

And it'll be a good night from her!

By John MacLeod

AN almost forgotten play by the late comic Ronnie Barker has been revived for the Dràma Na h-Alba festival next month.

Mum was written for Barker's actress daughter Charlotte and was first performed at the King's Head in London in 1998.

Culbokie-based comedienne Jackie Goode will play the lead part of Alison in the latest production.

She told the *North Star*: "I had pretty much free rein to do anything I wanted for the festival and had just read the authorised biography of Ronnie Barker. So I knew about the play, but I thought there was no way I could do it. Ronnie Barker was always very protective about who performed his work and how it was performed.

"But encouraged by a friend of mine, Dave Smith of Write Lines, who had a copy of the play, I picked up the phone and rang Essential Books who control the rights to his work. They told me all I had to do was write a letter to Ronnie's wife Joy Barker to check it was OK.

"The following week I got a letter back telling me I could do it. I was given permission to do two performances."

Jackie admits that the part will be more challenging than the ones she is used to playing: "It's a tragi-comedy, and not his usual style. It's not a laugh-a-minute, hold your sides sort of play. In fact, it's more tragedy than comedy. I'm really looking forward to doing it, it's good to do something more serious for a change.

"Because I've never had a part like this before, it's going to be hard work. The mood of the character goes up and

Comic plays it straight in Barker play

down, as does the tone of her voice and temperament. It is definitely the most challenging thing I have ever done.

"The play is set in modern-day London, but we decided to base it up here. Ronnie had written it in two acts but we are just going to run it all the way through – it lasts about an hour and a quarter. As far as I know, this will be the first time it has been performed since 1998."

Jackie is used to appearing in one-woman shows like *Illicit*, which she performed at the Inverness Festival. However, on this occasion well-known Highland actor Brian Smith shares the bill with her. He plays the two male parts in the play.

Brian appeared in *The Wedding* and *The Accidental Death of an Accordionist*, which were also very popular at the Edinburgh Festival fringe.

Brian also works for Arts in Motion and Cartoon Theatre and acted in the play *The Perfect Spot* – a children's show about finding the perfect spot to go camping in Scotland.

Many people will recognise him as the chief health and safety officer at Belladrum and other events around the Highlands. He also worked with the Grey Coast Theatre Company and Theatre Hebrides from Stornoway.

Stuart Brownlee, marketing officer for the festival, said: "I know Jackie is really looking

forward to the challenge of performing in this play.

"I believe it was the last thing Ronnie Barker ever wrote – it will stretch her as all one-woman shows do.

"She is also a very active board member of the Highlands and Islands Theatre network."

Mum, which is described as "dark, sinister and emotive" in the programme, will be performed in the

Jackie Goode, who will be starring in *Mum* by Ronnie Barker on October 18-19 as part of the Dràma na h-Alba Theatre Arts Festival.



Spectrum Centre, Inverness on Thursday, October 18 at 2pm, and Friday, October 19 at 5pm. Tickets £6.50 (concessions £5).

Dràma Na h-Alba, Scotland's

international theatre arts festival and forum, runs from October 18-22, at venues in and around Inverness. There are more than 100 events over the five days.