



Press release – Embargoed until 0800 on Thursday 29 May 2025

## Travfest 2025: The pinnacle of compelling new writing at Edinburgh's August Festivals 2025

- The trusted engine room of new writing in Scotland and multi award-winning Traverse Theatre reveals its TravFest programme for 2025.
- 12 productions - 3 world premieres, 1 European, 3 UK and 3 Scottish premieres, showcasing some of the best new writing from Scotland and the world, intimate one-on-one performances and high impact dramas giving space to some of the key issues in the world today
- Director John Tiffany returns to the Traverse alongside Johnny McKnight with *She's Behind You*, written by McKnight, an uplifting journey exploring our love of panto and the dames that define it
- Lucie Barât, sister of The Libertines' frontman Carl Barât, steps into the spotlight in the world premiere of her autobiographical musical play *Standing In The Shadows of Giants*, Directed by Traverse Associate Artist Bryony Shanahan
- Traverse collaborates with Bristol Old Vic to present *The Beautiful Future is Coming*, an urgent new drama about the onrushing climate apocalypse, by Flora Wilson Brown and directed by Nancy Medina
- Gary McNair's beloved fable *A Gambler's Guide to Dying* returns to the Traverse to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its sell-out, award-winning debut
- Traverse 1 hosts premieres including Women's Prize for Playwriting winner pitch-black domestic comedy *Consumed*, innovative Shakespeare adaptation *Lost Lear*, and Fuel presents Khalid Abdalla's powerful solo show *Nowhere* as part of the Here & Now Showcase
- New work on the Traverse 2 stage includes the UK premieres of haunting post-#MeToo fable *Red Like Fruit* (2b Theatre) and brotherly drama *Rift* (Luna Stage and Richard Jordan), as well as interactive pub quiz-cum-theatre show *LUCKY TONIGHT!*
- Two intimate, innovative productions for solo audiences include *I'm Ready to Talk Now* in Traverse Above and *Deliverance*, which brings the drama direct to audiences' homes
- [FREE TO USE IMAGES HERE](#)



The Traverse Theatre, Scotland's new writing theatre, once again takes centre stage amidst Edinburgh's August Festivals, with a programme that reaffirms its unwavering commitment to discovering, developing, and showcasing the most vital new voices in theatre and sharing their stories with a national and international audience.

This year's TravFest promises a compelling and wide-ranging programme of theatre that underscores the Traverse's pivotal role in shaping the landscape of contemporary drama, both in Scotland and beyond. Carefully curated, the programme gives space to key issues on people's minds today, from climate change to radicalisation, and loved ones developing dementia, to global conflict and dysfunctional family dynamics while also bringing joy, humanity, commonality and humour.

The 12 productions include 10 premieres, giving audiences the chance to be among the first to see some of the most groundbreaking, quality new theatre in Edinburgh this August.

### **HOME PRODUCTIONS**

Among the **world premieres** is a deliciously honest, wicked and moving unpicking of that well-known Scottish theatre character – the Panto Dame - as brought hilariously and poignantly to life by Scotland's Prince of post-modern panto himself, **Johnny McKnight**.

Stepping into the shoes of the glamorous Dorothy Blawna-Gale, Johnny's glittery trip through the most unique of theatrical traditions helps us understand why dames are so close to our hearts. A new Traverse Theatre production presented in association with National Theatre of Scotland, and directed by the acclaimed **John Tiffany**, ***She's Behind You*** is a deliciously honest, wicked and moving unpicking of the significance of one of the most beloved and enduring characters in all of British theatre.

Chaos, rejection, addiction and self-discovery is Lucie's experience of navigating life as a rockstar's sister in the mid-2000s. In this **world premiere** of an autobiographical musical play written and performed by **Lucie Barât** – sister of The Libertines' frontman and guitarist

Carl Barât – she finds her voice and steps into the spotlight in ***Standing In The Shadows of Giants***, directed by Traverse Associate Artist **Bryony Shanahan** in a Traverse Theatre & The Hale co-production.

The Traverse collaborates with Bristol Old Vic to present the **Scottish premiere** of ***The Beautiful Future is Coming*** – an urgent new play about the onrushing climate apocalypse. Spanning 250 years of real and imagined history through the eyes of three couples, the play takes us from 1850s New York to present-day London, and a future seed vault in storm-ravaged Svalbard. **Flora Wilson Brown's** production, directed by Bristol Old Vic Artistic Director **Nancy Medina**, is a fast-paced and funny drama about the end of the world as we know it.

**Gary McNair's** beloved solo fable ***A Gambler's Guide to Dying*** returns to the Traverse 10 years on from its sell-out, award-winning debut and subsequent tours which took it to stages across Scotland, the UK, and the world. An intergenerational tale of what we live for and what we leave behind, written and performed by Gary and directed by Traverse Artistic Director **Gareth Nicholls**, the play will delight Edinburgh theatre-goers and Festival visitors once more with the hotly anticipated revival in Traverse 2 this August.

### **POWERFUL PREMIERES**

Winner of the Women's Prize for Playwriting 2022, **Karis Kelly's** brand-new play ***Consumed***, directed by Katie Posner, receives its **world premiere** on the Traverse stage this August, in a Paines Plough, Belgrade Theatre Coventry, Sheffield Theatres, Women's Prize for Playwriting co-production, in association with Lyric Theatre Belfast.

A pitch-black and twisted tale of dysfunctional family dynamics, generational trauma and national boundaries, ***Consumed*** brings together four generations of Northern Irish women, a house full of hungry ghosts and a 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party that no one wants.

A haunting exploration of complicity, consent, patriarchy and trauma in a post-#MeToo world, ***Red Like Fruit***, brings audiences the latest work of award-winning Canadian playwright Hannah Moscovitch. This **European premiere** from **2b theatre company** from Halifax Nova Scotia (*Old Stock*, Fringe 2017), directed by Christian Barry, sees Luke narrate Lauren's life: her fraying mental health and the unease she feels in the world. Reporting on domestic violence and haunted by adolescent memories, Lauren begins to unravel.

All at once fast-paced and thought-provoking, ***Lost Lear*** lands us in the world of Joy, a woman with dementia, who is being cared for through a method where people live inside an old memory.

Following the tour of *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Dan Colley, Riverbank Arts Centre and Mermaid Arts Centre have turned their sights to a very (very) loose adaptation of Shakespeare's enduring tragedy *King Lear*, examining the self and that part of us that's inaccessible to others. This **UK premiere** comes with a raft of 5-star reviews from its opening at the Dublin Theatre Festival.

Inspired by playwright **Gabriel Jason Dean's** relationship with his own brother, a currently-incarcerated high-level member of the alt-right, **RIFT** is a story of estrangement, ideological divide, and the fight to change our world. The **UK premiere** is directed by Ari Laura Kreith and is presented by Luna Stage & Richard Jordan Productions.

In **Nowhere**, an intricate and playful solo show, inspired by his involvement in the Egyptian revolution of 2011 and his experience of the counter-revolution that followed, Glasgow-born actor and activist **Khalid Abdalla** (*The Crown*, *United 93*, *The Day of the Jackal*) takes us on a surprising journey into his own history, set against a cartography of seismic world events. From colonialism to decolonisation; friendship and loss; protests and uprisings to the violence in Gaza post-October 2023, Khalid weaves the personal with the political. *Nowhere* is a **Scottish premiere**, written and performed by Khalid Abdalla, directed by Omar Elerian and is a Fuel production.

*"In the 90's sitcom Goodness Gracious Me, one of Nina Wadia's many characters can make everything at home 'with a small'... what?"*

For questions like this and more, join us for **Lucky Tonight!** - a hilarious, interactive pub quiz-cum-theatre show written and performed by **Afreena Islam-Wright**. Audiences join the quizmaster Afreena, a former contestant on *The Chase*, as she unpacks her identity across cultures and generations, from Old Trafford to Chittagong. Expect rounds of trivia, rounds of drinks, personal storytelling, and a redefinition of 'Britishness'. *Lucky Tonight!* is a **Scottish premiere**, directed by Julia Samuels.

In a new space upstairs - Traverse Above – is the **UK premiere** of a touching and achingly intimate performance which audiences will experience one-to-one with the artist. ***I'm Ready to Talk Now*** is set inside a hospital room, where audience members meet Oliver as he shares the story of being diagnosed with a severe immune condition—right after starting testosterone. Blending music, projection, and physical theatre, this performance event from the producers of 2024's award-winning Traverse hit *BATSHIT*, blurs boundaries between audience and performer in the most profound way. Written and performed by Oliver Ayres and presented by Skint, in association with Quiet Riot.

The final production in TravFest25 is ***Deliverance***, made by Brite Theatre, originally produced by Vanishing Point, written by Kolbrún Björt Sigfúsdóttir and performed by – you!

A stranger arrives at your door with your script – for the next 90 minutes, you dress up, dance, answer a mysterious phone call... and no one's watching but you. Originally conceived and presented for audiences during lockdown and described as a fun and reflective night in and an exercise in self-knowledge and self-love, *Deliverance* has been brought back for audiences who missed this unique opportunity for self-reflection and journeying the first time around.

Edinburgh Beer Factory is this year's TravFest partner.

**Linda Crooks, CEO & Executive Producer of Traverse Theatre, said:** *"Writers are often one step ahead, regularly predicting future challenges as well as crystallising our morally complex world today and offering fresh insights and perspectives. This year's TravFest programme gives us space to reflect on global issues from radicalisation to climate change, to incredibly personal experiences of loved ones with dementia and dysfunctional family dynamics. What shines through these voices and these stories, even when tackling hard topics, is the depth of humanity, a humour – sometimes black – and often a commonality and a joy."*

*"We present a programme that promises to be as vibrant and diverse as ever, and the place to come in August for the best in new writing."*

**Gareth Nicholls, Artistic Director of Traverse Theatre and Director of A Gambler's Guide to Dying, said:** *"In challenging times, more than ever, we need to hear new stories. And as Scotland's engine room of new writing, working year-round to support and develop fresh voices alongside our partners and co-producers, the Traverse feels more energised and vital than ever in giving platform to artists here on our Edinburgh stages as well as across the world."*

*"Alongside championing unseen premieres the Traverse also plays a vital role in giving space to contemporary plays and writers which have made a huge impact on writing in Scotland, and there is barely a conversation goes by without someone reflecting forlornly that they did not see A Gambler's Guide to Dying when it was originally produced in 2015."*

*"One of my favourite works, and a joy of a collaboration with Gary McNair, I am delighted that this story of hope, family and what we value in life is returning to its spiritual home to give audiences a chance to experience the play they've long heard about and that will, I'm sure, resonate more than ever."*

**Laura Mackenzie Stuart, Head of Theatre, Creative Scotland said:** *"We are delighted to see another captivating programme of work this Traverse Festival, showcasing the best and most creative brilliance of artists from across Scotland and the world. This impressive collection of new work is underpinned by the work the Traverse undertakes year-round and their reinforces their vital position and role in ever a changing world."*

- ENDS

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## **Traverse Festival 2025**

Friday 25 July – Sunday 24 August 2025

Full programme and booking: <https://www.traverse.co.uk/whats-on/travfest25>

Traverse Theatre, 10 Cambridge St, Edinburgh, EH1 2ED | [traverse.co.uk](http://traverse.co.uk)

For more information, interviews, press tickets or images, contact [press@traverse.co.uk](mailto:press@traverse.co.uk)

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

**TravFest25 productions (on sale from Thu 29 May, 08:00am):**

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## **Traverse 1**

### **World Premiere**

#### ***She's Behind You***

Commissioned by the National Theatre of Scotland and Traverse Theatre. Produced by the Traverse Theatre in association with the National Theatre of Scotland.

Written and performed by **Johnny McKnight**, directed by **John Tiffany**

Johnny McKnight has spent a lifetime in the pantosphere. After playing eighteen dames and writing more than thirty pantomimes, he invites you to take a peek underneath his hooped skirt and join him on a transformative journey.

*She's Behind You* reflects on Johnny's adventures in panto, entertaining audiences across Scotland over twenty years. Pantomime may be the most popular genre of theatre but it can also be the most conventional. His story is a testament to pushing the boundaries of the art-form through a candid exploration of identity, courage and – finally – acceptance.

*She's Behind You* is a collaboration with award-winning director John Tiffany which unearths the magic, music and madness behind the curtain with a story as touching it is hilarious. It's a celebration of shifting traditions and the unexpected beauty found in the anarchy of pantomime.

*She's Behind You* was originally conceived as part of the Cameron Lectures, in association with the University of Glasgow and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

### **Scottish Premiere**

#### ***The Beautiful Future is Coming***

Traverse Theatre presents a Bristol Old Vic Production

Written by **Flora Wilson-Brown**, directed by **Nancy Medina**

*'Can you feel it? Something is hanging in the balance – ready to fall.'*

**1856. New York:** Eunice sits in what will become Central Park and wonders if her research into CO2 is telling her something is going horribly wrong.

**2027. London:** Claire falls in love as the heatwave breaks and the streets begin to flood.

**2100. Svalbard:** While an 86-day storm rages outside, Ana hears a baby crying in the seed vault.

The world is ending, sure. But what happens in between? An urgent, powerful drama about the onrushing climate apocalypse, spanning 250 years of real and imagined history through the eyes of three couples. Directed by Bristol Old Vic's Artistic Director **Nancy Medina**, the [show opens there from 15 May – 07 June](#) before arriving at the Traverse in August.



## World Premiere

### ***Consumed***

A Paines Plough, Belgrade Theatre Coventry, Sheffield Theatres, Women's Prize for Playwriting co-production, in association with Lyric Theatre Belfast  
Written by **Karis Kelly**, directed by **Katie Posner**

A 90th birthday party that no one seems to want.  
Four generations of Northern Irish women, reunited under one roof. A house full of hungry ghosts, with more than one skeleton in the closet.  
Turn off your phones at dinner.

Winner of the 2022 Women's Prize for Playwriting, **Karis Kelly's** play is a pitch-black and twisted tale of dysfunctional family dynamics, generational trauma and national boundaries.  
[Previews at Belgrade Theatre, Coventry](#), from 25 – 26 July before its premiere at the Traverse.

## UK Premiere

### ***Lost Lear***

A Riverbank Arts Centre and Mermaid Arts Centre production  
Written and directed by **Dan Colley**

All at once fast-paced and thought-provoking, *Lost Lear* lands us in the world of Joy, a woman with dementia, who is being cared for through a method where people live inside an old memory.

Following the tour of *A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings*, Dan Colley and his company have turned their sights on a very (very) loose adaptation of Shakespeare's enduring tragedy *King Lear*, examining the self and that part of us that's inaccessible to others.

#### Reviews:

★★★★★ The Stage - *"Devastating stuff, deftly done... Colley is a theatre maker of remarkable imagination and insight"*

★★★★★ The Examiner - *"Brilliantly conceived and executed... a remarkable achievement"*

★★★★★ The Arts Review - *"Bravely visits painful places to tenderly illuminate them"*

★★★★ Irish Mail on Sunday - *"In a role demanding a wide physical and emotional range... Bowe is remarkable"*

## Scottish Premiere

### ***Nowhere***

A Fuel production – part of the **Here & Now Showcase**  
Written and performed by **Khalid Abdalla**, directed by **Omar Elerian**

In this intricate and playful solo show, inspired by his involvement in the Egyptian revolution of 2011, and his experience of the counter-revolution that followed, Glasgow-born actor and activist **Khalid Abdalla** (*The Crown*, *United 93*, *The Day of the Jackal*) takes us on a

surprising journey into his own history, set against a cartography of seismic world events. From colonialism to decolonisation; friendship and loss; protests and uprisings to the violence in Gaza post-October 2023, Khalid weaves the personal with the political.

## **Traverse 2**

### ***A Gambler's Guide to Dying***

A Traverse Theatre Company production

Written and performed by **Gary McNair**, directed by **Gareth Nicholls**

What are the odds of living an extraordinary life? One boy's grandad wins a fortune betting on the 1966 World Cup. When diagnosed with cancer, he gambles it all on living to see the year 2000. An intergenerational tale of what we live for and what we leave behind.

Returning to the Traverse 10 years on from its sell-out, award-winning debut and subsequent tours which took it to stages across Scotland, the UK, and the world, **Gary McNair's** acclaimed solo show is ready to delight Edinburgh theatre-goers and Festival visitors all over again.

### **World Premiere**

### ***Standing in the Shadows of Giants***

Traverse Theatre & The Hale co-production

Written and performed by **Lucie Barât**, directed by **Bryony Shanahan**

It's the early 2000s. In London, Lucie Barât, fresh out of drama school, is struggling to make it in the industry whilst living in the shadow of her brother Carl – who just happens to be the guitarist and frontman an up-and-coming indie band called **The Libertines**.

Amid chaos, rejection, addiction and self-discovery, Lucie navigates family, fame and fear of failure. Directed by Traverse Associate Artist **Bryony Shanahan** (who also directed last year's Festival hit *Same Team*), and featuring original music, the show is a powerful and funny story about finding your own voice.

### **European Premiere**

### ***Red Like Fruit***

2b theatre company

Written by **Hannah Moscovitch**, directed by **Christian Barry**

Lauren asks Luke to narrate her life: her fraying mental health, the unease she feels in the world. Reporting on domestic violence and haunted by adolescent memories, Lauren begins to unravel.

The latest from award-winning Canadian playwright **Hannah Moscovitch**, *Red Like Fruit* is a haunting exploration of complicity, consent, patriarchy and trauma in a post-#MeToo world.



## UK Premiere

### ***RIFT***

Luna Stage & Richard Jordan Productions

Written by **Gabriel Jason Dean**, directed by **Ari Laura Kreith**

Direct from its sell-out North American premiere.

Two brothers — one a progressive novelist, the other a convicted murderer and high-ranking member of a white supremacist prison gang — shared a traumatic childhood. Now adults, these men navigate the edges of their bond. Are they truly so different?

Award-winning US playwright **Gabriel Jason Dean**'s new play is inspired by the real-life relationship with his own brother and asks if it's truly possible to love someone whose beliefs you hate. Heartbreakingly honest, *RIFT* is an urgent and hopeful exploration of race, power, and ideological divides.

Luna Stage is one of North America's most exciting new writing theatres, making their UK debut at the 2025 Edinburgh Fringe in a collaboration with Olivier, Tony, Emmy, and Scotsman Fringe First Award-winning producer Richard Jordan who, with *RIFT*, continues his long association with the Traverse Theatre.

## Scottish Premiere

### ***Lucky Tonight!***

Written and performed by **Afreena Islam-Wright**, directed by **Julia Samuels**

*"In the 90's sitcom Goodness Gracious Me, one of Nina Wadia's many characters can make everything at home 'with a small'... what?"*

For questions like this and more, join us for *Lucky Tonight!* - A hilarious, interactive pub quiz-cum-theatre show written and performed by **Afreena Islam-Wright**. Audiences join the quizmaster Afreena, a former contestant on The Chase, as she unpacks her identity across cultures and generations, from Old Trafford to Chittagong. Expect round of trivia, rounds of drinks, personal storytelling, and a redefinition of 'Britishness'.

P.S. the answer is aubergine.

## Traverse Above

## UK Premiere

### ***I'm Ready to Talk Now***

Skint, in association with Quiet Riot present

Written and performed by **Oliver Ayres**

A touching and achingly intimate performance which audiences will experience one-to-one with the artist. Inside a hospital room, audience members meet Oliver as he shares the story of being diagnosed with a severe immune condition—right after starting testosterone.

Blending music, projection, and physical theatre, this performance event from the producers of 2024's award-winning Traverse hit *BATSHIT*, blurs boundaries between audience and performer in the most profound way.

## Off-site

### ***Deliverance***

Made by **Brite Theatre**, originally produced by **Vanishing Point**

Written by **Kolbrún Björt Sigfúsdóttir**, performed by... **You!**

Don't fancy getting yourself up and out for a night at the theatre? Well why not get ready for a fun, reflective night in by yourself, performing your own solo theatre show, with your own personal soundtrack? A stranger arrives at your door with your script – for the next 90 minutes, you dress up, dance, answer a mysterious phone call... and no one's watching but you.

Originally conceived and presented for audiences during lockdown, and described as *'like a mindfulness exercise crossed with a dressing-up-box game'* (The Guardian), *Deliverance* has been brought back for audiences who missed it the first time around.

★★★★ The Guardian - *'I went from computer-weary to radiant. At the end, I felt taller.'*

★★★★ The Stage - *'Every 'performance' of Deliverance will be different – different protagonists, in different homes, listening to different songs, thinking different thoughts. But at its heart, it is an imaginative exercise in self-knowledge and self-love.'*

#### **Notes to editors:**

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