

traverse Theatre Supporters Newsletter: May

Welcome to your first Supporters Newsletter of May! As we are approaching the summer, the Traverse is busy as a bee planning for August. I can't reveal anything just yet, however, pencil in the 26th of May in your diaries for some hot Traverse news. In the meantime, we'll look back at the projects that wrapped up last month: the archive project with Queen Margaret University and Breakthrough Writers Launchpad. Currently going on at the Trav, we have the final Edinburgh Tradfest shows and Edinburgh International Children's Festival. In the second half of May, we'll have The White Chip coming up and the culmination of our Traverse Young writers' hard work in the form of a Scratch Night. Enjoy!

Archives 101: QMU Showcase



Last month, the students from Queen Margaret University presented a creative showcase based on their research of the Traverse Theatre's on-site archives over the last few months. The students worked in 6 different groups, each of them focussing on a particular research area; taboos & controversial plays, women behind the scenes, critics & reviews, celebrities, sustainability and artistic directors.

On the night of the performance, we were taken back all the way to 1963 and the decision of the Traverse to be established as a 'club':

'A club was an amazing way to get around a whole series of rules, right, and so when we think about the foundation of the Traverse, its radical roots, and why so many people wanted to come and see what it was put on by the Traverse City, the fact that it was a club is all important, right?

Because clubs we're set up in order to get around the censor. If you were a commercial theatre performing to the public, you had to send your plays to the Lord Chamberlain's office in London. Every new play on a commercial stage had to be sent to the Lord Chamberlain, right? And so, you know, and then the Lord Chamberlain would redact. So that would say blasphemy or the defamation of character. You can't swear you can't have nudity, you can't have sex, you can't have any of those things in it. You know, extreme violence is out there. When do political things that would enrage people or stirred them up in some way would just be cancelled?

We talk about cancel culture today, but back then, when the Lord Chamberlain was in, cancel culture was rife and an unelected post. Some bureaucrat in London would determine what is or isn't acceptable for us to see. And so, clubs were a really great way of getting around the censor because you were playing to private members, you didn't have to get it verified by the Lord Chamberlain, right? So, it was a great solution. Many actual established organisations like the Royal Court set up clubs as a means to get around the censor and put on new plays. But the Traverse City club was set up in part to allow for, you know, the experimentation and presentation of radical new work. That was its foundation.' -Dr. Andy Henry

This was followed by *F in Mass*.

F in Mass



By Ryan Catterson, Kayleugh Conlan, Marcus Lundie, Rachel McKeen, Rachel Meek and Neve Meldrum.

Inspired by the Trav plays that pushed societal boundaries.

PAST

...
KNOX: I am Ballie Robert Knox, and I for one think it is preposterous! How could McDougall let this go on! I mean for heaven's sake, breasts, sexual desires, sodomy. LESBIANISM!
...
Mass in F? What a ludicrous name for a play. The Traverse is nothing but a glorified strip club, yet another cultural stain on this city's respected reputation.
...
People are beginning to say that Edinburgh has just become a kind of brothel what with the pill, lotteries, and now this! **This is not the kind of thing decent people approve of.**
...
I believe that protesting will change nothing, immorality can never be allowed to take forefront... but who knows History may prove you students, to be right.

FUTURE

The students perform a choreographed march around the stage with their protest signs, when returning to the audience they switch their 1968 protest signs around and reveal these messages:



Black Lives Matter!
Trans Rights are Human Rights!
Planet over Profit!
Eat the Rich!

Next, we were presented a documentary-style video on *Women Behind the Scenes*.

Women Behind the Scenes

By Emma Mackay, Elaine Matheson, Chloe McCleave, Alex Shanks

Spotlighting inspirational women who have worked at the Trav.



They focussed on the careers and influences of:

- Kim Moore: a Scottish based composer and sound designer, who works as a solo artist (as Wolf) across a variety of platforms including theatre, dance and visual artist. Kim was the Composer and Sound Designer for Traverse's *Girl in the Machine* and *Mouthpiece*.



- Sam Holcroft: Sam was part of the Traverse Theatre's young writers group and later wrote *Cockroach* (2008) for the Traverse. *Cockroach* was the first production at the Traverse that had a full female production team. Holcroft premiered again at the Traverse in 2010 with *While You Lie*, and has grown to be a staple in British Theatre.



- Lizzie Powell: Established and respected lighting designer sought by leading directors across the UK, who has done more than 10 shows performed at the Traverse including *What Girls Are Made Of*, *The Dark Things* and *While You Lie*.

- Naomi Wilkinson: award-winning stage Designer with a vision and flair, famous for epic designs. She designed for the Traverse on many occasions, including for *The Last Witch*, *Cockroach*, and *Happy Birthday, Mister Deka D*.



Critics Will Come and Go, but Reviews Are Forever...

By Jordan Curtis, Rebecca Drever, Anna O'Connor, Georgia Ramsey, Emilie-Jane Stein

Inspired by the Trav's relationship with the media and critics.



...
JOAN: Remember why you write... and keep that passion in every piece you do... and don't bother with what anyone else thinks...
TAYLOR B-but.. but..
JOAN Do you honestly think I got to be where I am now by worrying about what people think of my opinions? I don't... You came here and had a bitch and a moan about everything you disagreed with in my piece...

JOAN I'm not going home to change my review... I stand by it... and you should stand by yours too Taylor...
Good luck on your journey Taylor... enjoy it. Much like with this coffee, I'm pleasantly surprised about the new and up and coming talent.

Snatch Game: Traverse Edition

By Helena Brown, Jay Brown, Laura Coull, Cara Moloney, Cara Vallance

Inspired by research into the celebrities that performed at the Trav, in a game made famous by RuPaul- Snatch Game!



TRAVIS: Good evening & welcome to this very special episode of Snatch Game - Traverse Edition! Yes tonight, these queens will be playing caricatures of famous faces that started their career on this very Traverse stage. These women will be fighting to become the new face of the Traverse Theatre 2022, fame has never been so glamorous!

(with Colette O'Neil, Blythe Duff, Tilda Swinton & Ashley Jensen)

...

Here's the rules of today's game: I'll ask a question and our panel will have the opportunity to fill in the blank! I have the correct answer on my cards, and our "celebrities" will try and match the unknown answer. Alright, first question! "The Traverse Theatre has just started a BRAND new programme, it's called 'A play, A pie and A BLANK!'"
Colette?

COLETTE Oh sorry, Werthers Original

TRAVIS Aw honey, better luck next time. Next up, Tilda; - a play, a

pie and a...?

TILDA Pinot Grigio

TRAVIS If only you just cracked a smile I would have given you the point. Miss Blythe, what's your answer, a play, a pie and a ...

BLYTHE Blythe Duff

TRAVIS: You would think Blythe, but this is going to be the one show that you don't star in at the Traverse. Last up, Ashley, a play, a pie and a...

ASHLEY A play a pie and a prostitute...

TRAVIS: Oh Ashley! I didn't expect that to come out of your little mouth. Unfortunately ladies none of you were able to identify the correct answer. The programme is in fact called a play, a pie and a... PINT

...

Get Out: The Musical



By Eilidh Anderson, Amy Davidson, Bethany Dunion, Anna Katherine Farnleitner, Katie Hudson

Inspired into sustainability in the theatre design.

(sung to [*music of The Greatest Showman's The Other Side*](#))

→ Feel free to have a go at it yourselves!

PROPS/COSTUME:	Right here, right now
	We sort the problem out
SM	I don't want to chase you out
	But please get going
DIRECTOR	You want to leave?
	Then I can cut you free
	Out of the drudgery you say you're trapped in
SET	I'll trade that typical for something colourful
	And if it's crazy, I'll live a little crazy
	You can play it sensible, a king of conventional
	Or you can take a chance and see
SM	Don't you wanna get away, it's getting late so let's call it a day
PROPS	'Cause I got all our stuff, so come with me and take the ride
SM	Just put them in the van outside!
SET	'Cause you can do like you do
	Or you can do like me
	Stay in the cage, or you'll finally take the key
DIRECTOR	Oh, damn! Suddenly you're free to fly
	It'll take you to the other side
COSTUME	Okay, my friend, no need to rush right in
	Well I hate to tell you, but this just won't fix things
SET	Well thanks, but no
SM	Are you guys good to go?
DIRECTOR	I quite enjoy the life you say I'm trapped in
PROPS	Now I admire you, and all that work you do
	You're onto something, really it's something
DIRECTOR	But I work practically, I don't work emotionally
	I'll have to leave that up to you
SM, C, PROPS	Don't you know that there's a way, to resolve this and get on with our day
	'Cause we got what we need and we don't wanna say goodbye
SM	(I do)
SM, C, PROPS	Don't wanna see you both take sides
DIRECTOR	Just go and do like you do
SET	I'm good to do like me
SM, C, PROPS	Ain't in a cage, so you don't need to take the key
SET, DIRECTOR	Oh, damn! Can't you see I'm doing fine
	I don't need to see the other side
COSTUME	Now is this really how you like to spend your days?
PROPS	Conflict and misery, affecting your plays
SM	If I had just called sick, I wouldn't be here right now
PROPS	We're disgraced and disowned, another one of the clowns
COSTUME	But you would finally live a little, finally laugh a little
	Just let me give you the freedom to dream
PROPS	And it'll wake you up and cure your aching
	Take your walls and start 'em breaking
SM	Now that's a deal that seems worth taking

SM/C/PROPS But I guess we'll leave that up to you
(pause)
DIRECTOR Well it's intriguing, but to move would cost me greatly
So we would have a space for all our props and staging?
SET That's good to hear, you want to finally take some action?
I'd stay on board if we could shake and make it happen
PROPS/COSTUME Sounds like a good idea, find space, we'll be just fine
DIRECTORS I'll find us a space and we can store things till the end of time
SET Our set?
COSTUME Costume too?
PROPS Props?
SM Your archives?
ALL Lumiere!
EVERYONE Don't you wanna get away to a whole new part we're gonna play
'Cause I got what you need, so come with me and take the ride
SM To the van outside
EVERYONE So if you do like I do
So if you do like me
Forget the cage, 'cause we know how to make the key
Oh, damn! Suddenly we're free to fly
We're going to the other side
DIRECTOR So if you do like I do
SM, C, PROPS (To the other side)
SET So if you do like me
SM, C, PROPS (We're going to the other side)
EVERYONE 'Cause if we do we're going to the other side
We're going to the other side

A Traverse Carol

By Rebecca Cox, Ciara Gilmartin, Euan McGeechan, Emma Ruse



Inspired by research into the Traverse's Artistic Directors.

→ Emma was very boldly wearing a checked shirt as a nudge to our current Artistic Director- Gareth Nicholls-, who was seated in the audience that night!

...
JO Long day ahead. All I need to do is plan a celebration for Scotland's leading new writing theatre that somehow encompasses everything we've done in the past 60 years, acknowledges exactly where we are right now and looks forward to the future of the organisation. Wait, but what does the future hold? Ahhh, I've got no idea.
GARETH Right. Yes. You seem a little stressed, all on track?
...

TERRY, the ghost of Traverse Theatre appears with a fanfare.



TERRY I am the ghost of Traverse Past. The Traverse manipulated the system, setting up to circumvent the censorship act and present work that was outside the norm. If you're looking for something to celebrate at the Traverse – remember where we came from. Put that in your 60th anniversary manifesto and smoke it, just be radical.

JO Whilst everything you've described sounds wonderful... it doesn't solve the problems of what it means to make theatre right now! It doesn't solve the funding system, the artists relying on us for work and support and the sheer number of tickets we need to sell just to make ends meet. It's hard to be radical when you need bums on seats. It's hard to be a game-changer when theatre is still recovering from a pandemic. And therefore, doesn't solve my problem of what to produce for the anniversary. ...

REN the ghost of Traverse Theatre future appears with a fanfare.



JO Let me guess, you're the ghost of Traverse future?

REN Look, I understand you've got the reputation of the Trav on your shoulders, not even the greatest chiropractors in the world can sort that pain out. But you need to know that the future of the Traverse Theatre is bright, it's exciting, it's like something you could never imagine.

JO Could you help me imagine?

REN Well, we have a new building for one thing. We're focusing on new writers, alongside new writing. Ticket prices are at an all-time low, audience numbers are at an all time high. 90% of our writers live and work in Scotland, the other 10% are international touring trailblazers. We've established a development programme for new writing talent, and our productions are the most diverse they've ever been. We've even developed a new artistic director model, led by a creative community board who develop our strategy.

...

Breakthrough Writers: Launchpad finished

Breakthrough Writers are the new, interconnected creative development initiatives that started this season. It aimed to support new creative voices through a series of mentoring, coaching and dramaturgical sessions.

The first strand Launchpad, opened to anyone living in Scotland aged 18 or over. The Breakthrough Writers: Launchpad was a digital writers' group, led by award-winning playwright Stef Smith (*Enough*, *Girl in the Machine*, *Swallow*), which offered a completely free 3 month course of mentoring to 12 individuals from across Scotland. Some nice feedback from those involved in this first iteration of Launchpad:



EmmaNobleWrites
@EmmaNobleWrites

And just like that...what a great 10 weeks with @traversetheatre as part of Breakthrough Writers. Thank you to @stefsmith for everything. Tonight it was an honour to hear @louiseludgate @LauraLovemore @NeilJohnGibson @kylegardiner_ reading my extract. Onwards! ✍️



Andy Grierson
@AndyGrierson32

My words. I've written. Read out by real life actors tonight 🤖 in what rounds off an amazing 10 weeks on the @traversetheatre Breakthrough Writers Launchpad. Special shout to @EmmaNobleWrites & @LewieEh for the support, laughs & who I will forget immediately after tonight 🥰💚⚡



Stef Smith
@stefsmith

Last night marked the end of Launch Pad @traversetheatre. Felt quite emotional as each writer had an extract read by wonderful actors. It gave me great hope for the future of Scottish playwriting. It was a joy to lead the group. Power to your pens ✍️❤️



Lewie Watson
@LewieEh

A bit o' a pinch ma moment the night as actors read out a wee bit o' ma play for a @traversetheatre event. A pretty special end to an amazing 10 week course. Scottish theatre, I love ye.

6:25 pm · 13 Apr 2022 · Twitter for iPhone

Participants will have a follow-up meeting with the Traverse Theatre and will be encouraged to submit their full scripts to the second strand of the Breakthrough Writers in 2023, Breakthrough Writers: In Residence.

Edinburgh Tradfest

Since the 29th of April, the very best traditional music from Scotland and around the world has been heard on the Traverse's stages as part of the Edinburgh Tradfest.

Sadly enough, today will make the final performance of this year's edition, however the festival promises to go out with a bang, with the phenomenal The Shee. Don't miss out and join us tonight for a final Tradfest boogie- book your tickets [here](#)!



The Shee

Tonight @ 9pm

'The Shee are phenomenal, their combination of Scottish folk with just the right amount of bluegrass is an irresistible rhythmic force.' – Spiral Earth

Cross-Border folk multi-instrumentalists and festival favourites, The Shee, met on the Folk and Traditional Music Degree course at Newcastle University in 2006.

The Shee are an exceptional band boasting powerful and emotional vocal performances and instrumental prowess. Featuring the talents of Scottish Album of the Year nominee 2021, Rachel Newton on harp, Sting's clogger of choice, Amy Thatcher, on accordion, and brand new member; Scottish-Icelandic percussionist Signy Jakobsdottir, adding a fresh approach to the band's huge catalogue of material.

Following three albums (*'A Different Season'*, *'Decadence'* & *'Murmurations'*) and a hectic touring schedule over the past decade, the six members of the band each commissioned a Folk Music hero and in some cases mentor, to write an original piece of music for their fourth album *'Continuum'* to celebrate their tenth anniversary as a band.

Premiered at their sell out concert at Celtic Connections and toured around the UK and at Summer festivals throughout 2016 - 2019, the album has received great audience and press acclaim.

2020 and 2021 have been exceptionally tough years for everyone involved in the music industry, but The Shee are very much looking forward to a return to normality as soon as possible. They can't wait to get back together, and plan to begin work on material for their fifth album at the first opportunity. This will feature an adventurous brew of folk, gaelic and bluegrass music. Expect slow airs, Gaelic ballads, original songs, high energy tunes, hypnotic riffs, and, of course...clog dancing!

Edinburgh International Children's Festival (7-15 May)



The Edinburgh International Children's Festival is back with a live programme for young people and their families. The 2022 programme offers a rich mix of artforms including theatre and dance, as well as circus for babies, acrobatic painting, musical explorations and productions that incorporate beautiful video projections and soundtracks.

For information and tickets go to www.imagine.org.uk/festival

THE 3 SHOWS FEATURED AT THE TRAVERSE:



BIRDBOY BY UNITED FALL (8-15 YRS)

A funny, high-energy trip inside the whirring head of a young boy who wished he was a bird. This kaleidoscopic show, includes comical lip-syncing, stunning imagery, toe-tapping music and one incredible performer.

I AM TIGER BY OLIVER EMANUEL (12+ YRS)

This is the story a girl who is given a pet tiger by her parents following the suicide of her big brother. Heart-breaking, comic and thought-provoking, the show explores the idea of loss and why keeping silent is not always the best solution.

FAMILY PORTRAIT BY BARROWLAND BALLET (7-11 YRS)

A four screen video installation combining striking imagery and choreography, capturing an intimate portrayal of family life in the splendour of Scotland's natural environment.

The White Chip by Sean Daniels
18 May, 7.30 PM



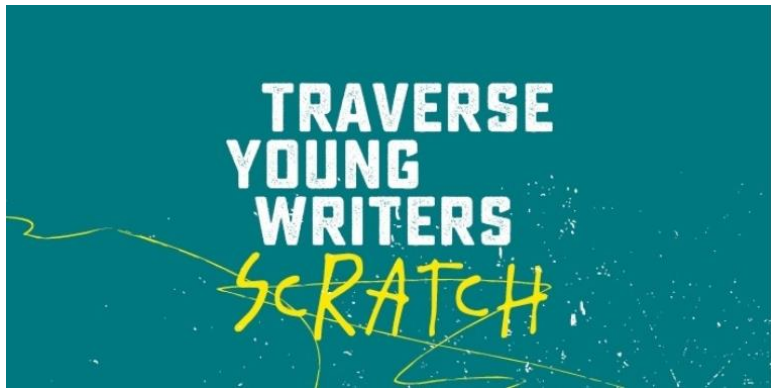
Sean Daniels' Off-Broadway hit described by New York Times as a "fizzily fast paced production", is a laugh out loud poignant tale of a life spinning hideously out of control.

Rollicking through this "bonfire of disasters" and seemingly infinite bottomless pits, this autobiographical confessional, strips bare the truth behind an enabling industry and guides us through the pitfalls of a self confessed "recovering Mormon" who turns repeatedly to the AA for help. Having no truck with religion, finding his "higher power" to remain in recovery comes to him in a life redeeming unexpected way.

Book your tickets [here!](#)

Traverse Young Writers' Scratch Night
21 May, 7.30 PM

The Traverse is delighted to present 11 new, specially created pieces from this season's cohort of young writers, developed with a team of professional actors and directors. Since March, the Traverse Young Writers Group has received weekly online tuition from acclaimed playwrights to develop their creative writing skills.



An important aspect of the Young Writers programme is presenting excerpts of the writers' work in a Scratch Night performance at the Traverse, during which each writer has the opportunity to gather feedback from members of the audience, industry and their peers. Request your **FREE** tickets [here!](#)

On behalf of all of us at the Traverse, we thank you for your support and for sharing the joy of theatre with others.

**With your help, we can keep these pages full of news and ensure the Traverse is a home for powerful, new theatre.
Thank you.**

Laura, Ellen, and Team Traverse