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Contact: press@traverse.co.uk

**First shows of Traverse Festival 2021 announced**

* **A celebration of dynamic new writing, the spirit of Edinburgh, and our community**
* **Blended programme of in-person, outdoor and online events, from 3 August until mid-September**
* **In-person world premiere performances of *Still* by Frances Poet and *This is Paradise* by Michael John O’Neill in Traverse 1, and *MOVE* by Julia Taudevin at Silverknowes Beach**
* **Natalie McGrath’s powerful *We’ll Meet in Moscow* receives its world premiere in Traverse 3 as an immersive audio play**
* **Return of First Stages Festival of breakthrough creative talent and events**
* ***Walk This Play* takes listeners on an immersive journey through Edinburgh’s streets**
* **Online performances of Fishamble’s *On Blueberry Hill,* Inua Ellam’s *An Evening With An Immigrant*, Uninvited Guests’ *Love Letters at Home* and *SHEDINBURGH* - as well as *MOVE*, *Still* and *This is Paradise* for those unable to attend in person**
* **Traverse 1, Traverse 3 and Silverknowes Beach events Pay What You Can**
* **Guaranteed full refunds for bookers for in-person events, no questions asked**
* **Further events announced in coming weeks**

The Traverse Theatre today announces the first shows of its Traverse Festival 2021, which will include in-person, outdoor and online events.

This year more than ever, we celebrate our incredible city, its vibrant community, and are excited to share the fruits of some of the creative development journeys taken in collaboration with stellar artists as scripts move from first draft towards full production.

We are absolutely overjoyed to welcome audiences back into Traverse 1 for the first time since March 2020, for the world premiere of Frances Poet’s ***Still*** – a cathartic story of life, love and loss which takes place in familiar Edinburgh locations. Michael John O’Neill’s timely and powerful monologue about the fragility of peace in Northern Ireland, ***This is Paradise***, will also be performed in-person for a limited Traverse 1 run, and we take to Silverknowes Beach for the first time, with in-person open air performances of Disaster Plan’s evocative ***MOVE***.

Traverse 3 will present on-demand versions of all in-person shows following their live performances, as well as the world premiere of **We’ll Meet in Moscow** – an immersive audio play written in response to Russian courts banning Moscow Pride celebrations in August 2012 for 100 years, a digital production of Fishamble’s **On Blueberry Hill**, another chance to catch Inua Ellam's intimate and affecting **An Evening With An Immigrant** (which sold out its TravFest17 run), Uninvited Guest's isolation busting interactive and music powered Zoom show ***Love Letters at Home***, and the return of **SHEDINBURGH** – all for a limited run.

TravFest21 spotlights writers at different stages of their careers, and invites those who might not yet consider themselves as creatives to ignite their imaginations with the Summer 21 edition of our ***First Stages Festival*** of creative development readings and workshops.

We are excited to present this blended model of events, which we are committed to continuing as we move beyond lockdown and into the future. Along with all events being sold on a Pay What You Can basis, and availability of £1 tickets across the programme for those under 25 or in receipt of government benefits, we will continue to both maintain and improve the inclusivity and accessibility of our work and stories.

**Many more additions to the TravFest21 programme will be announced in coming weeks – this is just the beginning.**

**Traverse Executive Producer, Linda Crooks, said:**

“Announcing the first shows of the Traverse Festival 2021 today is a moment worthy of celebration – of artists, compelling stories, our incredibly supportive audiences, and our unique and vibrant Edinburgh community. Our Festival programme aims to be a love letter to Edinburgh, and its spirit of resilience is embodied within the culture of the Traverse Festival. In Still, Walk This Play and MOVE, audiences have the chance to rediscover and reconnect with their city, both indoors and out, and shows including This is Paradise, We’ll Meet in Moscow, On Blueberry Hill, An Evening with an Immigrant and Love Letters at Home take us to very different worlds, shining a light on some of the most urgent and important issues facing us today We meet the world in Edinburgh and we take Edinburgh to the world. We’re committed to discovering new voices, sharing our passion for creativity, and giving you a first look at shows soon to be on our stages in the Summer 21 edition of our First Stages Festival. And we’re thrilled to be able to present our full programme in our digital venue, Traverse 3, for the very first time, capturing our in-person shows and making them available for audiences near and far, who may be unable to attend the live performances. The Traverse is here to entertain, challenge, comfort and welcome audiences, no matter where they are.”

**Traverse Artistic Director, Gareth Nicholls, said:**

*“Over the past 15 months we’ve been bowled over by artists’ imaginations in using digital spaces and technologies to tell their stories and connect with audiences, who have been just as open minded in their enthusiastic embracing of this new way of enjoying and participating in our work. We’re now particularly overjoyed to be back in our Cambridge Street home to savour and celebrate some of our productions with audiences in person again. I’m delighted that Frances Poet’s Still will be the first Traverse production back on the Traverse 1 stage since March 2020. It’s a beautiful and cathartic story, full of life and love and live music, a celebration of and for Edinburgh, which is so deserved after a period of such upheaval and uncertainty, which saw our incredible local community come together to support one another and become stronger than ever. This city is a unique place with a singular spirit, and we’re looking forward to sharing it with the world, in-person and digitally, this August.”*

**COVID-19 safety**

We are adhering to social distancing for all in-person events. Traverse 1 will be an allocated venue for the foreseeable future, with audiences able to book specific seats in bubbles of 1, 2 or 4 seats comprised of individuals from the same household. Audiences will be required to wear masks whilst in the Traverse and throughout in-person performances, unless medically exempt.

As the world continues to open up, we know that some audiences may feel nervous about booking, so we guarantee any bookers for in-person events full refunds at any point before their booked performance, no questions asked.

Full COVID-19 safety procedures will be in place across all sites, which will be shared with bookers before their visit, and our current procedures can be viewed by anyone on the [How We’re Keeping You Safe section of our website](https://www.traverse.co.uk/your-visit/how-were-keeping-you-safe).

**TravFest21 productions**

**Still by Frances Poet
Traverse Theatre Company**
World Premiere

**IN PERSON EVENT (Traverse 1): Mon 2 – Sun 22 Aug**
[On sale now](https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/still-in-person)

A celebration of Edinburgh, the souls who reside there, and the community they have created, *Still* is a cathartic story of life, loss and joy.

Gaynor’s got to leave the house if she wants to meet her newborn granddaughter. Stillness has been the only way to deal with her chronic pain but now it’s time to move. Gilly’s not sure what her dying dad’s feeling but the one thing she knows from experience is that it’s best not to Google it. Dougie and Ciara have spent their last NCT class preparing for the labour pains ahead but now it’s time for one last night on the dance floor.

And then there’s Mick, who wakes up on Portobello Beach in the early hours of the morning with two gold rings in his pocket. He can’t remember what they’re for but he knows it’s something important. He’ll work out what if only his old pal, Pat, will stop buying him drinks…

Full of tenderness and humour, and woven through with a live, folk-rock inspired, musical score, *Still* is set in familiar locations around Edinburgh. This stripped-back production draws audiences straight into the heart of the story as we welcome you back into our space for the first time since March 2020.

Developed during writer Frances Poet’s (Adam, Gut) IASH Fellowship, *Still* is directed by Traverse Artistic Director Gareth Nicholls (Ulster American, Crocodile Fever), with design by Karen Tennent, lighting design by Colin Grenfell, composition and sound design by Oğuz Kapalangi, and movement direction by Kally Lloyd-Jones.

Cast includes Martin Donaghy, Molly Innes, Oğuz Kapalangi, Gerry Mulgrew, Mercy Ojelade and Naomi Stirrat.

**A digital version of *Still* will be available to access on demand in late August for those unable to attend in person.**

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**This is Paradise by Michael John O’Neill**

**Traverse Theatre Company**

World Premiere

**IN PERSON EVENT (Traverse 1): Tues 24 - Sun 29 Aug**
On sale now [LINK]

Having enjoyed a successful first reading as part of February’s First Stages Festival, Michael John O’Neill’s powerful *This is Paradise* – discovered through our Open Submissions initiative – continues its journey towards a full production in a limited run of in-person performances directed by Katherine Nesbitt.

10 April 1998, Belfast. As the Good Friday Agreement is signed, Kate receives a phone call from a stranger begging her for help. As Kate is forced to confront her past, the lingering legacy of her ex-lover and old life is thrown into sharp relief. At once timely and timeless in its exploration of the fragility of peace, *This is Paradise* is a powerful monologue exploring what it means to begin again.

**A digital version of *This is Paradise* will be available to access on demand in late August for those unable to attend in person.**

Development of *This is Paradise was* supported by the Consulate General of Ireland, Edinburgh.

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**MOVE by Julia Taudevin**

**Disaster Plan in association with Slung Low and the Traverse Theatre**

**IN PERSON OUTDOOR EVENT (Silverknowes Beach): Tue 3 – Sat 7 August**

[On sale now](https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/move-in-person)

Following its premiere in early 2020 at the renowned Celtic Connections Festival, MOVE by Julia Taudevin returns as part of TravFest21, as a unique open-air performance on the sands of Silverknowes Beach.

Inspired by ancient keening rituals, MOVE is about migration, loss and communal healing. Weaving storytelling, choral soundscape and Gaelic song, five women portray the ebb and flow of people across the globe throughout the ages.

**A digital version of *MOVE* will be available to access on demand from Tue 24 August for those unable to attend in person.**

*MOVE* is part of the Made in Scotland Showcase 2021.

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**First Stages Festival: Summer 21**

**Traverse Theatre**

**ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3): Various dates from Mon 16 Aug**

We were bowled over by the enthusiasm for the February digital edition of our *First Stages Festival*, and are delighted to bring you its next iteration this August.

First Stages Festival: Summer 21 will give audiences and creatives the opportunity to participate in a wide range of creative events, designed for anyone to join, to uncover and ignite their creativity, or expand and hone their skills.

Lifting the lid on how the Traverse develops new stories and artists, the festival will include public readings of current Traverse commissions on their journey towards production, creative prompts, workshops and tutorials from some of the most exciting names in the Scottish creative industries and. The full programme for First Stages Festival: Summer 21 will be announced in July.

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**We’ll Meet in Moscow by Natalie McGrath**

**Traverse Theatre Company**

World Premiere

**ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3): From Tue 10 Aug**

Written in response to Russian courts banning Moscow Pride celebrations in August 2012 for 100 years, and delivered against recent high-profile laws which still further limit LGBTQI+ rights, *We'll Meet in Moscow* is a beautifully haunting and consuming audio monologue about the risks we take and the lengths we go to when falling in love with sharp lyricism that tears through the heart and lingers in the mind.

Playwright Natalie McGrath was a Writer on Attachment to the Traverse in 2019 after coming to our attention through our Open Submissions writers’ programme, and worked in tandem with the Traverse Artistic Team to develop this audio version of *We'll Meet in Moscow*, directed by Shilpa T-Hyland (Assistant Director: *Crocodile Fever*).

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**Walk This Play**

**ThickSkin Theatre Company in association with the Traverse Theatre**

Scottish premiere

**ONLINE EVENT (Promenade): From mid Aug (dates TBC)**

*Walk This Play* is a new series of immersive, location-based audio plays by ThickSkin (*How Not to Drown*), designed to be experienced by listeners as they walk. Each is unique to its location and invites you to experience a familiar route from a new perspective. Through narration and original music blended with the sights and sounds around you, *Walk This Play* takes you on a journey of imagination and discovery.

This new edition of the plays, produced in association with the Traverse and directed by Jonny Riordan (Nigel Slater’s *Toast*), continues our exploration of the many different facets of Edinburgh, presenting new and surprising perspectives on the city and its stories, and encourages audiences to get out and rediscover their city this summer.

The writers for *Walk This Play* will be announced soon, and performance dates will be confirmed in July.

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**On Blueberry Hill by Sebastian Barry**

**Fishamble**

Scottish premiere

**ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3): Tue 10 – Mon 16 Aug**

Following its West End and Off-Broadway runs, Fishamble’s Olivier Award-winning *On Blueberry Hill* by current Laureate for Irish Fiction, and Costa Novel of the Year Award winner, Sebastian Barry, receives its Scottish and digital premiere. In Barry’s unique style, *On Blueberry Hill* features best of friends and worst of enemies Christy and PJ, played by Niall Buggy and David Ganly. This new play, directed by Jim Culleton, is bursting with humanity, as it explores murder, forgiveness, survival and, ultimately, love in the prison of the human heart.

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**An Evening with an Immigrant
Inua Ellams and Fuel**

**ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3): Late Aug (dates TBC)**

Following his sell-out limited run of *An Evening with an Immigrant* at TravFest17, we are delighted to welcome award-winning poet and playwright Inua Ellams back to Traverse 3 this summer for a digital version of this intimate and affecting show.

Born to a Muslim father and a Christian mother in what is now considered to be Boko Haram territory, Inua left Nigeria for England in 1996 aged 12.

Littered with poems, stories and anecdotes, Inua tells his ridiculous, fantastic, poignant immigrant-story of escaping fundamentalist Islam, finding friendship in Dublin, performing solo at the National Theatre, and drinking wine with the Queen of England, all the while without a country to belong to or a place to call home.

*An Evening with an Immigrant* was filmed at London’s Bridge Theatre in November 2020. Dates for this on demand run will be confirmed in July.

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**Love Letters at Home
Uninvited Guests and Fuel**

ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3 – Live on Zoom): Mid Aug (dates TBC)

In response to our desire for connection in an age of distance, Uninvited Guests brings to you a completely digital, wholly personal and wonderfully live experience in *Love Letters at Home.*

Every night is unique to its audience, featuring your song dedications and the stories attached to them, declarations of love, past and present. Dedications are spoken, toasts are made, speeches are given, songs are sung and dances are danced on your behalf and with you.

An antidote to isolation, join us online via Zoom as we raise our glasses to long lost loves and current lovers, to mums and dads, and to absent friends.

Dates for this limited run, experienced live on Zoom, will be confirmed in July.

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**SHEDINBURGH 2021**

**A Francesca Moody Productions, Popcorn Group and VAULT Creative Arts co-production**

**ONLINE EVENT (Traverse 3): Tue 3 – Mon 30 Aug**

We’re delighted to welcome back SHEDINBURGH, conceived by Francesca Moody, Harriet Bolwell and Gary McNair, following their successful run last year. In 2021, they return with an online festival of the best of the Fringe stalwarts of theatre, music and comedy, all performed live from two sheds at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh and Soho Theatre to raise money for the Shed Load of Future Fund, to help new artists bring their work to the Edinburgh Fringe. Last year’s 25 events sold 4,500 tickets in total, raising over £20,000 and featured work from artists including Tim Crouch, Sara Pascoe, Deborah Frances-White, Inua Ellams, Nassim Soleimanpour, Tobias Menzies, Rosie Jones and Ahir Shah.

The full line-up for SHEDINBURGH 2021 will be announced and go on sale in July.

**LISTINGS INFO**

**Traverse Festival 2021**

**In person/outdoor:** Tue 3 – Sun 30 Aug

**Online:** From Tue 3 Aug – mid-September

Full programme and booking: <https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on>

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

**For more information, interviews or images, contact** **press@traverse.co.uk**

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