

HOLDING/HOLDING ON

WRITER'S NOTE

A creative inquiry for National Theatre Scotland on *"Care in Contemporary Scotland"*

Between October 2020 and April 2021, I was engaged as a lead artist on National Theatre of Scotland's *"Care in Contemporary Scotland"* project, a creative inquiry to find new ways of working within the care system, and with care experienced people. During that period, when we were still mostly in Covid lockdown, I met online with various adults and young people on a weekly or bi-weekly basis, to simply hear the stories they generously wanted to tell me about their experience of the Care system in Scotland, either as a child/young person or as an adult looking after young people within the system. Week by week they told me their stories and I listened.

As a playwright and socially engaged theatre maker, a quest to become an "active listener" has become a key part of my creative practice in the last decade. What I mean by active listening is "listening with the whole body", opening myself not just to the words of the speaker but to the emotions and the energy underlying them. This has been the most important part of the project for me – to create a safe space to listen to people's stories and make them feel heard.

Then came the publication of the Scottish Government's *"The Promise"* in 2020, the result of the Independent Care Review which had run for many months and consulted children, young people and others with experience of the system. Its main findings seemed to chime with my own impressions of how we look after our most vulnerable children in Scotland. And this piece, sewn together from those tens of hours of listening sessions, become a way of responding to it. Three strong themes emerged: class, poverty and love.

Today some of the people who collaborated with me will be present. We have anonymised them for the sake of privacy. But for all of them this will be the first time they have heard their stories live on stage. That is a really important part of the process – hearing their stories as part of a much bigger one. But another vital part is that somehow these stories might contribute to a desperately needed change in Scotland – that we start to care about the Care system and those within it. And to encourage our law makers and stakeholders and care workers to find ways to "do" love within the system.

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CAST

Maureen Carr
Callum Cuthbertson
Daniel Cahill
Brooklyn Melvin
Neshla Caplin
Yolanda Mitchell

CREATIVE TEAM

Claire Lamont	Director
Nicola McCartney	Writer
Rita McDade	Cultural Dramaturgy Consultant

PRODUCTION TEAM

Kat Siebert	Company Stage Manager
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ACCESS

BSL Communication Support:
Marcus Glover
Katy Smillie
Georgina Donohoe

THE COMPANY WOULD LIKE TO THANK:

Murdoch Rodgers for the images you see today, Pippa Murphy, Stuart Platt, Karen Tennent, Charlotte Armitage, Kenneth Joseph Murray Scottish Power Foundation, The Rayne Foundation, the Hugh Fraser Foundation, the John Mather Trust and Scottish Children's Lottery Chance to Connect.

A special thank you: to those who contributed their lived experience in the creation of the work.

FESTIVAL OF POLITICS

We present a programme of free and paid-for events that aim to inspire and engage people across a range of topics, from end-of-life choices to the cost-of-living crisis, the Festival offers a safe and informed space to discuss and deliberate.

Whether it's the spirited debate or the free programme of live music and exhibitions in the Festival Café Bar, you are assured of a warm welcome at your Scottish Parliament.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

Following a call-out process in 2020, National Theatre of Scotland commissioned two artists, to undertake a six-month project to investigate the impact that the arts can make within a care context across Scotland, the outcomes of which form *Care in Contemporary Scotland, A Creative Enquiry*.

As part of the project Nicola McCartney engaged with care experienced adults and young people, community collaborators and sector professionals resulting in a filmed

reading of a work in progress script, *Holding/Holding On*, which explores and gives voice to authentic narratives around Scotland's care system.

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Breathing Space
The Samaritans
Who Cares? Scotland
The Why Not? Trust
Aberlour Scotland's Children's Charity
The Promise

ABOUT NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND

National Theatre of Scotland is a Theatre Without Walls. We don't have our own building. Instead, we bring theatre to you. From the biggest stages to the smallest community halls, we showcase Scottish culture at home and around the world. We have performed in airports and tower blocks, submarines and swimming pools, telling stories in ways you have never seen before.

We want to bring the joy of theatre to everyone. Since we were founded in 2006, we have produced hundreds of shows and toured all over the world. We strive to amplify the voices that need to be heard, tell the stories that need to be told and take work to wherever audiences are to be found.

Jackie Wylie Artistic Director & Chief Executive
Brenna Hobson Executive Director
Seona Reid DBE Chair

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National Theatre of Scotland believes everyone should have the opportunity to take part in live theatre, whether as an audience member or a theatre maker.

We are committed to breaking down the barriers that some prevent people from participating, whether those be poverty, ethnicity, geography, disability, gender, sexuality or age.

As a registered charity, we rely on the generosity of our donors to maximise the positive impact we can make.

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