

Under embargo until 11am on Wednesday 13 May 2026

SCOTLAND'S NATIONAL NEW WRITING COMPANY UNVEILS TRAVFEST26:

A BOLD AUGUST PROGRAMME OF NEW WRITING FROM SCOTLAND AND BEYOND



The Traverse Theatre today announces a major programme for **TravFest26**, its annual August celebration of new writing, bringing world premieres, landmark co-productions and urgent contemporary theatre to Edinburgh this summer.

Running from Friday 31 July to Sunday 30 August, TravFest26 brings together work by **emerging, mid-career and internationally acclaimed playwrights**, affirming the Traverse's role as **Scotland's national new writing company** and a place where bold ideas and voices begin, are nurtured and are celebrated.

This year's programme brings together a powerful range of female voices: stories grappling with grief and faith, autonomy and morality, motherhood and ecology, ambition and identity, misogyny and moral courage. Across its two in-house stages, the Traverse presents work rooted in lived experience but resonant with audiences across Scotland and far beyond.

At the centre of the festival are three new Traverse-led productions that embody the theatre's long-term commitment to, and investment in, new work from Scottish-based artists.

CATHY (world premiere, Traverse Theatre), by **Eilidh Loan**, is a fierce and funny new play starring **Elaine C. Smith**, who is returning to the Traverse main stage for the first time in 26 years. Written with Smith in mind for the title role, and marking Loan's second directing role, the play follows a sharp-tongued widow in the wake of her husband's death, as Christmas approaches and long-buried truths surface. Darkly comic and deeply humane, from one of Scotland's bold new voices.

AFTER PARTY (world premiere, Traverse Theatre in co-production with Paines Plough and the Belgrade Theatre Coventry), a major new play by **Morna Young** (*Sunset Song, Lost At Sea, Never Land*), brings large-scale writing confidently into the festival landscape. Set on the night of a legendary actress's 80th birthday, the play unfolds as family secrets and champagne collide around a decision that will change everything. Directed by **Katie Posner** and developed with partners Paines Plough and Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, *After Party* is an unflinching, funny and frank exploration of autonomy, love and a life-defining choice: intimate and epic in equal measure.

Completing the trio of Traverse-led work premiere productions is **SUPPOSING: (world premiere, Traverse Theatre Company)** by **Zinnie Harris**, directed by the writer herself. When a curse falls on Sally's house - unexpected, unwanted and impossible to shake - no one will believe her. Rooted in Greek mythology, yet fiercely contemporary, the play explores belief, isolation and the unsettling forces that disrupt ordinary life. *Supposing*: promises a not-to-be-missed ambitious work by one of Scotland's most established writers in the theatre's most experimental and intimate space, Traverse 2.

Beyond these three flagship productions, TravFest26 presents a diverse programme of premieres and transferring shows that reflect the organisation's international outlook and platforming of bold voices taking risks.

The programme features **BOG WITCH (Scottish premiere, Avalon & Tellus Studio)**, the acclaimed autobiographical work by **Bryony Kimmings**, who returns to the Traverse for the first time in over a decade; **THE SINGER (world premiere, Dundee Rep Theatre and Solar Bear, in collaboration with Aberdeen Performing Arts)**, radical gig theatre written and directed by **Cora Bissett** with original music and lyrics by **KT Tunstall**, exploring Deaf culture, authorship and creative ownership; **FOR DOLORES (UK premiere, Fishamble in association with Lime Tree Theatre, Belltable, Galway International Arts Festival and Traverse Theatre)**, a blisteringly funny new play written by **Eva O'Connor** and directed by **Jim Culleton**; **BADGERS** written by **Malaika Kegode** and directed by **Jenny Davies (world premiere, Theatre Royal Plymouth in association with Bristol Old Vic)**, a hybrid theatre piece blending spoken word and live music, exploring the art of letting go and the ethics of true crime; and **MRS. STERN WANDERS THE PRUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY** written by **Jenny Lyn Bader** and directed by **Ari Laura Kreith (European premiere, Luna Stage and Richard Jordan Productions with Traverse Theatre)** -, a gripping drama inspired by the real-life arrest of Hannah Arendt in 1933 Berlin.

Alongside the in-house programme, TravFest26 spills out across the city.

Traverse @ The Lyceum Studio is the home of **LITTLE ANIMALS (world premiere, Fern Culture co-produced by Pentabus, in association with Gulbenkian Arts Centre)**, a new work written and performed by Paul Ready, star of BBC's *Motherland*. A frank, funny show about climate anxiety, the stories we tell ourselves and the chance to write a new one.

The award-winning hit of Melbourne and Adelaide Fringes, **TRANSMISSION: INTO THE DARK** by **one step at a time like this (European premiere, Fern Culture co-produced by Pentabus, in association with Gulbenkian Arts Centre)** comes to Edinburgh this summer. This is an immersive, multimedia night journey reimagined for Edinburgh, with content specifically crafted for the city. Responding to a mysterious invitation, audiences head to a secret location where a voice entices them into the unknown.

A new creative industries focused partnership between Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh College of Art and First Stage Studios presents *Sound Cave* to an invited audience, which tests innovative audio concepts in the Leith production studio space. And rehearsed readings will offer insights into future full stage works commissioned for the Traverse – more to be announced in June.

As August fills Edinburgh with thousands of shows, TravFest26 offers something distinct: a fully curated, confident programme where new writing meets expert support, scale and belief, and where audiences can follow the careers of artists shaping the future of theatre.

Traverse Festival 2026 runs Friday 31 July to Sunday 30 August at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh.

CEO and Executive Producer of Traverse Theatre, Linda Crooks said: *“Traverse Festival is our international showcase and most visible expression of what we do all year round – nurturing writers, taking risks, and creating the inspiring work that speaks to the world as it is now. This year’s programme brings together artists at different stages of their careers, bringing their different perspectives to our stages, all united by the ambition, the desire to entertain, and a passion to connect with audiences, amidst the backdrop of a refusal to play it safe.”*

Programme and booking information at traverse.co.uk

Tickets on sale from Wed 13 May 2026.

/ENDS

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LISTINGS:

TRAVERSE 1

CATHY (World Premiere)

Written & Directed by Eilidh Loan

Traverse Theatre Production

Fri 31 Jul – Sun 30 Aug

Starring: Elaine C. Smith, Alan Orr, Sally Reid, Chloe Hodgson and Michele Gallagher.

Eilidh Loan is a young Scottish writer.

Her first play, *Moorcroft* was a true story based upon her dad's amateur football team and opened to critical acclaim when she directed it at the Tron in Glasgow.

Cathy is a new comedy inspired by her grandmother, and how she dealt with the grief in her unique way after losing her husband. Cathy, Eilidh's grandmother, insisted that Elaine C Smith must play her and so she is.

AFTER PARTY (World Premiere)

by Morna Young

Directed by Katie Posner

Idea conceived by Alex Fthenakis and Morna Young

Traverse Theatre in co-production with Paines Plough and the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry

Thu 6 – Sun 30 Aug

Matriarch Vivienne Blackwood has always lived life on her own terms; much to the frustration of her fractured family.

Summoning them for her 80th birthday party, they arrive expecting the usual family escapades. But as old tensions surface and beliefs collide, Vivienne's reasons for gathering them soon unravels. She wants the party of a lifetime – but can her wayward family make it through the night?

Sharp, darkly funny and unflinching, *After Party* is a powerful and passionate exploration of a life-defining choice, and our responsibility to others, in life and in death.

BOG WITCH (Scottish Premiere)

by Bryony Kimmings

Co-directed by Francesca Murray-Fuentes

Avalon & Tellus Studio

Sun 2 – Sun 30 Aug

Bryony Kimmings returns to the stage with her first solo show in half a decade. An autobiographical journey of plugging back into nature in a last-ditch attempt to be happy and sane.

A rare new play by Bryony Kimmings, renowned for her tearjerking and hilarious

autobiographical theatre creations. As with all her previous shows (*I'm a Phoenix, Bitch, Fake It 'Til You Make It*), *Bog Witch* follows a part of Kimmings' real life story, this time the journey of uprooting her and her son's life to live in a tumbledown cottage in the wilderness to plug back into nature as a last-ditch attempt to be happy and sane.

THE SINGER (World Premiere)

Music & Lyrics by KT Tunstall

Book by Cora Bissett

Directed by Cora Bissett

Based on the short film *The Singer* by Cora Bissett and Jamie Rea, produced by Laura McBride, Lothian Films and James Heath, MTP, commissioned by Screen Scotland and BFI Network via Short Circuit

Dundee Rep Theatre and Solar Bear in collaboration with Aberdeen Performing Arts

Thu 6 – Sun 30 Aug

A bold, new, thrilling piece of gig-theatre about Joe, a deaf artist who “sings” with his hands, and Andy, a washed-up musician hungry for a comeback.

Joe experiences music viscerally and physically, feeling rhythm through his body and crafting lyrics that pulse with life and exhilarating originality. When their unlikely creative partnership sparks something extraordinary, ambition and belonging collide. But as prejudice and the music industry's ableist blind spots close in, their bond is pushed to breaking point.

Featuring music and lyrics by Grammy Award-nominated KT Tunstall, *The Singer* is a powerful story of music, identity and connection, and the fight for a deaf artist to be truly seen and heard.

TRAVERSE 2

SUPPOSING: (World Premiere)

Written & Directed by Zinnie Harris

Traverse Theatre Company

Fri 31 Jul – Sun 30 Aug

A curse has fallen on Sally's house. Unexpected, unwanted and hard to shake. Worst of all, no one will believe her. As the line between certainty and doubt begins to blur, Sally must decide whether to trust what she sees, and what happens if she's right.

Zinnie Harris (*Further than the Furthest Thing, This Restless House, Meet Me at Dawn*) writes and directs this Traverse Theatre world-premiere production at Traverse Festival 2026.

FOR DOLORES (UK Premiere)

by Eva O'Connor

Directed by Jim Culleton

Fishamble: The New Play Company, in association with Lime Tree Theatre | Belltable, Galway International Arts Festival and Traverse Theatre

Thu 6 – Sun 30 Aug

"When beautiful worlds collide"

Four-time Fringe First and Olivier Award winning Fishamble presents *For Dolores* by Fringe First Award winning Eva O'Connor.

Mo (the Scottish one) and Realtín (the Irish one) party, play and blaze their way through the Edinburgh student dream.

Set in Glasgow a couple of years later, *For Dolores* is about friendship, motherhood and coming to terms with your worst mistakes.

Like twin stars in obsessive orbit, it's a friendship, a rivalry and an adventure. Risk is a delicious pleasure: until it all explodes in the blink of an eye. How far will they go for love?

BADGERS (World Premiere)

by Malaika Kegode

Directed by Jenny Davies

A Theatre Royal Plymouth Production in association with Bristol Old Vic

Thu 6 – Sun 30 Aug

Something has taken root in this town. A recluse, a disappearance, a mysterious folk song. And then there's you, Meles — a podcaster with a dying mother and a stalling career — about to stumble into something unfathomable. Something that could change everything. But is it your story to tell?

A folk tale about folk tales, the art of letting go, and the ethics of true crime, *Badgers* is a shape-shifting, mercurial new show from the team behind *Outlier*. Written by Malaika Kegode with music by Jakabol — '*tremendous poetic drama*' ★★★★★ The Guardian / '*exuberant, convivial energy*' ★★★★★ The Stage.

MRS. STERN WANDERS THE PRUSSIAN STATE LIBRARY (European Premiere)

by Jenny Lyn Bader

Directed by Ari Laura Kreith

Luna Stage and Richard Jordan Productions with Traverse Theatre

Thu 6 – Sun 30 Aug

1933 Berlin. With martial law in effect, political activism has become a capital crime. When a young Gestapo officer arrests a philosophy graduate student, her interrogation will endanger them both.

Direct from its critically acclaimed Off-Broadway premiere and inspired by the real life arrest of Hannah Arendt, Jenny Lyn Bader's thrilling and timely new play illuminates the struggle for human connection and perseverance in even the darkest of times.

Luna Stage, one of North America's most exciting new writing theatres and Olivier, TONY, EMMY and 19-time Scotsman Fringe First Award-winning producer Richard Jordan who

continues his long association with the Traverse Theatre, return with the European Premiere of *Mrs. Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library* following their 2025 Scotsman Fringe First sell-out production of *RIFT*.

OFF SITE

TRANSMISSION: INTO THE DARK (European Premiere)

by one step at a time like this

one step at a time like this and Richard Jordan Productions with Traverse Theatre

Fri 7 – Sun 23 Aug

It's night-time. You receive an address to a secret location. A mysterious voice speaks to you, drawing you towards unknown destinations, through Edinburgh's darkened streets and into the soul of the night.

Interweaving site-specific radio, installation, night-walking, and the sky, *Transmission: into the dark* invites audiences to embark on a nocturnal journey where the strange is real and the real is strange.

Sell-out hit of both the Melbourne and Adelaide Fringes. Winner of the 2025 John Chataway Innovation Award, the SA Touring Award, the Adelaide Fringe Award, and Nominee for the 2026 International Annwn Prize for Excellence in Immersive Storytelling. *Transmission: into the dark* is created by leading Australian immersive performance company **one step at a time like this**, with award-winning artistic producer **Richard Jordan**, who continue their association with Traverse Theatre where previous productions include *Forever Young* and *en route*.

LITTLE ANIMALS (World Premiere)

Conceived, written and performed by Paul Ready

Directed by Caroline Steinbeis

Fern Culture co-produced with Pentabus, in association with Gulbenkian Arts Centre

Tue 18 – Sun 30 Aug

We are born of the stars.

Really think about that.

Try to remember that the next time you're filling out your tax return.

You're invited to Richard's memorial. Richard is dead, after all. He's gone. But his friend wasn't invited to the funeral. And he can't let go because something happened. Something he needs to lay to rest. This is his chance.

Little Animals is the story of a life-long friendship, set in a culture that can't stop consuming. As Richard's climate concern grows more extreme, and his friend struggles with mortgages, parenthood and the stresses of modern living, a wedge is driven between them. Because we can't all sit around growing f**king tomatoes. Can we?

A frank, funny & inventive one-man show, written & performed by Paul Ready (National

Theatre, *Motherland*, *Ann Droid*) and directed by Caroline Steinbeis (Shakespeare's Globe, Sheffield Crucible) about what we've lost, the stories we tell ourselves, and the ever-present chance to write a new one.

ABOUT TRAVERSE THEATRE

As Scotland's National New Writing Company, the Traverse Theatre discovers, develops and produces bold new work. From its home in Edinburgh, the Traverse supports artists to tell urgent contemporary stories and connects audiences with theatre that reflects the world we live in now.

For more than sixty years the Traverse has been a home for creative risk and a place where new voices are given space to grow. Many of the plays that begin life on its stages go on to national and international touring, further productions and translations, helping to shape the future of theatre in Scotland and beyond.

Through year-round artistic activity, artist development and the internationally recognised Traverse Festival, the organisation brings writers, theatre-makers and audiences together to share ideas, explore different perspectives and encounter live theatre that is immediate, challenging and alive to the present.

As the organisation continues to evolve, the Traverse is focused on strengthening its role as Scotland's national centre for new writing: supporting artists, widening access to theatre and ensuring that new stories continue to be discovered, developed and shared with audiences at home and around the world.

traverse.co.uk

Traverse Theatre, 10 Cambridge St, Edinburgh, EH1 2ED | traverse.co.uk



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