

# *The Project*

*Mr Hayward, I am thanking you very much for this evening – you have changed our lives. It is the first time my son and I are really talking.*

*An elderly Indian lady in Calcutta*

*Puts the alcohol abuse aspects of the show into context and offers an explanation, not an excuse, for dysfunctional and destructive behaviour.*

*Brenda Carson, Education Department, Strathclyde Council*

# ***The Journey So Far!***

## **“A TRAGICALLY COMIC AND LOVINGLY LYRICAL WILD ROLLER COASTER JOURNEY THROUGH LIFE”**

I met Alison Kennedy in Glasgow through mutual friends whilst I was doing a Scottish soap - 6 years – ‘Take The High Road’. She asked if I could help her with voice projection and my reply was that it would be a pleasure if she could write me a ‘one man show’. I had no idea at the time what a brilliant writer she was. Approximately two weeks later Act I of a script arrived with a working title of ‘The Audition’. I was blown away by its brilliance. Two weeks following Act II arrived. My actor’s instinct told me I had at all costs to get this show to be seen by a director. My first point of call was a theatre company based in Ayrshire called ‘Borderline’, as by reputation I knew they put on new and experimental work. I went to see the director, John Murtagh and, after much pleading, begged him to let me read the show in its entirety. He immediately saw the potential and withdrew one of his shows from the Edinburgh Festival and put ‘The Audition’ in its place. Alison co-directed the show with John and we were fortunate in getting a booking at a small village hall in Crieff, prior to taking it to the Edinburgh Festival. At the festival we won the Scotsman’s prestigious award of a Fringe First.

A little time after I did the show at The Arches in Glasgow where, for the first time and almost at whim, at the end of the show, after having taken my bows, I said to the audience “If any of you would like to stay on and have a chat about the sub-text of this piece, I’ll go backstage, have a couple of slugs of Diet Coke and if there’s no-one here when I come back I’ll understand that you’ve had enough intellectualising for one night!” You can’t imagine the thrill and delight I felt when I returned and no-one had left their seats. It was only at this point that I confessed that I am an ex-drunk and an alcoholic. This evoked a huge curiosity in the audience and questions about the shows content and my own life came thick and fast. We had to cut it short as a result of the janitor needing to close the theatre. One night two very loud drunks came in and were determined to disrupt proceedings. However, one of the theatre ushers spoke to them (he himself was an ex-heroine addict) and somehow persuaded them to be quiet – they came back after the interval – they stayed for the after-show chat – they met me at the bar afterwards – not only was it their first ever experience of theatre but as I was living in Glasgow I was able to help them both and they are still sober today (as far as I am aware – but I am sure I would have heard otherwise). So the idea of the after-show chat became an established part of the whole evening’s experience.

During one of the breaks from recording ‘Take The High Road’, I did the show at *Forest Hill School* in London, where I did some supply teaching. We performed the show in the evening though due to time restrictions we didn’t do an after-show chat. However, I was approached by a man from the British Council called Simon Gammell – Head of Drama and Dance and asked if I would be interested in touring the show to India and Sri Lanka. It was then I discovered how greatly A.L. Kennedy’s name was revered in academic circles as she toured the world talking about her novels. Naturally I leapt at the chance of the tour and Alison and I had decided to change the name from ‘The Audition’ to ‘Just About Ready to Jump’. There were of course hundreds of amusing and serious anecdotes as a result of the tour but perhaps one of the most relevant was - an old Indian lady who approached me after the show, saying “You have changed our lives tonight – it is the first time my son and I are really talking”.

On returning to the UK, although I was still very busy recording episodes of 'Take The High Road', I decided to take advantage of the amount of fame that the programme afforded me by putting on the show in various venues across Scotland and, having had the experience from that London school, decided to broaden its audience base. By seeking advice from professional educationalists we came to the conclusion that the show was suitable from age 15. I filled out an application for grant form and duly performed the show at two schools in Scotland. The response was truly amazing as were the extensive and intelligent questions from the students. With the help of the Head of Drama at Whitehill Secondary School I have produced a Health and Social Education document as a teaching aid. There is one point that is vital for me to communicate clearly – the pre-publicity for the show being put on in schools or any educational establishments should avoid any reference to alcoholism or to me being an alcoholic as the after-show chat will then have a more surprising and dynamic effect on the audience.

It is now approximately 15 years since I have performed the show. I now find myself of an age where I don't just want the ego-satisfaction of acting. I want to be able to use some of my earlier talents which include being team leader for various expeditions such as two major mountain and cave rescues, an A-grade teacher with the unusual combination of Maths and Drama, and the extra dimension to my communication skills brought about by having been sober for over 20 years. I believe the combination of performing the show and then talking about my experiences as an ex drunk, without the burden of a teacher/student relationship, uniquely breaks down the communication barriers between generations. Funding authorities might well say that this is an inappropriate time for such a project. However, it is my sincere contention that in times of stress the generation gap becomes even wider and the disaffected youth are only too keen to knock both the establishment and the older generation and use booze and drugs to widen this gap. In my day I recall most teenagers looked up to the older generation, especially in Wales, wanting to be rugby players and to drink with the men but nowadays the youth seem to have no interest or aspiration in being like their forefathers.

# Review Strathclyde Regional Council

## Strathclyde Regional Council

Department of Education  
Strathclyde House, 20 India Street, Glasgow G2 4PF

Director : Frank Pignatelli MA MEd FBIM  
Senior Depute Director and  
Head of Educational Development: David S. Alexander MA MLitt

Tel: Direct Line 0141 248 8052

FAX: 0141 204 3368

Our ref: Arts Initiatives

Date: 27 September 1995

Our location : Strathclyde Arts Centre, 12 Washington Street, Glasgow G3 8AZ

If phoning or calling please ask for: Brenda Carson

Mike Hayward  
59 Tewkesbury Ave.  
Forest Hill  
London SE23 3DG



Dear Mike

### "THE AUDITION"

I was very impressed by the show, which I saw in Whitehill Secondary School.

Both the script, by A.L. Kennedy, and your own performance were outstanding.

I feel that the show has a great deal to offer school pupils, not only as a means of explaining and coming to terms with alcohol abuse problems, but as a piece of drama in its own right.

There would also be great potential for the show to be used with adults in communities, or with teachers as an in-service piece, or indeed in any workplace where alcohol abuse might become an issue.

"The Audition" deals with the relationships and insecurities which we all experience, puts the alcohol abuse aspects of the show into context, and offers an explanation, not an excuse, for dysfunctional and destructive behaviour.

I wish you the best of luck with the show and will pass on your information to other colleagues as appropriate.

Best wishes

Yours sincerely

Brenda Carson  
Arts Officer

## Health and Social Education

The show works most dynamically when the audience has no idea of the sub text, part of which relates to alcoholism. It means at the end of the show, after the devastating final climax, I quieten the audience and simply say to them, “I am now standing in front of you not as an actor or as an ex schoolmaster but as an ex drunk. If any of you would like to know more about this show, its sub text and its parallels to my life, please remain seated. I shall go backstage for a quick slug of Diet Coke and if there is no-one here when I return I’ll go home to bed. Thanks for coming.”

The sub-text of “Just About Ready to Jump” looks at the implications of the following human and social issues. These could be used as the basis for group discussions and/or titles for creative writing exercises.

- Our need to love and be loved.
- The invisible wall we often build between each other in order to protect ourselves from being wounded or found out.
- Compulsive behaviour – terminal uniqueness.
- Parental expectations coupled with a misunderstanding of generational changes.
- How some of us are in possession of a self-destruct button and manifest our emotional instability and fear by overt anger or withdrawal into self.
- How a minority of us (though in my opinion rapidly becoming the majority) need alcohol or drugs – sometimes both – in order to suppress feelings of low self-esteem or isolation.
- How we are bombarded by belief systems, family ideals and dogmas leaving the individual confused as to any sense of self.

The character of Jack Rees demonstrates – often in an amusing way – all the above traits, but because of his driving ambition, coupled with his paranoia, he is not aware that all his manipulations of people and audiences are going to turn in on him and ultimately destroy him.

On the academic side the play illustrates the incredible perception of some of our greatest writers – Shakespeare, Chekov, Osborne, The Bible and last but not least A.L. Kennedy. This is achieved in a very innovative, stimulating and non-patronising way.

**For drama students the after-show talk could take the form of a practical seminar on acting techniques, as I am also a fully qualified drama teacher.**

## Public Relations

1. It needs to be performed in front of Education Committees, Youth Workers, Prison Governors, Public School Heads, Theatre Bookers, Drama Colleges, etc. Please add to this list.
2. I am convinced that any schools booking the show would probably book it every two years as the student body changes.
3. The show has not yet been seen by any national press.
4. The show needs a portable lighting rig which can be transported in my estate car.
5. I think a flyer should be put in each programme to be handed in to someone on the door when departing the theatre. Here is a rough idea of my thinking:

“Dear Member of Audience – as you probably know publicising and promoting a one man show is very difficult and is rarely cost effective. Please help us by answering the following questions:

- Would you recommend this show to friends?
- If so, approximately how many?
- Would you see it again?
- If you know of any group or organisation that might like to host this show, please ring 07866626257

By answering these questions we might be able to put the show on again at this venue.”

6. If we manage to get a small tour of theatres, in my experience it is best I arrive at the location the day before as I can get to a local A.A. meeting and almost guarantee at least a small audience on the night. Local press need to be informed that we would probably put the show on for just one night with a view to revisiting the location one or two weeks later, after the show had been reviewed and the flyers from programmes collated.
7. I think it would be great to promote Alison’s novels by means of a book stand and publicity poster. I note from one of the reviews of her novel called ‘Day’ (from The Times, Wednesday January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2008 entitled **Tale of war and redemption pips Stalin to take £25,000 prize**. “Picking up her prize Kennedy made a special plea to have ‘libraries with books in them and bookshops with a wide range of books’. She added afterwards ‘if you genuinely care about books then defend them. You’ve got to start with the education system’.”

**Although I am not a doctor or psychiatrist, I have many friends who are – most of them are also ex-drinkers and they have often endorsed the unique way in which this project could help those in need of help and, for the rest of you stable human beings it is a cracking good show anyway!**

# Education Review Forest Hill School



## FOREST HILL SCHOOL

HEADTEACHER: GRAHAM AGNEW M.A.

DACRES ROAD, FOREST HILL, LONDON SE23 2XN

TELEPHONE: 0181 699 9343 FACSIMILE: 0181 699 9198



The Audition - a one-man play by Alison Kennedy performed by Mike Hayward.

Mike Hayward's performance in the one-man play written especially for him was an unforgettable experience for all those parents staff and pupils fortunate enough to be in the Main Hall on 15th February 1995.

It is a rare talent that can single-handedly captivate an audience for 2 hours. Mike's portrayal of the life story of actor Jack Rees ran the full range of human emotions. From his rejected childhood, through his career, personal relationships and alcoholism Mike carried the audience in the palm of his hand, taking them from hysterical laughter to long expectant silences.

The simple set was augmented by fantastic lighting techniques which made a significant contribution to the atmosphere surrounding the different stages in Jack's life.

There is no doubt that this play should be a must for Drama and English Literature students but I would have no hesitation in recommending it for all students from Year 10 upwards because Jack's experiences and problems are extremely relevant for today's youngsters.

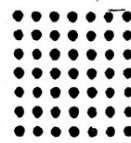
As someone who has seen hundreds of plays this performance was one of the few I shall always remember. I hope it is repeated so that those who missed it can experience the same enjoyment as we all did last night.

Tony Payton



# Endorsement British Council

The British Council



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ef

line 0171 389 3073

0171 389 3088

Mike Hayward  
59 Tewkesbury Avenue  
Forrest Hill  
London SE23 3DG

Promoting cultural, educational  
and technical co-operation between  
Britain and other countries

11 Portland Place  
London W1N 4EJ  
Telephone 0171-930 8466  
Telex 8952201 BRICONG  
Fax 0171-389 3199

11 June 1996

To whom it may concern.

Mike Hayward toured his one-man show "The Audition" by  
A.L.Kennedy to several cities in India under the management  
of the British Council during the Spring of 1994. The tour  
was a considerable success with audiences and critics alike.

Simon Gammell  
Head of Drama & Dance

Internet: Simon.Gammell@britcoun.org

X 400: G Simon'S Gammell@ BCC GHPADMD AT FMAIL/PRMD-BRITCOUN



# A L Kennedy Prize

THE TIMES Wednesday January 23 2008 30p

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## Tale of war and redemption pips Stalin to take £25,000 prize

Dalya Alberge Arts Correspondent

A dark novel by a Scottish writer who recently embarked on a second career as a stand-up comedian was singled out for one of Britain's most prestigious literary prizes last night.

A.L. Kennedy, 42, follows the Nobel-winning poet Seamus Heaney and the bestselling novelist Philip Pullman as the winner of the Costa Book of the Year award.

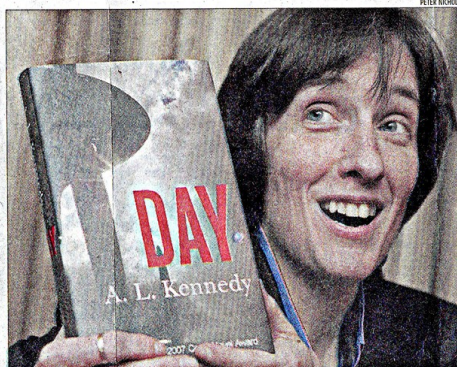
She was chosen for her fifth novel, *Day*, a harrowing story of a Second World War bomber crew, which the judges hailed as a masterpiece. It has been lauded as a superbly crafted work about the brutal simplicities of war and the camaraderie among the

crew as they face death. The chairman of the judging panel, the author Joanna Trollope, said that the novel was perfect and beautifully written.

She said: "She is an extraordinary stylist. Her style is arresting. It has got shades of James Joyce and all kinds of greats in it."

The panel's choice was no surprise to the bookmakers. The book was the odds-on favourite at William Hill, followed by Simon Sebag Montefiore's *Young Stalin*, Jean Sprackland's poetry collection *Till*, the debut novelist Catherine O'Flynn's *What Was Lost* and *The Bower Bird* by Ann Kelley.

But the eight judges took 90 minutes to choose the winner, arriving at their decision only minutes before



The judges called A. L. Kennedy's harrowing wartime novel a masterpiece

their deadline. Trollope said that it was a close-run contest between Kennedy, O'Flynn and Montefiore.

The Costa Book Award encouraged impossible comparisons between categories, she added. "You cannot compare a slim volume of verse with a hefty biography. This is about the judges concentrating on choosing an example of excellence for its category, something we could recommend and

give to a friend." She applauded *Day* as a novel about "learning to live with what is left of oneself after trauma ... I wouldn't recommend it to someone who is profoundly depressed."

The category winners — novel, biography, poetry, first novel and children's — were chosen from 553 entries. Each winner received £5,000, and Kennedy was awarded a further £25,000. Picking up her prize,

Kennedy made a special plea to have "libraries with books in them and bookshops with a wide range of books". She added afterwards: "If you genuinely care about books, then defend them. You've got to start with the education system."

Alison Louise Kennedy said that she writes under her initials because the authors she first admired — J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and E.E. Nesbitt — had done so. She lives in Glasgow and is an associate professor with the Warwick University Creative Writing Programme. On her website, she writes: "Prizes do not make sense

**'If you win a prize, try to pretend it was because your book was good'**

Keep away from them, do not consider them, they are none of your business, if you write, unless you happen to be judging one, in which case, try to arrange for the best book to win. If you win one, keep your head down and try to pretend it was because your book was good."

A review of *Day* in *The Times* said: "Kennedy writes with keen, precise, quirky intelligence and artistry." *The Daily Telegraph* wrote that "it ought to win all the prizes going".

The prize was established in 1971 to recognise the most enjoyable books of the past year.

*Picking up her prize, Kennedy made a special plea to have "Libraries with books in them and bookshops with a wide range of books". She added afterwards "If you genuinely care about books, then defend them. You've got to start with the education system".*

## Technical

Running Time: - 1 hour 50 minutes (including 15 minute interval)

The show can be performed in virtually any space – as was proved in India! I have performed it in a small living room and a 2000 seat theatre. As a one-man-show it's an intimate piece of theatre – to this end it's a bonus if the theatre has a policy of no admittance after the play has opened and outside sounds are not allowed to percolate into the auditorium. The show requires a one-day get-in with a performance that evening. Hopefully a total blackout can be obtained. Please note the following is the optimum lighting rig but the show can be performed even with limited lighting resources.