

EMBARGOED UNTIL: Tuesday 6 June 2017, 6:30pm
Contact: Anna Docherty, Press and Media Officer
anna.docherty@traverse.co.uk / press@traverse.co.uk
Direct: 0131 659 7104



TRAVERSE THEATRE ANNOUNCES FESTIVAL 2017

Traverse Theatre Company presents a record 5 productions

8 World Premieres, 3 European Premieres and 5 Scottish Premieres

Urgent programme represents a diverse range of experiences, voices and dramatic forms

This year's Traverse Festival programme presents eight world premieres, three European premieres and five Scottish premieres, among them a record five Traverse Theatre Company productions. In this, the 70th anniversary year of the Edinburgh Festival, the Traverse is proud to deliver its mission of championing international creative talent and programming urgent and diverse work, placing powerful contemporary theatre at the heart of cultural life.

Believing in the vital role art plays in turbulent times, the Traverse Festival 2017 programme gives a platform to narratives that are often silenced or side-lined – taking in important stories from eight countries. Our hope is that this work will both entertain and stir conversation – provoking crucial debate amongst audiences: inspiring them to ask questions, seek answers and challenge the status quo.

Orla O'Loughlin, Artistic Director, says:

"We live in unpredictable times as the world pitches and shifts on a daily basis. An often frightening reality has become our new normal. We believe that at such times theatre has a crucial role to play in sounding a rallying cry for those who seek to resist the divisive and the unjust. This year's carefully selected and proudly international line up represents a timely opportunity for our audience to gather and bear witness and feel part of a community that believes change is possible.

Along the way there will be laughs a plenty, tears no doubt, surprises and provocation but overall this year's programme speaks resolutely to the power of now and the responsibility we all have to come together even in times that seem to be hell bent on tearing us apart."

Traverse Theatre Company

Meet Me at Dawn

World Premiere. A Traverse Theatre Company and Edinburgh International Festival Co-Production.

An unflinchingly honest and tenderly lyrical new work written by award-winning playwright Zinnie Harris and directed by the Traverse Theatre's award-winning Artistic Director Orla O'Loughlin, exploring everyday love and unexpected loss. When two women wash up on a distant shore following a boating accident, they discover that this unfamiliar land is not what it seems and that, though they are together, they have never been further apart. Inspired by the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, *Meet Me at Dawn* addresses the desperation of grief, and what we might do given one more day with those we've lost.

The Whip Hand

World Premiere. A Traverse Theatre Company and Birmingham Repertory Theatre Co-Production in association with National Theatre of Scotland.

Written by Douglas Maxwell, *The Whip Hand* is a blistering and timely family drama set in Glasgow, exploring important themes of power, privilege, blood ties and our inescapable past, directed by Birmingham Rep Associate Director Tessa Walker. Dougie Bell has just turned 50 and his family are throwing him a party at his ex-wife's new home. But it's he who has a surprise for them – a bombshell proposal which could compromise his daughter's future. With rising tension and a sense of the thriller, *The Whip Hand* is a domestic drama in which no one escapes the fallout.

Letters to Morrissey

World Premiere. Traverse Theatre Company in association with Tron Theatre. Part of the Made in Scotland Showcase 2017.

The third in a trilogy of often darkly comic works drawing on the joys and struggles of growing up in working class Scotland, award-winning playwright Gary McNair returns to the Traverse Theatre after his sell-out Festival hit *A Gambler's Guide to Dying*, reunited with director and Traverse Theatre Associate Director Gareth Nicholls. *Letters to Morrissey* – performed solo by McNair – considers our human desire to be understood, explored through letters written to singer-songwriter Morrissey at the turn of the millennium by a conflicted Glaswegian teenager. Spanning a timeframe from the late '90s to now, our protagonist is prompted to confront embarrassing teenage memories, brutal truths, and *those* letters and ask, as Morrissey did: "...is evil just something you are. Or something you do?".

Breakfast Plays: Birth

Scottish Premiere. A Traverse Theatre Company and Royal Exchange Theatre Co-Production.

Four countries. One global controversy. Four leading women playwrights from India (Swati Simha), Syria (Liwaa Yazji), UK (Stacey Gregg) and the USA (Kirsten Greenidge) provoke crucial debate as they examine one of the key issues of our time: the vast inequality in healthcare across the world, in this case their respective country's approach to birth practice and the cultural pressures that surround it. *Breakfast Plays: Birth* will be presented as script-in-hand readings (with breakfast included). Directed by Traverse Associate Artist Emma Callander.

Locker Room Talk

World Premiere. Traverse Theatre Company.

Following its sell-out Work in Progress rapid response performances in February, Gary McNair returns for a one day, two performance event of *Locker Room Talk* – a provocative and confronting piece of event theatre inspired by Donald Trump’s leaked sexually aggressive comments, later dismissed as ‘locker room banter’. McNair uses these comments as a creative catalyst, provoking and gathering hundreds of conversations with men and boys about women, relayed via headphones and performed verbatim by a cast of women. A vital part of each performance is a post-show conversation, inviting the audience to examine the issues raised: Just how prevalent is this misogynistic language? Directed by Traverse Artistic Director Orla O’Loughlin.

Visiting Companies

Nina – A Story About Me and Nina Simone

Scottish Premiere. Unity Theatre and Riksteatern (Sweden) in association with Young Vic.

Following a sold out run at London’s Young Vic Theatre, Olivier-Award nominated actress (*The Lion King*) and founder of black-led arts festival Push, Josette Bushell-Mingo (together with a brilliant band) mixes story and song to tell a tale at once personal and political, connecting her own life with that of Nina Simone’s. *Nina – a story about me and Nina Simone* draws on the famous singer and activist’s political acts as part of the American Civil Rights Movement, as well as the struggles in her personal life, to make important parallels with today, triggering the uncomfortable question of how far we’ve really come in the search for equality.

Adam

World Premiere. National Theatre of Scotland.

Part of the Made in Scotland Showcase 2017.

Directed by award-winning theatre director Cora Bissett, and written by Frances Poet, *Adam* is the remarkable true story of a young trans man and his journey to reconciliation – performed by Adam Kashmiry, the real person on whom the drama is based (making his professional debut) and Neshla Caplan. From Egypt to Scotland – from a country where being trans can get you killed, to the hopeful unknown – it charts Adam’s fight across borders and genders to find a place to call home. *Adam* features a 120-strong virtual choir, bringing together trans and non-binary voices from around the globe.

Eve

World Premiere. National Theatre of Scotland.

Written and performed by acclaimed playwright Jo Clifford – the first openly ‘out’ transgendered woman playwright to have had a play produced on London’s West End stage – *Eve* offers audiences an authentic and intimate insight into the real life experiences of a

trans person. A deeply personal work reflecting on one trans woman's life, from an oppressive 1950s boyhood to the present day, *Eve* follows Clifford's own turbulent life journey through a time of huge personal, social and political change. Earlier in 2017 Clifford was welcomed into the Saltire Society's 'Outstanding Women of Scotland' community. Co-written by Chris Goode and directed by Susan Worsfold.

Wild Bore

European Premiere. Soho Theatre and Malthouse Theatre.

Soho Theatre and Australia's Malthouse Theatre bring together, for the first time, three masters of smart, spiky, political performance – Zoe Coombs Marr, Ursula Martinez and Adrienne Truscott – to form an international, intellectual supergroup. Together they delve into the torrent of critical fury that has been aimed at baffling, misunderstood and sometimes downright awful works of art (including their own). They respond to this amassed criticism in the only way that makes sense – by quite literally talking out their arses. May contain a trio of bare bottoms.

Nassim

World Premiere. Bush Theatre.

Following multidisciplinary Iranian theatre-maker Nassim Soleimanpour's globally acclaimed *White Rabbit Red Rabbit* – translated into 15 different languages and performed over 1000 times, by names including Ken Loach and Whoopi Goldberg – *Nassim* takes the 'no rehearsals, no preparation' theatrical experiment baton. Each night a different actor will take to the stage (performing with the playwright himself), presented with a sealed envelope containing a script that they have never seen before.

Lilith: The Jungle Girl

European Premiere. Sisters Grimm.

When a wild girl is captured in the rainforests of Borneo, all of Holland is set abuzz. The year is 1861, and pioneering neuroscientist Charles Penworth is called upon to raise the child from the pit of her animal nature. *Lilith: The Jungle Girl* sees Australian independent queer theatre-makers Sisters Grimm – featuring trailblazing actor, activist and MC Candy Bowers – mix theatre, lo-fi animation and live art to present a wild mash-up of satire, slime and queer rage, taking the audience deep into the thorny political jungles of colonialism, individualism and assimilation. Or, in the words of the makers: "We also wanted to cover a naked man in ridiculous pink slime and put a windmill on his back because LOLZ".

Jess and Joe Forever

Scottish Premiere. Farnham Maltings in association with Orange Tree Theatre.

Zoe Cooper's tender coming of age tale about growing up and belonging, *Jess and Joe Forever* invites the audience – through the clever use of direct address – to invest in the lives of two seemingly very different young people, as they lock arms in an attempt to find

their place in the world. Joe is Norfolk born-and-bred, Jess holidays there with her au pair, over the course of several summer holidays – spanning the age of nine to 15 – they form an unlikely friendship, with the story building towards its eventual revelation. Arriving from a critically acclaimed run at London's Orange Tree Theatre in 2016.

The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk

*Scottish premiere. Kneehigh with Bristol Old Vic.
Part of British Council Edinburgh Showcase 2017.*

Marking her last show as joint Artistic Director of Kneehigh, Emma Rice directs Daniel Jamieson's critically acclaimed *The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk* – a dazzling and evocative play vividly drawn from the early life of the pioneering modern artist Marc Chagall, and his wife Bella (aka the 'flying lovers'). Tracing the lives of the young couple as they navigate the Pogroms, the Russian Revolution, and each other, the vibrant staging is woven throughout with live Klezmer music inspired from Russian Jewish folk tradition.

An Evening with an Immigrant

Scottish Premiere. Inua Ellams and Fuel.

Born to a Muslim father and a Christian mother in what is now considered by many to be Boko Haram territory, award-winning poet and playwright Inua Ellams left Nigeria in 1996 for England, aged 12. Expanding on his autobiographical Fringe First award-winning play *The 14th Tale*, *An Evening with an Immigrant* is littered with new poems, stories and anecdotes, telling Ellams' ridiculous, fantastic, poignant immigrant story of escaping fundamentalist Islam, performing solo shows at the National Theatre, and drinking tea with the Queen, all the while without a country to belong to or place to call home.

Dive Queer Party's Rainbow Soapbox

Party-starting cabaret artists and arch dissectors of gender norms, Dive Queer Party are hopping on their 'Rainbow Soapbox' for a series of live Party Political Broadcasts celebrating queer history, identity and spaces. Hosted by chief weirdo Miss Annabel Sings, it'll play host to a selection of special guest performers and speakers from across the Fringe – including international cabaret star Le Pustra, drag queen Alice Rabbit and queer cabaret writer, critic and academic Ben Walters.

Status

Rehearsed reading. China Plate.

Independent theatre studio China Plate present a one-performance-only rehearsed reading of *Status*, a new play by writer and performer Chris Thorpe and director Rachel Chavkin – the team behind Fringe First award-winning *Confirmation*. Tackling the topic of nationality – for some it's like eye-colour, for others it's a straightjacket – Thorpe will consider fitting in with it, having it taken away, and rejecting it altogether.

Off-site

Frogman

World Premiere. curious directive and Hull UK 2017.

Renowned theatre makers curious directive continue to interweave science and art with latest piece, *Frogman* – an ambitious, coming-of-age thriller, told through live theatre and 360 film in Virtual Reality, submerging the audience deep into the Great Barrier Reef. Blending youthful nostalgia with a sense of unease, the show captures that yearning to return to purer days, real or imagined, and the pain at realising those days are gone forever. Directed by artistic director and founder Jack Lowe, the show has been assembled by an exceptional young team including Linbury Prize-winning designer Camilla Clark and Tony award-winning sound designer Pete Malkin (*The Encounter*).

Party Game

European Premiere. bluemouth inc. with Necessary Angel Theatre Company.

Following the success of 2011 Festival hit *Dance Marathon*, Toronto and New York-based bluemouth inc. return to the Traverse with new explorative production *Party Game*, a co-production with Necessary Angel. Advancing the boundaries of multidisciplinary theatre with an immersive audience experience, every audience member becomes a party guest – some might help hang some lights, while others play party games – and all will leave looking at life a little differently. Integrating dance, theatre, music and video, no two audience experiences will be the same. Written in collaboration with rising Canadian star Jordan Tannahill and award-winning director Jennifer Tarver.

More...

Pre-View, presented by University of Edinburgh and Playwrights' Studio, Scotland, returns this year and features readings from five new plays. Enjoy the world premiere of new work from Sonia Hayden, Andy Mosely, Catriona Scott, Brandon Shalansky and Carolyn Yates. Readings of extracts are performed by professional actors. All writers are graduating students from the MSc in Playwriting at the University of Edinburgh.

Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and Made in Scotland present **TalkFest 2017** – a series of lively discussions (Monday 7 & 14 August) delving into what stimulates the artists behind this year's festival, each chaired by a leading playwright or theatre-maker, including Philip Howard, Nicola McCartney, Rona Munro and Adura Onashile.

The Traverse will also proudly host the award ceremony for the **James Tait Black Prize for Drama 2017**. The University of Edinburgh in association with Playwrights' Studio, Scotland and the Traverse Theatre award the £10,000 prize to the best new play worldwide, demonstrating an original theatrical voice and making a significant contribution to the art form.

Traverse Festival 2017 Press Performances

Specified press performances are as detailed below. Please ensure all press ticket requests are submitted to the press office by 14 July. Email press@traverse.co.uk for a booking form.

Friday 04 August: Traverse 2

11am	<i>Lilith: The Jungle Girl</i>	1h 10m
1.30pm	<i>Letters to Morrissey</i>	1h 10m
4pm	<i>Nassim</i>	1h 10m
6.30pm	<i>Jess and Joe Forever</i>	1h 10m
9pm	<i>Eve</i>	1h 10m

Sunday 06 August: Traverse 1

10am	<i>Adam</i>	1h 20m
1.45pm	<i>Meet Me at Dawn</i>	1h 25m
5.30pm	<i>The Whip Hand</i>	1h 25m
9.15pm	<i>Nina – A Story About Me and Nina Simone</i>	1h 20m

Tuesday 08 August: CodeBase

7pm	<i>Frogman</i>	50m
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Wednesday 09 August: Traverse 1

1pm	<i>Wild Bore</i>	1h
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Wednesday 09 August: Wee Red Bar

8.30pm	<i>Party Game</i>	2h
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Wednesday 16 August: Traverse 1

1.15pm	<i>The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk</i>	1h 30m
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Monday 21 August: Traverse 2

1pm	<i>An Evening with an Immigrant</i>	1h 30m
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