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## **TRAVERSE THEATRE TO CONTINUE CHAMPIONING REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSIVITY IN AUTUMN/WINTER SEASON**

- **Traverse Festival 2017 audience numbers reach nearly 40,000**
- **Associate Director Gareth Nicholls to direct Autumn/Winter world premiere of award-winning play *How To Disappear* by Morna Pearson – an important story of the personal consequences of austerity**
- **Launch of new under-30s ticket type to increase theatre access to young people**
- **Class Act to travel to India as part of the British Council's UK/India 2017 Season, supported by the British Council, Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government**
  - **Edinburgh Class Act to include Gaelic school for the first time**
- **Traverse Theatre to work with Young Carers on new creative project**

### **Traverse Festival 2017**

In this, the 70th anniversary year of the Fringe, the Traverse Theatre is proud to have delivered a defiant programme representing narratives that are often silenced or side-lined – provoking crucial conversation and placing powerful contemporary theatre at the heart of cultural life.

Audience response reflected the strength of the programme – taking in 17 productions, among them eight world premieres, three European premieres and five Scottish premieres – with total audience numbers reaching 39,385 across the 297 production performances.

The programme received a trio of Fringe First awards (*Letters to Morrissey*, *Nassim* and *Adam*), two Herald Angel awards (*Adam* and *Zinnie Harris*), a Scottish Arts Club Award (*Adam*), a Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh Award (*The Flying Lovers of Vitebsk*), plus an Amnesty Freedom of Expression shortlist for *Adam*, a Total Theatre Award shortlist for *Wild Bore*, and a Holden Street Theatres award shortlist for *Locker Room Talk*.

And so, as we say goodbye to #TravFest17 – a landmark programme representing a wide range of experiences, voices and dramatic forms – so we look towards our Autumn/Winter season, where the Traverse will continue to champion representation and inclusivity in its myriad forms.

**Orla O'Loughlin, Traverse Artistic Director, and Linda Crooks, Traverse Executive Producer say:**

*'The Traverse is proud to stand with the best of both Scottish, UK and global artists in order to shine a light on stories and experiences that have been too long in the shadows and to continue to champion work that is not afraid to ask the difficult questions about who we are and how we might affect change. We are delighted to reflect on how this year's Festival programme has so powerfully resonated – it is clear that the inclusive body of work has made a deep impact on our audience and industry peers, and has actively been embraced as a direct challenge to the status quo and the troubled political times in which we live. We recognise there is so much more work to be done on the issue of representation and reach and this year's Festival programme has only galvanised our commitment to do more and be better.'*

## **Autumn/Winter 2017**

Marking his first main stage production since joining the Traverse as Associate Director in June this year, Gareth Nicholls will direct the world premiere of award-winning play ***How to Disappear*** (the Catherine Johnson Award for 'Best Play') by Traverse Associate Artist Morna Pearson. *How to Disappear* tells an important story of the personal consequences of austerity, one-size-fits-all disability assessments and the limitations of the UK's mental health care. The story speaks of the real and tangible effects of governmental policies on the lives of individuals and families – exploring the idea that even the smallest of changes can turn people's lives upside down. It marks Pearson's main stage return following *The Artist Man and the Mother Woman*, and is once again laced with her pitch-black humour with and huge heart.

More seldom-told tales are brought to the stage with ***COAL*** – choreographer Gary Clarke's powerful piece of dance theatre about life at the coal face; and, 30 years since its UK premiere at the Traverse, a new adaptation of Manfred Karge's ***Man to Man*** tells the story of a woman – ravished by war, poverty and hunger – forced to adopt the identity of her dead husband in order to survive in Nazi Germany.

***The Coolidge Effect*** uses a blend of storytelling, poetry and science to examine how pornography affects our mental health; while ***Damned Rebel Bitches*** celebrates the independent, risk-taking women of the war years' generation, performed by an international and intergenerational cast aged 30-75. Plus, the return of ***Dive Queer Party*** for special Halloween- and Christmas-themed events, celebrating the very best of queer performance with their own inimitable energy.

Traverse co-productions include ***Jury Play***, in which the award-winning Grid Iron imagine a change in how we deliver courtroom justice, inspired by the pioneering work of Dr Jenny Scott of the Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research. Turning Traverse 1 into a courtroom, barriers are deconstructed and jurors take centre stage, with audience members given the opportunity to 'opt in' to the jury. Later in the season there is ***Our Fathers***, a co-production with Magnetic North, a new play by Traverse Associate Artist Rob Drummond and Magnetic North's Artistic Director Nicholas Bone, inspired by Edmund Gosse's Victorian memoir about growing up in an evangelical Christian family. It sees Drummond and Bone – both sons of clergyman – exploring belief and how to disagree with someone you love.

The Traverse is also delighted to continue its relationship with multi award-winning theatre maker Shona Reppe – following her 2016 CATS Award win for 'Best Production for Children

and Young People' and 'Best Design' for previous festive family smash-hit, *Black Beauty* – with a Christmas production of the double award-winning *Cinderella* (Total Theatre Award and Ipay Victor Award) to entertain families in Traverse 2.

The Traverse will also seek to encourage inclusivity within its audience with the launch of a new **under-30s ticket type**, aimed at increasing theatre access to young people.

**Gareth Nicholls, Traverse Associate Director, says:**

*'I'm absolutely delighted to be directing Morna Pearson's award winning play How to Disappear as my first Traverse main stage production. This blisteringly funny piece combines a thrilling mix of magic realism, black humour and biting social commentary to explore how people disappearing on the fringes of society survive. With food banks in full use and a forgotten many increasingly falling through the cracks, How to Disappear is a uniquely theatrical play that asks vital questions about the world we live in. I'm relishing the opportunity to present it to audiences this Christmas.'*

**Creative Learning**

Our creative learning and engagement programme continues to offer important opportunities to a breadth of the community, aiming to bring as many people as possible within the walls of the theatre – schools, colleges, universities, new audiences, artists and professionals.

The season ahead will see our iconic education project, Class Act, travel to India, to work in partnership with RAGE Theatre, Mumbai for **Class Act Mumbai**. During January 2018 it'll see Scottish playwrights and directors collaborating with Indian artists to inspire school-aged young people from Mumbai to write their own short-plays, providing an innovative creative learning experience, cultural collaboration and advocating access to the arts for all. Class Act Mumbai is part of the British Council's UK/India 2017 Season and is supported by the British Council, Creative Scotland and the Scottish Government.

In addition, **Edinburgh Class Act 2017** will this year include a Gaelic class from James Gillespie's High School for the very first time, with the support of Bòrd na Gàidhlig and National Theatre of Scotland, alongside Drummond High School, Liberton High School and The Royal High School. These pupils will work with acclaimed Scottish playwrights, before having their work showcased on the Traverse stage in late November.

In addition, our **Open Submissions** window opened on the 1 August, with dozens of script submissions received so far. Finished, full-length scripts from emerging playwrights in the UK and Ireland can be submitted electronically until 30 September. Full details of the submissions guidelines are on the Traverse website.

Elsewhere, with the Traverse's December production, *How to Disappear* exploring important themes relating to the social care system, the Traverse will connect with young people from **Edinburgh Young Carers**. This will mark the beginning of a new relationship, leading to a large scale collaborative arts project slated to begin in early 2018, working to present young carers voices through different creative mediums. In Traverse 2, we will host Shona Reppe's

*Cinderella*, including a 'Relaxed Performance', with the intention of keeping our stages and stories open and accessible to all.

**Traverse Young Writers** will also return in September, focussing on supporting emerging talent in young people aged 18-25. This season the Young Writers course will work with award-winning playwright Lynda Radley, along with Traverse Associate Directors to hone their playwriting skills. We also have a new **Writers' Group**, led by Zinnie Harris, to begin in September, with the aim of connecting with writers representing a diverse range of experience and stories, and exploring how different forms of performance/writing can collaborate to create bold, new theatre.

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