

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Wed 03 May, 12:30pm

Contact: press@traverse.co.uk



Sixty years of evolution – TravFest 2023 showcases the power of new writing and innovative theatre

- **Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of Scotland’s premier new work theatre with a thrilling programme of work that reflects our world today**
 - **World premiere of Traverse Theatre Company production *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel* by Isobel McArthur, with Dundee Rep Theatre**
 - **Traverse Theatre Company hit show *Sean and Daro Flake It ‘Til They Make It* by Laurie Motherwell returns to the Traverse 1 stage**
 - **Scottish premieres of Breach Theatre’s *After The Act*, The Javaad Alipoor Company’s *Things Hidden Since The Foundation Of The World*, Fishamble’s *Heaven* and Prime Cut Production’s *Lie Low***
 - **Traverse 2 will showcase bold new works from Scotland; *No Love Songs* featuring songs by The View’s Kyle Falconer, by Dundee Rep in association with Traverse Theatre Company, and National Theatre of Scotland’s *Thrown* by Nat McCleary, as part of the Edinburgh International Festival**
- **Traverse presents return of Fringe and international hits *Bloody Elle* by Lauryn Redding and *NASSIM* by Nassim Soleimanpour**
- **Further Traverse productions and events to be announced in coming weeks**

TravFest 2023 sees the iconic festival and fringe venue showcase an incredible programme of brilliant and bold theatre. In its place at the heart of the Edinburgh Festivals, the Traverse marks 60 years of evolution, innovation, and conversation. Celebrating the cultural voice of the nation by staging a home-grown programme of work, with the Traverse company name to appear across 8 shows in this dynamic and thrilling programme.

On the Traverse 1 stage is an ambitious world premiere from the Traverse Theatre Company, ***The Grand Old Opera House Hotel*** by Olivier-award winning sensation Isobel McArthur. Hot on the heels of touring two smash-hit shows across the UK, McArthur delivers an extraordinary, brand-new ensemble comedy exploring how art can bring us together in the most hopeless of circumstances. *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel* marks McArthur’s debut original play, which takes us into a sumptuous

world filled with the joy and exuberance of her signature writing style. Directed by Traverse Artistic Director Gareth Nicholls, with Composition and Musical Supervision by Michael John McCarthy, *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel* is sure to be one of the most talked about productions in Edinburgh this August.

At the forefront of this year's Festival is work that the Traverse has originated, supported and championed. After a critically acclaimed run in April, hit show *Sean and Daro Flake It 'Til They Make It* by Laurie Motherwell, directed by Robert Softley Gale, will burst onto the festival scene, serving a generous helping of Scottish humour and a heart-warming story of friendship and flakes.

As we celebrate our 60th year of making new work we are thrilled to share an incredible programme of brilliant theatre in our home at the heart of the Edinburgh Festivals, spotlighting a wealth of talent, celebrated new writing and thrilling performance.

Groundbreaking, critically acclaimed new work *After The Act* from Breach Theatre, co-produced by New Diorama in association with Traverse Theatre, gets its first outing in Scotland after a recent box office breaking run in London.

Traverse Theatre will also present Northern Powerhouse representatives, the return of the sensational *Bloody Elle* from Lauryn Redding – for a limited run only - which will burst onto the stage after playing London's Soho Theatre throughout July, and *Things Hidden Since The Foundation Of The World* from The Javaad Alipoor Company and HOME, Manchester.

We are delighted to be welcoming back *NASSIM* by Nassim Soleimanpour in the final week, which has been touring and connecting with audiences across the globe since it debuted at the Traverse Festival in 2017. Audiences can expect to see famous faces from stage and screen - including some Traverse stalwarts from our illustrious 60 years – as they join *NASSIM* to share in the telling of this illuminating story of connection.

Traverse 2 will present Scottish premieres of Culture Ireland supported work, Celtic compatriots Fishamble's *Heaven* by Eugene O'Brien, directed by Jim Culleton, and *Lie Low* from Ciara Elizabeth Smyth & Prime Cut Productions, directed by Oisín Kearney. We are delighted to welcome the finest talent from Scotland, *No Love Songs* directed by Dundee Rep Artistic Director Andrew Panton, from Dundee Rep in association with Traverse Theatre Company, featuring songs by The View's Kyle Falconer. And Edinburgh International Festival presents, as part of its programme, the National Theatre of Scotland production *Thrown* by Nat McCleary, directed by Jonny McKnight.

We are proud that in the rich mix of Traverse productions is Cora Bissett's *What Girls Are Made Of*, co-produced by Raw Material, which will play at the Assembly Rooms for the full festival. Finally, Traverse 3 audiences can enjoy an array of innovative digital theatre through our *Chronic Insanity Residency*, with an anthology of 5 thrilling works to explore.

More TravFest23 productions and events will be announced in the coming weeks, including full details of our Traverse 3 online programme.

Linda Crooks, Traverse Executive Producer, said:

"TravFest is a labour of love and collaboration, founded on a driving passion to share life affirming and thought provoking performance with and for our local, national and international communities. This year's festival - coincidentally our 60th year of the Traverse - simply wouldn't be here without the input,

creativity and support of so many over the years, so we thank you all for joining us on the epic journey thus far and look forward to welcoming you in August once again.

Taking a risk as an artist, producer or an audience member is certainly not for the faint-hearted in these difficult times. Within this programme, our aim is to take up some of the heavy-lifting, take the our customers and friends by the hand in the hope that you can trust us to guide you through an enriching, enlightening and brilliant theatrical journey, and leave you with lifelong memories.

We are immensely privileged to be the hub of the best new work in Edinburgh Festivals each August. In our present world of division, we hope that our theatres and digital platforms can be a place of connection, empathy and joy. We welcome you all to share in the stories on our stages, and join us in conversation about the worlds and characters they portray. We celebrate 60 years of evolution, through our work; no big parties, no fireworks display, just the unbeatable magic of brilliant theatre”

Gareth Nicholls, Traverse Artistic Director and director of *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel*, said:

*“I cannot envisage a better way to mark the Traverse’s 60 years of creating bold theatre and bringing global stories to our Edinburgh stages than through our festival programme this year. We have premieres, companies with whom we have long-term collaborations, and – of course – a record number of works bearing the Traverse name. I am incredibly proud to be a part of this thrilling programme, directing the wonderful Isobel McArthur’s first-ever original play. *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel* is a raucous and heartfelt piece, on a scale rarely seen on the Traverse stage. I cannot wait to share this epic story of love and connection with our festival audiences, I know they’ll be entertained and moved to want more.”*

TravFest23 productions on sale now

THE GRAND OLD OPERA HOUSE HOTEL

by Isobel McArthur, directed by Gareth Nicholls

Traverse Theatre Company with Dundee Rep Theatre

World Premiere

Traverse 1: Thu 27 Jul - Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Sun 6 Aug, 2pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/the-grand-old-opera-house-hotel-festival-23

The Grand Old Opera House Hotel has seen better days. It used to be a magnificent Opera House, whose stage was graced by the great sopranos and baritones of the age. Nowadays, it’s fist fights that shatter glasses, the only divas are the ones who check-in, and there’s not a single romantic hero to be found.

When shy Aaron joins the hotel’s ramshackle team he’s faced with emotionally volatile guests, apathetic staff, and inept management. Not to mention the rumour of a pair of singing ghosts haunting the corridors. Yet, amongst the chaos Aaron overhears a beautiful, mysterious singer, who captures his heart, as well as his ears. It belongs to his colleague Jay, an operatic anorak with high hopes and low expectations for herself.

Drawn inexorably together by strange music floating through the halls, Aaron and Jay search for each other through chaotic corridors and amongst the absurd guests, never able to catch each other but knowing they are fated to be together.

A heart-filling ensemble comedy from Olivier Award-winning writer Isobel McArthur (*Pride and Prejudice* (*Sort Of)*, *Kidnapped*), directed by Traverse Theatre Artistic Director, Gareth Nicholls (*Ulster American*, *Crocodile Fever*) and with Composition and Musical Supervision from Micahel John McCarthy. The world premiere of *The Grand Old Opera House Hotel* is a story of art bringing us together in hopeless circumstance, set to the tune of some of the most popular opera songs ever written.

The Grand Old Opera House Hotel is part of the Made in Scotland Showcase 2023.

The Grand Old Opera House Hotel will transfer to Dundee Rep Wed 13 – Sat 16 September.

*

SEAN AND DARO FLAKE IT 'TIL THEY MAKE IT

by Laurie Motherwell, directed by Robert Softley Gale

Traverse Theatre Company

Traverse 1: Sun 27 Jul – Sun 20 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Sun 6 Aug, 10am

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/sean-and-daro-flake-it-til-they-make-it-festival-23

*"Ah've got a brain for business me.
Nothing says business like a pair of trackies."*

Returning after a critically acclaimed run at the Traverse in April, the Whippy Bros are back!

Looking for a way out of their humdrum lives in the outskirts of Glasgow, straight-laced Sean, fresh from dropping out of uni, and the gallus Daro, overflowing with charisma and business 'acumen', reckon they can be the dream team of frozen treats.

Following in the footsteps of their business heroes Bannatyne and Branson, full of tall tales and cunning plans, and fuelled by Irn Bru and baccy, the two go from the heady heights of summer to the perilous cold of winter in their slightly clapped-out van of destiny. But surely it's always ice cream season?

However, they quickly discover that conquering the ice cream business will be anything but a sundae stroll... As the bills, admin and brain freezes build up, Sean and Daro's relationship is put to the test and their friendship gets frosty. Will they stay solid, or will they melt under the pressure?

In the grand Scottish dramatic tradition of *Passing Places* and *Midsummer*, *Sean and Daro Flake It 'Til They Make It* is a new comedy from the Traverse Theatre Company. A story of friendship, finances and flakes, enjoy a warm journey across the west of Scotland as two friends discover what it takes to survive in the chilly world of cold confectionery.

Returning with full original cast and creative team, starring Sean Connor as *Sean* and Cameron Fulton as *Daro*.

*

NASSIM

by Nassim Soleimanpour, directed by Omar Elerian

Traverse Theatre Company presents, Nassim Soleimanpour Productions & Bush Theatre

Traverse 1: Tue 22 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Wed 23 Aug, 10pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/nassim-festival-23

Dear performer. Did you know, in Farsi my name is written like this: ‘.RUOPNAMIÉLOS MISSAN si eman yM’

A different performer joins the playwright on stage, while the script waits unseen in a sealed box... From Iranian playwright Nassim Soleimanpour comes another audacious experiment.

Touchingly autobiographical yet powerfully universal, *NASSIM* is a striking demonstration of how language can divide and unite us. *NASSIM* has toured extensively across the globe and been performed in the native language of each host country.

Originally debuting at the Traverse festival in 2017, this Fringe First Winner landed in New York City in 2019 where it won the Off Broadway Alliance Award for Best Unique Theatrical Experience. The five-month New York run with over 150 renowned names included Michael Shannon, Tracy Letts, Carrie Coon, Cory Michael Smith, Cush Jumbo, Michael Urie and other theatre, TV and movie stars.

Nassim Soleimanpour, writer and performer of *NASSIM*, said:

"Following six years of intensive international tours and over 400 performances across a myriad of languages, Nassim Soleimanpour Productions, Omar Elerian, and Aurora Nova are elated to present the award-winning NASSIM for another week-long spectacle under the auspices of the Traverse Theatre Company. Originally borne of the London Bush Theatre, this unswerving theatrical experiment has already entranced legions of theater, television, and film luminaries, and is now poised to come back to Edinburgh to capture another six in August. Whom do you surmise will take the plunge this time? Keep a vigilant watch on our website for further details. It will touch your heart and blow your mind."

*

BLOODY ELLE

by Lauryn Redding, directed by Bryony Shanahan

Traverse Theatre and Cloudrise Productions in association with the Royal Exchange

Traverse 1: Tue 8 – Sun 13 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Wed 9 Aug, 7pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/bloody-elle-festival-23

Elle meets Eve. Her eyes are green like guacamole, she has posh-hair and a freckle on her chin and when she touches Elle's arm...the world spins off its axis.

This loud, proud love story is heart-warmingly honest and belly achingly funny. Stuffed full of those stomach-flipping-time-stopping moments that everyone will recognise. It's brutal. It's beautiful. It's a "moment moment."

Returning for a strictly limited run after a sell-out TravFest22, *Bloody Elle* is full of searing original music performed live on stage. Building loops and layers of sound, you are transported to a 10,000-seat arena with a ten-piece band or to an intimate sweaty, packed-out gig in the back of a pub. Grab a pint, and let's go.

Lauryn Redding, writer, composer and performer of *Bloody Elle*, said:

*"I'm beyond buzzed to be bringing **Bloody Elle** back to the Traverse theatre and TravFest this summer. Our run in Trav 2 over the summer of 2022 was a perfect platform for the show, and after a sell out run, added shows and even the odd award(!) - I couldn't have asked for a more perfect festival run. The audiences were actual fire and the building became our sanctuary and I'm honoured to have been asked back for TravFest23. This time we are back for one week only in Trav 1 and I cannot WAIT to do it all over again. Come about! See you there!"*

Bloody Elle also runs at Soho Theatre, London, Tue 11 – Sat 29 July.

The original production of *Bloody Elle* was produced with Rebel Productions.

*

AFTER THE ACT

Written by Ellice Stevens and Billy Barrett, original score by Frew

Breach Theatre co-produced by New Diorama, in association with Traverse Theatre
Scottish Premiere

Traverse 1: Thu 3 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Sun 6 Aug, 10pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/after-the-act-festival-23

"Queers in classrooms!" "Perverts panicking parents!" - a new musical about pride, protest...and abseiling lesbians.

Section 28: the landmark legislation that silenced a generation and offered a global blueprint for LGBTQ+ oppression. Two decades after its repeal, multi-award-winning theatre company, Breach Theatre (*It's True, It's True, It's True*) sing and dance on the grave of this watershed moment in LGBTQ+ history.

In this verbatim musical, (almost) every word is taken from interviews the company has undertaken with students, activists, and teachers, as well as from tabloid articles and news clips. *After the Act's* cast take us from the adolescent anguish of the classroom to the heated debates of Parliament, via euphoric celebration and impassioned street demonstrations.

Returning with the full original cast and creative team, *After The Act* was commissioned by New Diorama and premiered at New Diorama Theatre in March 2023.

Ellice Stevens & Billy Barrett, founders of Breach Theatre and writers of *After The Act*, said:

"As part of the generation that grew up under Section 28, this is a story that's hugely personal to us as well as political. The moral panic of the 1980's over LGBTQ+ inclusive education had an enormous impact on our coming of age and sense of ourselves as young queer people in the '90's and noughties. It's been fascinating and a real privilege to speak to so many LGBTQ+ people of a slightly

older generation who remember the fight for and against section 28, and to people of all ages on its impact on them. We hope that by telling their stories, anyone who comes to see the show - will be inspired to continue the fight for LGBTQ+ rights and representation."

*

THINGS HIDDEN SINCE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

by Javaad Alipoor with Chris Thorpe, directed by Javaad Alipoor

The Javaad Alipoor Company and HOME

Scottish Premiere

Traverse 1: Tue 15 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Thu 17 Aug, 10pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/things-hidden-since-the-foundation-of-the-world-festival-23

In 1992 Iranian popstar and refugee Fereydoon Farrokhzad was found brutally murdered, only six months after playing to sold out audiences at London's Royal Albert Hall. The case was never solved.

This new work by Javaad Alipoor explores violence, digital culture and the post-colonial world. An investigation into both this iconic murder and an investigation into the nature of investigation itself, it reveals that in a world of murder mystery podcasts, Wikipedia and an internet that presents everything in the world as knowable, we need to understand that some worlds never collide.

Javaad Alipoor, writer, performer and director, said:

"It's really exciting to be back at The Traverse. Like our previous work Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World is a funny and kaleidoscopic look at what it means to live in a globalised world, and what responsibilities we all have to people fleeing from, or fighting authoritarian regimes. The cosmopolitanism, sense of fun and boldness of the TravFest program makes us proud to be sharing a venue with such great work."

*

NO LOVE SONGS

Songs by Kyle Falconer. Book by Laura Wilde and Johnny McKnight.

Dundee Rep Theatre in association with Traverse Theatre

Traverse 2: Thu 3 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Fri 4 Aug, 9pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/no-love-songs-festival-23

A new gig theatre show featuring music by Kyle Falconer, lead singer of The View. Inspired by the real-life experiences of Laura and Kyle, the story follows Lana and Jesse, two new parents grappling with the challenges of parenthood and the weight of postnatal depression. Through a powerful blend of music, tears, and laughter, the audience is taken on a heartfelt journey as the couple navigate the ups and downs of their new life together.

Performed live on stage, *No Love Songs* features songs from Kyle's critically acclaimed second solo album, 'No Love Songs For Laura', reimagined for this urgent new piece of music theatre.

Don't miss this brand-new musical capturing the essence of love, parenthood, and the struggles that come with it.

No Love Songs is part of the Made in Scotland Showcase 2023.

Andrew Panton, Artistic Director of Dundee Rep, said:

"We're very excited to be partnering with the Traverse on two new shows for TravFest. Both use music and song to tell stories in new and innovative ways, dealing with important and urgent themes. I'm delighted that we're collaborating with and showcasing the work of these extraordinarily talented artists at the Edinburgh Fringe this year."

*

LIE LOW

by Ciara Elizabeth Smyth, directed by Oisín Kearney

Ciara Elizabeth Smyth & Prime Cut Productions

Scottish Premiere

Traverse 2: Thu 3 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Fri 4 Aug, 1.30pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/lie-low-festival-23

Faye's afraid.

She's not sleeping, she doesn't trust ducks and all she's had to eat this week is a box of dry Rice Krispies.

A doctor recommends a form of exposure therapy, so Faye enlists the help of her brother, Naoise. But Naoise has a devastating secret that's about to explode.

A darkly funny new play, directed by Oisín Kearney, offering a theatrical exploration into the human brain via the genitals.

Ciara Elizabeth Smyth, writer of *Lie Low*, said:

*"We are so delighted to be bringing **Lie Low** to the Traverse as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe this August. The show really connected with audiences in Dublin and we can't wait to share this award-winning surreal comedy with Edinburgh audiences."*

*

HEAVEN

by Eugene O'Brien, directed by Jim Culleton

Fishamble

Scottish Premiere

Traverse 2: Thu 3 – Sun 27 Aug

Press/Opening Performance: Fri 4 Aug, 6.30pm

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/heaven-festival-23

Triple Fringe First and Olivier Award-winning Fishamble present *Heaven* by Eugene O'Brien. *Heaven* is set in the Irish midlands, during the weekend of a local wedding. Mairead and Mal are struggling to keep their marriage together. Perhaps attending a wedding will help, or it might raise questions that are difficult to answer.

A huge hit in Dublin and New York City, *Heaven* won the 2023 Irish Times Best New Play Award, is directed by Jim Culleton, (Irish Times Best Director Award 2019), and performed by Janet Moran (Irish Times Best Actress Award for *Heaven*) and Andrew Bennett (Oscar-nominated *The Quiet Girl*).

WINNER 2023 Irish Times Theatre Award for Best New Play.

Jim Culleton, Fishamble Artistic Director & CEO, and director of *Heaven*, said:

"I am thrilled that Fishamble is returning to Traverse, especially on the 60th anniversary of this beacon for new plays in Edinburgh, and the world. HEAVEN by Eugene O'Brien was a huge hit at the Dublin Theatre Festival in late 2022, and its Off-Broadway run in early 2023, and we look forward very much to sharing it with audiences at the Traverse in August."

*

THROWN

by Nat McCleary, directed by Johnny McKnight

Part of Edinburgh International Festival, produced by National Theatre of Scotland.

Traverse 2: Thu 3 – Sun 27 Aug**

Press/Opening Performance: Sat 5 Aug, 6.30pm **

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/thrown

Sweat. Breath. Opposition. Negotiation. Fear. How long can you hold on?

Five wildly different women gather in the muddy fields of the Highland Games circuit. They are ready to compete in the obscure art of Scottish backhold wrestling. The pearls are off, influencer videos posted, imitation Gucci bag from the Barras market cast aside as they attempt to join forces, wrestling with the only thing that could stop them from taking home the championship – each other. Will their differences throw Imogen, Chantelle, Jo, Pamela and Helen's chances of success in the mud?

Glasgow-based writer, actor and movement specialist Nat McCleary joins forces with director, performer and 'vanguard of post-modernist panto' Johnny McKnight to create this uniquely Scottish play. Satirical, poignant, and dynamic, *Thrown* gets to grips with belonging and identity in Scotland. It will be funny, it will be loud, it will be brutal.

**Please note: all tickets (public and press) for *Thrown* are available via the Edinburgh International Festival.

*

WHAT GIRLS ARE MADE OF

by Cora Bissett, directed by Orla O'Loughlin

Raw Material and Traverse Theatre Company

Assembly Rooms - Music Hall, George St: Fri 4 – Sun 27 Aug

On sale now: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/what-girls-are-made-of-2

The smash-hit, gig-theatre show returns, charting the true story of Cora Bissett's rollercoaster journey from 90s indie-kid to wised-up woman. Touring with Radiohead, partying with Blur, she was living the dream. Until she wasn't.

With a live band, Cora celebrates life's euphoric highs and epic lows, asking what wisdom we should pass to the next generation, and which glorious mistakes we should let them make. A Raw Material and Traverse Theatre co-production, directed by Orla O'Loughlin.

*

CHRONIC INSANITY RESIDENCY

On demand in Traverse 3: Tue 1 – Sun 27 Aug

On sale Wed 17 May: www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/event/chronic-insanity-residency

In a feast for curious minds seeking creatively-rich morsels, the Traverse welcomes award-winning company Chronic Insanity with a dazzling anthology of digital theatre for TravFest23. In collaboration with the Traverse Theatre Company they will be in residence across the whole of the festival in digital theatre space Traverse 3, taking audience members on journeys across worlds both familiar and unknown.

Full details of works will be announced Wed 17 May.

TravFest23 Trailer: <https://youtu.be/m4dZZy17URY>

Traverse Festival 2023

In person: Thu 27 July – Sun 27 Aug

Online: Tue 1 Aug – Sun 27 Aug

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, press tickets or images, contact press@traverse.co.uk

Please find a selection of press images etc [here](#).

Traverse Theatre is supported by:



The Traverse is funded by Creative Scotland and The City of Edinburgh Council.

Traverse Theatre (Scotland) is a Limited Company (Registered Number SC076037) and a Scottish Charity (Registered Number SC002368) with its Registered Office at 10 Cambridge Street, Edinburgh, Scotland, EH1 2ED.