

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 25 September 2017
Contact: Anna Docherty, Press and Media Officer
press@traverse.co.uk
Direct: 0131 659 7104



YOU HAVE BEEN SUMMONED!

- **Grid Iron Theatre Company, in co-production with Traverse Theatre Company, present *Jury Play* – an immersive new production investigating the role of the jury in the Scottish legal system**
- **Traverse 1 to be transformed into a scale replica of an active Courtroom**
- **Members of the audience to be selected to appear onstage as members of the titular jury**

Directed by Ben Harrison, and co-written with academic Dr Jenny Scott, *Jury Play* will turn Traverse 1 into a 'Court of Law' to investigate the passive role of the jury in current court proceedings.

As they make their way to the 'court room', audience members will be given the chance to opt in to the jury. Once settled in the 'public gallery', fifteen jurors will be selected and will make their way to the jury box. And so we begin...

The production presents extracts of a fictionalised 52-day murder trial – the judge's direction, the cross-examination of witnesses, the presentation of evidence – all suffocated in detail and legal jargon. The jury is additionally surrounded by the 'extra-legal' information they are improbably instructed to forget: tabloid headlines; the mugshot; the imagined murder scene; lurid descriptions of the accused.

Some jury members doze off, fiddle with their split ends, day dream, worry about the jobs they are missing, and disclose their inner monologues.

As the trial concludes, the jury are discharged to begin their deliberations – but one brave member admits that she has not understood everything that has happened and doesn't feel equipped to make a decision. Surprised to receive the support of the Judge, what follows is a reimagining of how a criminal trial might play out if the jury were to be afforded greater opportunity to ask questions and participate.

Jury Play will propose the use of better dialogue and more transparent decision making in a process that fundamentally affects people's futures.

Ben Harrison, Director and Co-writer, says:

'Inspired by the pioneering work of Dr Jenny Scott as she seeks to reveal all the forces acting on the jury, I am particularly interested in the way that the physical surroundings of the court could affect the conduct of the trial. In addition, the length of the trial, the lack of natural light, and being pulled away from work or domestic situations. Grid Iron and the

Traverse have had a long and happy working relationship and this collaboration deepens it further with our shared ambition to create new texts and play with theatrical form – staging it at the Traverse, with its flexible seating, allows us huge opportunities to be playful with the architecture that the rigidity of an actual court room would not permit. I hope audiences will think anew about our jury system and whether it is fit for purpose.'

Jenny Scott, Co-writer, says:

'Working with Grid Iron and the fantastic artistic vision of Ben Harrison has meant that I have had the chance to expand the boundaries of jury research like never before. Jury Play represents world leading research and it has been a journey of inquiry in which we challenge the presumption of juror participation in criminal trials. I hope that Jury Play will allow the general public to take their turn in calling to question an institution which has remained unchanged since the 1800s.'

Orla O'Loughlin, Traverse Artistic Director, says:

'The Traverse is proud to stand with the best of Scottish, UK and global artists, and we are delighted to be collaborating with Grid Iron, one of the country's most innovative companies, on Jury Play. We are relishing the opportunity to work with them ask some timely and crucial questions about an important aspect of our society, and to explore how looking at our judicial system afresh could create tangible change for us all.'

LISTINGS:

Traverse Theatre, 3-7 October, 7:30pm (matinee 7 October, 2:30pm)

Box Office: 0131 228 1404 / traverse.co.uk

Note: Jury selection will take place at the start of each performance. Audience members will have the option to opt in as they enter.

DIRECTOR AND WRITER BIOGRAPHY, Ben Harrison

Ben has been Co-Artistic Director of Grid Iron since 1996. Highlights include *The Bloody Chamber, Gargantua, Decky Does A Bronco, Fermentation, Those Eyes, That Mouth, The Devil's Larder, Roam, Once Upon A Dragon, Yarn, Barflies, Huxley's Lab, Spring Awakening* and *Crude*. He was Associate Director of the Almeida Theatre London 2000-2002, Director of the Dutch company Muztheater 2004-2008 and a Fellow of NESTA from 2001-2004. In Scotland he has directed for the NTS, EIF, Traverse, Tron, Oran Mor, Arches, Citizens, Dogstar, Tromolo Productions and Paper Doll Militia. His show *Peter Pan* for 360 Entertainment, (UK and US tour 2009-2015) was seen by more than a million people.
www.benharrison.info

WRITER BIOGRAPHY, Dr Jenny Scott

Jenny worked in the Arts as a musician before studying law, doing a PhD and turning into an academic. Her research focuses on the barriers to participation found in the criminal trial. Her work is interdisciplinary and multi-sensory. She calls to question the assumptions about the role of the juror by developing research that is embodied and accessible by the general public. Grid Iron believed in her ideas and it is as a direct result of their support and artistic vision that *Jury Play* has emerged. In term time Jenny teaches at Glasgow University.

NOTES:

- 1. Cast:** Bringing together a fantastic cast of seven, *Jury Play's* cast combines Grid Iron first timers Mary Gapinski (*Tamburlaine Must Die*, Tron Theatre; *Thread*, Nutshell Theatre) and Kirstin Murray (*Some Other Stars*, Magnetic North; *Class Act*, Traverse Theatre) with returning stars of previous Grid Iron productions Neil John Gibson (*Dr Stirlingshire's Discovery*, *Crude*), Gail Watson (*Barflies*, *Spring Awakening*, *Huxley's Lab*) and Sean Hay (*Huxley's Lab*) and John Bett (*Waiting for Godot*, Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh; *The Devil's Masters*, Traverse Theatre) and Helen Mackay (*Lanark*, Citizens Theatre and Edinburgh International Festival; *Outlying Islands*, Firebrand) who have both done script development work with the company before
- 2. Creative team:** The creative team unites Set and Costume Designer Emily James (*Adam*, National Theatre of Scotland; *Factor 9*, Dogstar and *Music is Torture*, Tromola Productions – both directed by Grid Iron's Ben Harrison) with past Grid Iron collaborators, Composer and Sound Designer David Paul Jones (*The Devil's Larder*, *Barflies*, *What Remains*, *Those Eyes*, *That Mouth*), Lighting Designer Paul Claydon (*Crude*, *Leaving Planet Earth*, *Barflies*, *Tryst*, *Yarn*, *Once Upon a Dragon*, *Roam*, *The Devils Larder* and *Fierce*) and Video Designer Lewis den Hertog (*Crude*, *Light Boxes*).
- 3. Grid Iron Theatre Company:** Grid Iron are an Edinburgh-based theatre company who, following their incorporation in 1995 and their first show *Clearance* at the Traverse, Edinburgh, swiftly gained a reputation for creating high-quality, high profile shows. The Company went on to specialise in presenting shows in unusual locations such as a zoo, an oil-rig manufacturing shed, an airport, car park, foyers, hotel, bar, school or a climbing centre. They are a new writing company who work in challenging sites that lend themselves especially well to Grid Iron's taut production style. Occasionally they create work for the stage or use theatre buildings in a site-responsive, immersive manner.

In 1996 Grid Iron's first ever production, *Clearance*, was part of the Traverse Theatre's spring season. Since then they have been awarded: 7 Fringe First Awards, 6 Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland, 3 Stage Awards for Acting Excellence, 3 Herald Angels, 2 Herald Devils, Herald Archangel and many others. This is Grid Iron's second co-production with the Traverse, the first being Douglas Maxwell's adaptation of *Spring Awakening* in 2010.

- 4. Traverse Theatre:** Formed in 1963 by a group of passionate theatre enthusiasts, the Traverse Theatre was originally founded to extend the spirit of the Edinburgh festivals throughout the year. Today, under Artistic Director Orla O'Loughlin, the Traverse is proud to deliver its year-round mission of championing creative talent by placing powerful and contemporary theatre at the heart of cultural life – producing and programming urgent and diverse work spanning theatre, dance, performance, music and spoken word.

Through the work it presents, the Traverse aims to both entertain and stir conversation – reflecting the times and provoking crucial debate amongst audiences, inspiring them to ask questions, seek answers and challenge the status quo.

The Traverse has launched the careers of some of the UK's most celebrated writers – David Greig, David Harrower and Zinnie Harris – and continues to discover and support new voices, including Stef Smith, Morna Pearson, Gary McNair and Rob Drummond.

With two custom-built and versatile theatre spaces, the Traverse's home in Edinburgh's city centre holds an iconic status as the theatrical heart of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe every August

Outside the theatre walls, the Traverse runs an extensive engagement programme, offering audiences of all ages and backgrounds the opportunity to explore, create and develop. Further afield, the Traverse frequently tours internationally and engages in exchanges and partnerships – most recently in India, New Zealand and Quebec.

-ENDS-