

TRAVERSE THEATRE MEDIA RELEASE

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TRAVERSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES NEW CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT APPOINTMENTS

- **Mahri Reilly becomes Creative Engagement Producer**
 - **Robbie Gordon takes the role of Creative Producer - Class Act**
 - **Jennifer Galt joins as Class Act Producing Assistant**
 - **Artists taking part in the Traverse's new Creating Space Writers' Group, led by Mariem Omari, and Breakthrough Writers: In Residence announced**
 - **Award-winning playwright Douglas Maxwell will lead this season's Traverse Young Writers Group**
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The Traverse is today delighted to announce three new appointments to its Artistic and Creative Engagement team, who will jointly focus on expanding the reach of the organisation's many creative engagement activities and programmes, including Class Act, Breakthrough Writers, and Creating Space. These key strategic appointments seek to connect the art we, our collaborators and our partners create, with our communities and our potential audience, and to provide the platforms and tools to help people create and participate in culture.

Mahri Reilly, who joins the Traverse today from her position as Creative Director of Scottish Youth Theatre, takes the role of Creative Engagement Producer, with oversight of all creative engagement strands. Class Act activities will be led by Robbie Gordon as Creative Producer - Class Act, supported by Jennifer Galt as Class Act Producing Assistant, as the project moves into an exciting new phase nationally, and internationally - with further details to follow soon.

ABOUT THE TEAM

Mahri Reilly, Creative Engagement Producer

Mahri Reilly joins the Traverse from Scottish Youth Theatre, where she was Creative Director, leading the company's national artistic and digital programme, in collaboration with young artists across intersections and geographies, supporting their bespoke artistic development journeys. Prior to this she was Head of Learning and Participation at Ovalhouse Theatre in South London, leading their creative learning department and associated cross-generation programmes in preparation for the organisation's move to Brixton House.

Previously an embedded member of the Learn Team at National Theatre of Scotland for 3 years, Mahri worked across scale and community to share and tell stories as the then Learn Project Manager, as well as taking the role of Associate Producer for year 2 of the Theatre in Schools Scotland pilot. As well as being based in theatre venues and theatre companies, Mahri has worked extensively across grassroots arts organisations, festivals and street theatre companies as a freelance practitioner, establishing accessible creative engagement participation opportunities and taking stories that connect to our universal humanity to new audiences far and wide.

Robbie Gordon, Creative Producer - Class Act

Robbie Gordon was previously one of the Traverse's Artists in Residence, working as Creative Development Producer. He is a theatre-maker and co-founder of Wonder Fools, and previously worked as the Creative Engagement Director at the Gaiety Theatre, and the director of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Young Company.

Selected credits: co-creator of *Positive Stories for Negative Times* (Wonder Fools in association with Traverse); curator of *Open Your Lugs* (Ayr Gaiety); co-producer of Class Act 2020 (Traverse); writer and movement director of *549: Scots of the Spanish Civil War* (Wonder Fools); writer of *When the Sun Meets the Sky* dementia-friendly audio play (Capital Theatres with Traverse Theatre Company); writer of *The Coolidge Effect* (Wonder Fools); writer and director of *McNeill of Tranent: Fastest Man in the World* (Wonder Fools); workshop leader and sand artist on Danny Boyle's *Pages of the Sea* (National Theatre of Scotland); research assistant on *Locker Room Talk* (Traverse Theatre).

Jennifer Galt, Class Act Producing Assistant

Jennifer is a producer and theatre-maker who joins Team Traverse from Framework Theatre Company, where she works as Company Producer. She has previously worked with Scottish Youth Theatre and Just Add Milk Productions as Assistant Producer.

Linda Crooks, Executive Producer:

"We are thrilled to welcome Mahri, Robbie and Jennifer to the Traverse team. The appointments of these extremely talented and passionate individuals are a dynamic response to the dramatically changed world in which we now exist, recognizing our responsibility to rapidly evolve in order to be relevant and vital. Creativity, learning and discovery lies at the heart of everything the Traverse does, and we are enormously proud of the transformation of our creative engagement programme undertaken in recent years. These activities have penetrated the country and internationally more widely than ever before, through our new digital channels, and we are excited for them to broaden the voices heard and stories told on our stages, and within communities, whether physical or digital.

We are grateful to our funders Adapt and Thrive and the Paul Hamlyn Foundation for enabling this vital extension of our team and look forward to working with Mahri, Robbie and Jennifer to further our

existing activities, alongside developing exciting and meaningful new elements of our creative engagement work to keep the Traverse relevant, innovating, and meaningful to our community and audiences.”

Mahri Reilly, Creative Engagement Producer:

“I am delighted to be taking up the new position of Creative Engagement Producer at the Traverse Theatre. I am inspired by the radical programming and diversity of thought quietly taking place at Scotland’s new writing theatre institution, particularly in this time of post pandemic recovery and cost of living crisis, when arts and culture have never been so essential and yet so under threat. I believe participation in cultural and creative life is key to positive wellbeing, social inclusion, community cohesion and critical thought. Theatre opens the opportunity to connect, to escape, to debate and sometimes, to make change.

I am committed to amplifying and growing the brilliant work already underway at the Traverse, and am especially excited to collaborate with my colleagues and the creative community to develop new pieces of work, both physical and digital, that will inspire and engage audiences, forging unity and solidarity as we venture forward into the new.”

The Creative Engagement Producer position is supported by Adapt and Thrive, part of the Scottish Government’s Community and Third Sector Recovery Programme and delivered in partnership by Firstport, Corra Foundation, SCVO, Just Enterprise, Community Enterprise and Social Investment Scotland.

The Creative Producer – Class Act and Class Act Producing Assistant roles are supported by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.



CREATING SPACE

We are also pleased to confirm the names of the artists who will be participating in our new Creating Space Writers’ Group for Scotland-based writers of the Global Majority. Led by acclaimed playwright Mariem Omari, and with support from Traverse Associate director Shilpa T-Hyland, over 10 weeks the group will be guided through online and in-person sessions covering the playwriting process, industry mentorship, and feedback on their writing. They will meet with established writers and artists, including guest facilitators Tawona Sithole, Apphia Campbell and Hannah Lavery.

At the culmination of the course, participants will have an opportunity to hear an extract of their writing read by actors, as well as receiving a bespoke one to one meeting with the Traverse Team.

The 2022 Creating Space writers are:

Valerie Andrews
Adam Buksh
Andrea Cabrera Luna
Neil Chue Hong

Sanjay Lago
Hannah Low
Garry Morris
Fin Ross Russell
Manjot Sumal
Jingling Wu

Creating Space Writers' Group has been developed in collaboration with Scottish BPOC Writers Network.

BREAKTHROUGH WRITERS: IN RESIDENCE

New for 2022, Breakthrough Writers: In Residence is a reset of the Traverse's much loved and lauded Open Submissions initiative. Developed to identify the most exciting voices writing in the UK & Ireland, Breakthrough Writers: In Residence invited writers over the age of 18 at any stage of their career, currently living in the UK and Ireland, to submit an anonymised, full-length stage script to the Traverse.

We are very pleased to now announce the five writers who have been selected to receive six months of bespoke mentoring and dramaturgical development from the Traverse Team, including Artistic Director Gareth Nicholls, Associate Directors Katherine Nesbitt and Shilpa T-Hyland, and other associated artists, to each develop a full-length play - culminating in readings of each, in their entirety.

The 2022 Breakthrough Writers: In Residence are:

Fatima Jawara
Liam Moffat
Beth Westbrook
Eliza Gearty
Lydia Sabatini

Breakthrough Writers is generously supported by the Idlewild Trust.

Idlewild Trust

TRAVERSE YOUNG WRITERS GROUP

The Autumn/Winter 2022 Traverse Young Writers course will be led by acclaimed playwright Douglas Maxwell (*I Can Go Anywhere*, *Charlie Sonata*, *Man's Best Friend*).

LISTINGS INFO

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

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

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

Traverse Theatre is supported by:



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