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**PRESS RELEASE - 21 MARCH 2020**

**The National Theatre of Scotland’s immediate response to the impact of COViD-19 on the theatre industry.**

**Scenes for Survival - a crisis responsive artistic online project launched in association with BBC Scotland and BBC Arts’ Culture in Quarantine project.**

An alternative theatrical online programme is being offered to isolated audiences across Scotland and beyond. This programme has also been curated to support the Scottish theatre sector and creatives during the current critical situation. Part of this programme is supported by high profile Scottish entertainment talent which will also serve as a fundraising platform for those most financially affected within the theatre industry.

Jackie Wylie, Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland says

*“We are living through a period that is unprecedented in my lifetime. In Scotland during times of crisis we have always turned to our storytellers to offer connectivity, solace and joy. We want to bring audiences together online despite our collective isolation. When we come through the other side of this era-defining moment we will all feel changed by what we have been through and it is theatre that will allow us to imagine, with hope, where we are going to find ourselves and how it will feel. Theatre matters, more than ever.*

*The National Theatre of Scotland is part of a theatre sector that is struggling to survive through these times.* ***Scenes for Survival*** *will provide much-needed paid opportunities for artists, celebrate our exceptional national culture and raise money for the freelance community who are experiencing drastic economic and emotional hardship. We thank those who have come forward with such immediate generosity to get us started.*

*We know that theatre is also about the shared, communal, live experience – the visceral understanding that the quickening of your breath and beating heart is happening alongside those sitting next to you. We continue to make theatre in this way so that we can survive these times of crisis and then come together again on Scotland’s stages”*

***Scenes for Survival*** is a new season of digital short artworks from National Theatre of Scotland which will launch new pieces of theatre from creative talents across a series on online platforms and channels over the next few months. This project is being delivered in association with BBC Scotland and BBC Arts *Culture in Quarantine* project.

Many established writers and performers have already confirmed their support of the project including Cora Bissett, Mark Bonnar, Tam Dean Burn, Alan Cumming, Brian Cox, Kate Dickie, Blythe Duff, Finn Den Hertog, Greg McHugh, Lorraine Mcintosh, Shereen Nanjiani, Adura Onashile, Julie Wilson Nimmo, Richard Rankin and Robert Softley Gale, with written contributions from Jenni Fagan, Greg Hemphill, Greg McHugh, May Sumbwanyambe, Val McDermid, Denise Mina and Ian Rankin.

A host of actors, writers and directors will be engaged and paid to create these short pieces of digital theatre remotely from their personal spaces of isolation.

The National Theatre of Scotland will announce a call out opportunity for writers to be commissioned to write short new pieces for the project. Creative teams/pairings for the project will be announced over the next few weeks.

The season is being produced in association with key Scottish theatres who have been critically hit economically by the COVID-19 virus. Theatre organisations to date include: the Citizens Theatre, Imaginate, Tron Theatre, Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Royal Lyceum Theatre Company, the Beacon Arts Centre, Perth Theatre and Horsecross Arts, Stellar Quines, Eden Court, Macrobert Arts Centre, The Traverse Theatre, Dundee Rep, Birds of Paradise, the Byre Theatre, and Aberdeen Performing Arts.

The season of works will also act as a platform to raise money for a new hardship fund for artists and those in the theatre industry who have been hardest hit financially.

High profile artists involved will be given the opportunity to donate their artistic fee on a pay it forward basis to enable further artists to be involved and paid over the next few months. The Company gratefully acknowledges the generosity of the artists who are supporting the project so far.

Other ongoing activity from the National Theatre of Scotland will be refocused as a digital offering or opportunity for artists and audiences including **Engine Room**, ongoing casting meetings for actors, **Play Dates,** a digital programme for children, young people and their families and **The Coming Back Out Balls’s** Online Dance Clubs for LGBTI+elders.

The National Theatre of Scotland is also exploring the rights issues involved, with a view to sharing filmed versions of acclaimed previous productions with online audiences.

All the National Theatre of Scotland’s digital offering during this time will be free for audiences and available via the Company’s online platforms and social media channels with **Scenes for Survival** content shared with BBC Arts, BBC Scotland and associate theatre organisations.

**SCENES FOR SURVIVAL**

The National Theatre of Scotland has today announced a responsive digital programme of work that will be created and unveiled online over the coming months. ***Scenes for Survival*** will see the Company engage writers, actors, and directors to create and deliver short scenes that will be created from isolation, on the themes currently being navigated by the creative sector and beyond.

The programme of work will not only offer free artistic content to audiences, but it will also act as a fundraising platform to raise money for a hardship fund for all those in the theatre industry severely impacted by the current economic perilous situation many workers and artists find themselves in.

The programme will serve as an inventive alternative online season of short works, following the enforced cancellation of productions and performances from the National Theatre of Scotland, as well as venues and theatre companies across the country. ***Scenes for Survival*** will draw attention to the enduring and urgent role of storytelling in the current crisis.

The works will either be new works from Scottish writers or works from much-loved Scottish classic and contemporary texts.

Val McDermid - contributing artist says: “*Stories are what bring us together and hold us together. There will be an ‘afterwards’ and our stories will prepare us for tha*t.’

Denise Mina- contributing artist says: *"Art is how we make sense of the world and of change and of trauma. It's essential to find ways to keep striving, to keep our vibrant and fragile community of audiences and creatives together, feeling our way through the dark times as well as the bright.”*

Mark Bonnar- contributing artist says *“'In extreme times, art helps to remind us we are not alone.’”*

Tam Dean Burn *-* contributing artist says *“We can overcome our isolation by reaching out to each other by whatever means we can, and art still gives meaning to our lives, transcending the difficulties we face”*

Artists and creatives involved in the project will include Cora Bissett, Mark Bonnar, Tam Dean Burn, Brian Cox, Alan Cumming, Kate Dickie, Blythe Duff, Finn Den Hertog, Greg McHugh, Lorraine Mcintosh, Adura Onashile, Shereen Nanjiani, Julie Wilson Nimmo, Richard Rankin and Robert Softley Gale with written contributions from, Jenni Fagan, Greg Hemphill, Greg McHugh, Ian Rankin, May Sumbwanyambe, Val McDermid and Denise Mina. Further writers, actors and directors will be announced in the coming weeks.

The programme will be developed and delivered by the National Theatre of Scotland working in association with an unprecedented number of organisations, including The Citizens Theatre, Eden Court, Imaginate, Stellar Quines, The Beacon Arts Centre, Dundee Rep, Traverse Theatre, Perth Theatre and Horsecross Arts, Byre Theatre, The Tron Theatre, Pitlochry Festival Theatre, Birds of Paradise, the Royal Lyceum Theatre Company and Macrobert Arts Centre.

***Scenes for Survival*** will also act as a platform to help raise funds for a new hardship fund, assisting artists and those workers and freelancers in the theatre industry who have been hardest hit financially by the COVID-19 outbreak.

The National Theatre of Scotland is working with the FST and other sector bodies to ensure equitable distribution of money raised from this fund. Full details of who will be managing this and how it will operate will be announced. The National Theatre of Scotland will not be directly allocating money from this fund.

High profile artists involved will be given the opportunity to donate their artistic fee on a pay-it-forward basis, to ensure payment for as many artists as possible over the coming months.

**ENGINE ROOM**

***Engine Room***, the Company’s nationwide programme of opportunities for artists will be repositioned as a digital offering with consideration to what will be most useful to artists in this new context. First off, the Company will be announcing a specific Starter Artist opportunity. 10 mini bursaries will be awarded to artists across Scotland to offer thinking and research time and for them to spend one week on a project with online access to National Theatre of Scotland and venue partner staff.

**PLAY DATES - A DIGITAL PROGRAMME FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Spanning our archives, educational resources and developing new, live digital projects, the National Theatre of Scotland will stay connected to families remotely. Children, young people, parents and carers will be offered up online educational inspiration and theatrical home entertainment over the next few months. Further details about Play Dates will be announced.

**THE COMING BACK OUT BALL’S ONLINE DANCE CLUBS**

The National Theatre of Scotland’s engagement with the LGBTI +community will continue over the new few months, following the cancelling of the Company’s popular Social Dance Clubs in Glasgow, Inverness and across Scotland. **The Coming Back Out Ball** is a partnership project with All The Queens’s Men in Australia, Eden Court, Inverness and Luminate, Scotland’s creative ageing organisation, in association with Glasgow City Council. All the Queen Men’s in Australia are hosting the first online dance club on Sunday 22nd March using cloud- based conferencing software. This approach will be used in Scotland over the coming weeks to influence and roll out new online Dance Clubs for existing social dance club members and those who would like to join.

**CASTING**

Casting of actors will continue. Casting will continue virtually for the Company's summer and autumn seasons alongside general meetings for actors, with the National Theatre of Scotland’s Casting Director and Associate Artists to ensure that this contact and support is sustained over the next few months.

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**Notes for Editors**

**The National Theatre of Scotland** is dedicated to playing the great stages, arts centres, village halls, schools and site-specific locations of Scotland, the UK and internationally. As well as creating ground-breaking productions and working with the most talented theatre-makers, the National Theatre of Scotland produces significant community engagement projects, innovates digitally and works constantly to develop new talent. Central to this is finding pioneering ways to reach current and new audiences and to encourage people’s full participation in the Company’s work. With no performance building of its own, the Company works with existing and new venues and companies to create and tour theatre of the highest quality. Founded in 2006, the Company, in its short life, has become a globally significant theatrical player, with an extensive repertoire of award-winning work. The National Theatre of Scotland is supported by the Scottish Government. [www.nationaltheatrescotland.com](http://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com)

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