offer to become pilots and aircraft designers. Harold attended the flying school at Brooklands, later famous as a motor racing venue, and gained pilot’s licence number 278.

He went to work at the Bristol aircraft company, before moving to Vickers at Brooklands as an instructor and test pilot. It was while test-flying the Vickers Vampire night fighter over Kent that Harold is believed to have become unwell, leading to his fatal crash on August 25, 1917, at the age of 38.

Frank Barnwell enjoyed a stellar career as an aircraft designer, starting with Bristol where he co-designed the Bristol Scout. He trained as a pilot and joined the Royal Flying Corps in 1915, but after seeing active service on the Western Front, he was released to become chief designer for Bristol where almost immediately he designed the successful Bristol F2 Fighter using lessons he had learned from fighting the Germans.

He worked at Bristol for the rest of his life, apart from a spell advising the Australian government on the development of that country’s air force. For his work during the First World War, he was awarded the OBE and Air Force Cross.

Barnwell designed two of Britain’s most famous military aircraft, the Bristol Bulldog and the Bristol Blenheim light bomber – the latter was a mainstay of the RAF during the first years of the Second World War. It had just entered service when Frank was killed when a light aircraft of his own design stalled on take-off and crashed on August 2, 1938.

All three of Frank Barnwell’s sons, Pilot Officer John Barnwell of 29 Squadron, Flight Lieutenant Richard Barnwell of 102 Squadron and Pilot Officer David Barnwell DFC of 607 Squadron, were killed on active service in 1940 and 1941. They were aged 20, 24 and 19 respectively.

Having won his Distinguished Flying Cross for downing aircraft attacking Malta at night, David Barnwell was shot down over the Mediterranean.

There is a memorial to the Bramwell brothers and their Scottish “first” beside the Causewayhead roundabout in Stirling. A memorial plaque was unveiled in Balforn on the centenary of that pioneering flight in 2009.

Hamish’s Scottish Quiz

Thanks to all who emailed me to say how well or badly they did in last week’s quiz. This week’s questions are:

1. Sir Andy Murray is to retire from playing tennis after the Olympics. How many gold medals has he won in the men’s singles?
2. In the 1996 film *Loch Ness*, who starred as the scientist trying to disprove the existence of the monster?
3. Arbroath-born David Buick (1854-1929) was famous for his motor cars, but what invention first made him successful?
4. The first Lord Tweedsmuir is better known as which author?
5. How many times has Joe Biden visited Scotland as president?
6. Which town was the capital of Shetland until 1708?
7. Was Kenneth McKellar a tenor or bass singer?
8. Has Scotland ever competed in its own right at the Olympic Games?
9. Named Denny-Brown after their joint inventors, what important additions to ships to keep them steady were invented in Edinburgh and Dumbarton in the 1930s?
10. Which very funny 1975 film was shot at Doune Castle?
11. After many years of controversy, planning permission was finally granted in midweek for the refurbishment of which famous building in Edinburgh?
12. Which King of Scots briefly succeeded Macbeth in 1057?



13. Leanach Cottage is located on which battlefield site?
14. Which city will host the Whisky Week Festival in September?
15. In the 1931 novel *Five Red Herrings* by Dorothy L. Sayers, Lord Peter Wimsey investigates a murder in what current local authority area of Scotland?
16. Cape Wrath is the only cape in Scotland. Is that true or false?
17. Professor James D Forbes (1809-68) created the first modern version of which measuring instrument?
18. Though there are several of them around the country, the Auld Brig is a still-standing feature of which city?
19. The famous R34 airship was built at Inchinnan by which renowned engineering firm?
20. Who is the current Solicitor General for Scotland?

ANSWERS

1. Two, 2. Ted Danson, 3. James Buchanan, 4. John Brown, 5. Denny-Brown, 6. Denny-Brown, 7. Denny-Brown, 8. Denny-Brown, 9. Denny-Brown, 10. Denny-Brown, 11. Denny-Brown, 12. Denny-Brown, 13. Denny-Brown, 14. Denny-Brown, 15. Denny-Brown, 16. Denny-Brown, 17. Denny-Brown, 18. Denny-Brown, 19. Denny-Brown, 20. Denny-Brown.