

MEDIA RELEASE

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**TRAVERSE CELEBRATES FULL REOPENING WITH ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITS
VIBRANT TRAVFEST22 PROGRAMME**



- Audience favourite, James Ley's riotous *Wilf* triumphantly runs to Traverse 1
- *This is Paradise*, Michael John O'Neill's award-winning play, enjoys a full Traverse 2 production
- Programme also includes the world premieres of Uma Nada-Rajah's *Exodus* and Tabby Lamb's *Happy Meal*, Liz Kingsman's smash-hit *One-Woman Show*, plus a brand-new spoken word performance from the iconic ALOK
- £1 tickets available across all performances for those under 25 or in receipt of low-income benefits
- Traverse celebrates new stories for a new era ahead of its 60th anniversary in 2023

The Traverse today announces our TravFest22 programme, celebrating a return to full strength across our performance spaces, Traverse 1 and Traverse 2. We are delighted to be welcoming audiences back to a full-scale TravFest through a programme of vibrant and brilliant new work spanning a spectrum of stories and perspectives, from queer rom-coms to the dark heart of show business.

Marking the beginning of a bright new era for the Traverse as we build momentum for our 60th anniversary in 2023, TravFest22 is a celebration of togetherness, and of the incredible resilience and creativity that theatre, the arts more widely, and every one of us collectively have displayed over the last two years. We are thrilled to offer such a dynamic and varied

range of shows for TravFest22, made possible by the determination, ingenuity and passion of everyone involved.

We are especially overjoyed that James Ley's riotous joyride of a show, **Wilf**, will be speeding back into Traverse 1, offering audiences a wild tour around Scotland, which, once taken, will never be forgotten... And **Michael John O'Neill's Popcorn Award-winning This is Paradise** will justly receive a full-scale Traverse 2 production following a limited staging during TravFest21. Each of these important and resonant shows have been under further development throughout the past two years, and we are both proud and ecstatic to finally bring them both to full-scale audiences this August.

Making a celebratory return to the streets of Edinburgh is the location-based audio experience ***Eavesdropping: Walk This Play®*** by **Hannah Lavery and Sarah MacGillivray** (ThickSkin in association with Traverse Theatre), which takes audiences on a journey of imagination throughout the festival city, and beyond.

Elsewhere in the programme audiences will be able to enjoy the world premieres of **Uma Nada-Rajah's satirical Exodus** (National Theatre of Scotland), **Sonya Kelly's comedic The Last Return** (Druid), and **Tabby Lamb's queer rom-com Happy Meal** (Roots/Theatre Royal Plymouth with ETT and Oxford Playhouse). Scottish premieres include **Liz Kingsman's universally acclaimed One-Woman Show** (Country Mile Productions), **ALOK's new comedy and poetry show ALOK** (Soho Theatre), **Lauryn Redding's gig musical Bloody Elle** (A Cloudrise Production), **Matt Wilkinson's thrilling Psychodrama** (Psycho Productions & Cusack Projects Limited) and the **moving Blood Harmony featuring the music of the Staves**, co-created by Matthew Bulgo, Jonnie Riordan and Jess Williams (Commissioned and produced by ThickSkin and Lawrence Batley Theatre, in co-production with Watford Palace Theatre and Wales Millennium Centre and supported by the Lowry).

With the generous support of our Festival Companies, we are delighted that a limited number of £1 tickets will be available for each performance in the programme, for those under the age of 25 or in receipt of low-income government benefits, subject to availability.

Further additions to the TravFest22 programme will be announced in the coming weeks.

Linda Crooks, Executive Producer, said:

"TravFest22 marks a bold and brave new beginning for the Traverse, ahead of our sixtieth anniversary in 2023. The last two years have undoubtedly been challenging, but we have continued to bring artists and audiences together online, outdoors and when possible, within our spaces to generate new ideas and keep telling new stories. Now we are delighted to again be able to present a full-scale, in-person festival programme and welcome our partners, friends and audiences back to a space where they can connect, imagine, plan and get back to those post show debates we've all missed so much. We are pleased to welcome friends old and new across the programme and cannot wait to share these vital and vibrant pieces of work with the audiences that's needed to make them complete."

Gareth Nicholls, Artistic Director, said:

"We couldn't be more thrilled to be working with so many amazing artists this August – some we know well and others who we are incredibly excited to get to know better. The variety and imagination of work on offer this year is a testament to everyone who has been determined to keep creating throughout these difficult times, and have been unwavering in producing work which confronts, comforts and entertains. We are delighted to have them as part of our programme. And it's especially meaningful for us to be able to bring both James Ley's 'Wilf' and Michael John O'Neill's 'This is Paradise' to full theatres this year, with both pieces sure to offer laughter, delight and reflection to audiences. Our doors are open – and so is the bar – we can't wait to see you all here soon!"

TRAVFEST22 PRODUCTIONS

WILF

by James Ley

Traverse Theatre Company

Calvin is going to completely revolutionise his life. Escape his abusive boyfriend, detonate his inner sex bomb, see (and shag) the world!

Now he's found his partner in crime in Wilf, a rusty Volkswagen Polo which, like Calvin, has seen better days. Together they hit the road on a wild and bumpy ride of greasy takeaways, graveyard orgies and banging 80s power ballads - ending up somewhere they never imagined they'd go.

This riotous and heartfelt play from James Ley (*Love Song to Lavender Menace*), directed by the Traverse's Artistic Director Gareth Nicholls (*Ulster American*), takes audiences on a hilarious and unapologetic ride through Scotland as Calvin and Wilf attempt to escape loneliness, cope with mental illness and learn to love themselves, with the help of one another.

THIS IS PARADISE

by Michael John O'Neill

Traverse Theatre Company

10 April 1998, Belfast.

The Good Friday Agreement is signed, promising peace to Northern Ireland.

Away from all that pageantry, a river is rising in Kate. When a phone call from a desperate young woman compels Kate to return to a relationship she hoped was left in another life, she embarks on a journey which risks breaking the uneasy peace she has since made for herself.

A powerful, intimate and dream-like monologue shot through with the vibrancy of living, Michael John O'Neill's Popcorn Award-winning *This is Paradise*, directed by Katherine

Nesbitt, explores the ramifications of what happens when one woman is asked to rescue the man who promised to destroy her – and what it takes from any of us to decide to begin again.

Part of the Made in Scotland Showcase – www.madeinscotlandshowcase.com

BLOOD HARMONY

Co-created by Matthew Bulgo, Jonnie Riordan and Jess Williams

Music by The Staves

Commissioned and produced by ThickSkin and Lawrence Batley Theatre, in co-production with Watford Palace Theatre and Wales Millennium Centre and supported by the Lowry

Soaring music by Atlantic Records artists, **The Staves**, combines with bold new writing and dynamic physicality in *Blood Harmony*, an uplifting and powerful new play with songs about love, loss and legacy.

A fractured trio of sisters are pulled back together with news that turns their worlds upside down. When it feels like your world has come to a stop, how do you find a way to keep moving forward?

Award-winning theatre company, ThickSkin makes a thrilling return to the stage with this highly visual and musically charged production. Created by the company behind the five star hit show *How Not To Drown* ('Truly stunning' ★★★★★ The Scotsman).

BLOODY ELLE

by Lauryn Redding

A Cloudrise Production

This heart-warming and belly-achingly funny story is stuffed full of those stomach-flipping-time-stopping moments, a touch, a glance, a kiss, that everyone will recognise.

Bloody Elle is set to an original score, building loops and layers of sound that make you feel like there is a ten-piece band on stage, transporting the audience to a sweaty, packed out gig in the back of a pub or a 10,000 seat arena.

EXODUS

by Uma Nada Rajah

National Theatre of Scotland

How far will a politician go?

In her bid to become the country's leader, Home Secretary Asiya Rao prepares to make a major policy announcement that will establish her as the front-runner of the political race. Alongside her calculating advisor Phoebe, she embarks on a publicity stunt starting with a photo shoot by the white cliffs of Dover. But rather than the tide washing her reputation clean, something else washes up...

An omen or an opportunity? The women are determined to keep their eyes on the prize, no matter the cost, even if it's a human one.

Part of the Made in Scotland Showcase – www.madeinscotlandshowcase.com

THE LAST RETURN

by Sonya Kelly

Druid

Not all good things come to those who wait.

One final night. One last chance. Five people queue for a ticket to the hottest show in town. All they must do is simply wait in line. But what in life is ever simple?

Who will triumph, who will fail, and who will walk away with... *The Last Return*?

A new play by acclaimed playwright Sonya Kelly (*Once Upon a Bridge*, *Furniture*), *The Last Return* is a thrilling comedy about conflict, peace and the pursuit of territory at any cost.

HAPPY MEAL

by Tabby Lamb (she/they)

Roots / Theatre Royal Plymouth with ETT and Oxford Playhouse

Join us for an online show irl. Travel back to the quaint days of dial up and MSN, where you'll follow two strangers on their journeys to become who they always were.

A funny, moving and nostalgic story of transition.

The world premiere of *Happy Meal* is a joyful queer rom-com where Millennial meets Gen Z and change is all around. Exhilaratingly staged by Jamie Fletcher (she/her), fresh from her acclaimed production of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.

ALOK

by ALOK

Soho Theatre

ALOK (they/them) is an internationally acclaimed writer, performer and public speaker. This is their new comedy and poetry show.

A mixed-media artist, ALOK's work explores themes of trauma, belonging and the human condition. They are also the author of *Femme in Public* (2017), *Beyond the Gender Binary* (2020) and *Your Wound/My Garden* (2021), and have been honoured as one of HuffPo's Culture Shifters and NBC's Pride 50.

ONE-WOMAN SHOW

by Liz Kingsman

Country Mile Productions

The Guardian's #1 Comedy Show of 2021 comes to the Fringe for a limited run.

A bold, irreverent, raw, moving and triumphant celebration of adjectives, this blurb will nail down nothing.

Times' Top 5 Comedy Shows of 2021.

Telegraph's Best Cultural Events of 2021.

"The hands-down funniest live comedy show of 2021.. A tour de force" (Guardian)

"Do everything legal you can to get a ticket" (Evening Standard)

"Fight for a ticket" (Telegraph)

"Superbly funny" (Times)

PSYCHODRAMA

by Matt Wilkinson

Psycho Productions & Cusack Projects Limited

A gripping, at times hilarious revenge tale about an actress in her 40's under investigation for the murder of an auteur theatre director.

Set against the backdrop of a stage production of Hitchcock's *Psycho*, Emily Bruni (*Peep Show*) plunges us into the dark heart of show business.

Nominated for two Off West End Theatre Awards.

EAVESDROPPING: WALK THIS PLAY®

by Hannah Lavery and Sarah MacGillivray

ThickSkin in association with the Traverse Theatre

Don your headphones and get ready to eavesdrop in this latest solo audio experience from ThickSkin (*How Not to Drown*). Celebrating the stories and people who are the heartbeat and spirit of Edinburgh, *Eavesdropping* asks who gets to define a city, who gets to be its guide and whose story matters.

Eavesdropping takes audiences on an adventure through familiar and unfamiliar streets in Scotland's capital, revealing new sides to and stories of the people who (may) live here. This location-based walking audio play by Hannah Lavery (*The Drift*) and Sarah MacGillivray (Traverse Young Writer alumni), the latest in ThickSkin's *Walk This Play®* series, will encourage audiences to look differently at the rich tapestry of people you may walk past every day, whether you notice them or not.

LISTINGS INFO

Traverse Festival 2022

Thursday 4 – Sun 28 Aug (previews from Sat 30 Jul)

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

For more information, interviews or images, [click here](#) or contact press@traverse.co.uk

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Notes to editors

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

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