 

**Press Release: 28 March 2023**

**National Theatre of Scotland and Manchester International Festival in association with Claire Cunningham Projects and Kunstenfestivaldesarts present**

***Thank You Very Much***

Created and conceived by **Claire Cunningham**

Dramaturg **Luke Pell**, Sound Designer/Composer **Matthias Herrmann**, Costume Designer **Shanti Freed**, Designer **Bethany Wells**, Lighting Designer **Chris Copland** and Associate Director, **Dan Watson.**

Performed by **Claire Cunningham**, **Tanja Erhart, Vicky Malin, Jo Bannon**

**International tour of award-winning show to festivals and venues in Belgium, Germany, Poland, and Norway from 25 May to 21 October 2023**

[**PRESS IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE**](https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/78iex4xt2hsfxwpi8vi6y/h?dl=0&rlkey=munymbl4gt3onffy1l41u3ski)

National Theatre of Scotland and Manchester International Festival (MIF) in association with Claire Cunningham Projects and Kunstenfestivaldesarts are delighted to announce a return of pioneering artist Claire Cunningham’s award-winning contemporary dance performance ***Thank You Very Much***, as they pull back the curtain on the glittering world of the tribute artist. This ambitious and powerful meditation on identity and acceptance and the challenges of being yourself will open at the **KVS BOX, Brussels** as part of the **Kunstenfestivaldesarts,** before touring to **Hannover** for the **Theaterformen Festival; ZAMEK Culture Centre** in **Poznań, Poland,** and finallyto **Oslo t**o the **CODA Oslo International Dance Festival.**

***Thank You Very Much*** sees Claire Cunningham and her ensemble of leading disabled performers invite audiences to join them as they pull back the curtain on the glittering and mysterious world of the tribute artist, taking to the floor with wit, glitz, and a pulsating soundtrack. A performance that navigates up, down and all-around society's ideas of normality, and shakes up the myth of how bodies should be. The dancers pull on their sparkling costumes and ask: Who have we been trying to be all our lives? Has it ever been our choice? And what really is "the wonder of you"?

Glasgow-based choreographer and performer Claire Cunningham is one of Europe’s most acclaimed disabled artists. In 2021 Claire was honoured for her Outstanding Artistic Development in dance at the German Dance Awards. ***Thank You Very Much*** won two Critics Awards for Theatre in Scotland 2020 for Best Ensemble (Claire Cunningham, Tanja Erhart, Vicky Malin, and Dan Daw) and Best Music and Sound (Matthias Herrmann). ***Thank You Very Much*** premiered at MIF in 2019 to critical acclaim followed by performances in Dusseldorf, Glasgow, and London. In 2021 the production successfully toured to a variety of festivals in Switzerland, Germany, and Sweden.

“a life-affirming display of community spirit that would make Elvis quiver with pride.”

★★★★★ The Herald

“compelling and illuminating.” ★★★★ Guardian

***Thank You Very Much*** was commissioned by National Theatre of Scotland, Manchester International Festival, and Perth Festival in association with tanzhaus nrw and Dance Umbrella and produced by National Theatre of Scotland and Manchester International Festival in association with Claire Cunningham Projects. The project has been supported by the National Lottery through Creative Scotland.

The production’s touring to Poland and Norway is part of the Obecność / Presence project of the Zamek Culture Centre in Poznań, and made possible by the Norwegian and EEA (European Economic Area) Funds.

**Claire Cunningham** is a performer and creator of multi-disciplinary performance based in Glasgow, Scotland. One of the UK’s most acclaimed and internationally renowned disabled artists, Cunningham's work is often rooted in the study and use/misuse of her crutches and the exploration of the potential of her own specific physicality with a conscious rejection of traditional dance techniques (developed for non-disabled bodies). ***Thank You Very Much*** is her first work for MIF. The National Theatre of Scotland first collaborated with Claire Cunningham on ***Ménage à Trois*** (Paterson's Land at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and touring) in 2012.

Join the conversation: **#TYVM**

Touring to**KVS BOX, Brussels – Kunstenfestivaldesarts** (25-28 May 2023); **Hannover, Germany - Theaterformen festival** (28 & 29 June 2023); **ZAMEK Culture Centre, Poznan, Poland** (12 & 13 October 2023); **CODA Oslo International Dance Festival, Norway** (20 & 21 October 2023).

**Full tour dates, booking info: nationaltheatrescotland.com**

**Age recommendation: 12+**

**Running time: 90 mins**

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**Artist Biographies**

**Jo Bannon** is an artist working in performance, choreography, and film. Her practice is concerned with how our specific bodies, identities, and sensory perceptions impact how we experience the world around us, and how this sensory experience can or cannot be conveyed. Her work is informed by her identity as a disabled woman with albinism and attempts to unpick the ways we look, her and sense our immediate environment in order to rethink or make unfamiliar these intrinsic human behaviours. Bannon’s work is led by form and so manifests in various mediums including intimate encounters designed for single or small audiences, stage performance, dance, film, and installation. She also works as a dramaturg, educator and writer and is a founder member of artist collective Residence. Recent works include Feeling Thing (2021), Absent Tense (2020), Kitchen Alba (2020), We are Fucked (2018), Alba (2015), Dead Line (2013) and Exposure (2011).

**Chris Copland** graduated from Goldsmiths College with a MA Theatre Arts in 2001. He has worked extensively in theatre and dance since 1993. He has worked as Production Manager for such companies as Bedlam Dance, Nigel Charnock, Ursula Martinez, Laila Diallo, Wendy Houstoun, Flexer & Sandiland Claire Cunningham/Jess Curtis, and Gary Clarke amongst many others. Lighting design credits include *Stupid Men*,*One Dixon Road*, and *Ten Men* for Nigel Charnock; *Ostrich* for H2 Dance; *Heart of Darkness* and *City of Tribes* for Tavaziva Dance; Still for Candoco; *My Stories Your emails,*and *Free Admission* for Ursula Martinez; *All Ears* for Kate McIntosh; *Pact with Pointlessness* for Wendy Houstoun. The Way You look (At Me) Tonight for Claire Cunningham and Jess Curtis

**Claire Cunningham** is a self-identifying disabled artist and choreographer based in Glasgow. Her work combines multiple artforms and ranges from the intimate solo show *ME (Mobile/Evolution) (*2009), to the large ensemble work *“12”* made for Candoco Dance Company. In 2014 she created the solo: *Give me a reason to live*, inspired by the work of Dutch medieval painter Hieronymus Bosch and the role of beggars/cripples in his work, and the full-length show *Guide Gods,* looking at the perspectives of the major Faith traditions towards the issue of disability. In 2016 she was the Artist in Residence with Perth International Arts Festival, Australia and Associate Artist at Tramway, Glasgow. From 2017 -2019 she was Factory Artist with tanzhaus NRW, Dusseldorf, Germany, and is currently an Affiliate Artist at The Place, London. A special programme about the work of Claire Cunningham*, Elvis - A Tribute in Dance* was first broadcast on Radio 4 in December 2018 and subsequently rebroadcast in 2019. In 2019 Claire created Tributary, her first work for gallery spaces, performing alongside collaborator Vicky Malin, as part of the group exhibition *Automatise Ambulatoire: Hysteria, Imitation,* curated by Amanda Cachia for Owen’s Art Gallery, Sackville, Canada. In 2020, in collaboration with the scholar and activist Julia Watts Belser, Claire created the audio works *Quanimacy,* commissioned by Splayed Festival at The Place, London, and *We Run Like Rivers* for Theaterformen, Hannover. In 2021 Claire was honoured for her Outstanding Artistic Development in dance at the German Dance Awards.

**Tanja Erhart,** born in Austria based in London, identifies as a crip - chronically ill and physically disabled - dance artist, cultural anthropologist and crip pleasure activist. [Tanja](http://tanjaerh.art/) creates her own work, teaches, choreographs, holds lectures & talks about disability, ableism and dance at various events and performed in pieces by Candoco Dance Company, Claire Cunningham, Farah Saleh, Michael Turinsky etc. worldwide. Currently she is curious exploring movement practices of her 3 different bodyminds - one-legged, with her wheelchair or three-legged with her crutches - and pleasure activism in dance and disability justice, focusing on access, care, desires and dismantling oppressive structures like ableism. The current dance production “j e n g a,” in the making in collaboration with Tanja’s crutches and her dance colleague Katharina Senk, is an interactive dance film and a live performance about pleasure as a juicy resource of movement in interaction with the 2 crutches and as an interface in the discourse between disability and feminism and will premiere in Vienna in January 2022.

**Shanti Freed**trained as a theatre designer, and has worked as a designer, maker, and collaborator, and creative problem solver on numerous national and international projects, in theatre, dance, film, visual art and entertainment events. With an accomplished skill set and significant experience Shanti contributes to productions from the intimate to the large scale, thriving on teamwork and creative collaboration – a veritable and masterful Jill Of All Trades. Shanti has designed several pieces for Claire Cunningham, and worked with artists including CandoCo Dance company, Duckie, Steve McQueen, Kira O’Reilly, and Lea Anderson. Shanti has worked on every edition of Manchester International Festival (MIF) since its inception, including wardrobe supervising and touring Robert Wilson’s MIF production *The Life and Death of Marina Abramovic*.

**Matthias Herrmann** studied cello with Rudolf Mandalka at the Robert Schumann Hochschule, Düsseldorf, Germany. He has created numerous award-winning scores for the productions of international dance theatre companies including Do Theater (St. Petersburg, Russia), Fabrik Company (Potsdam, Germany), Howard Katz (Berlin/New York) and Jess Curtis/Gravity (San Francisco/Berlin). He co-founded the internationally touring band PostHolocaustPop.

**Vicky Malin** is a disabled independent artist based in Brighton, U.K. She began performing in 2007 after training with Candoco Dance Company where she danced in works by Hofesh Schecter, Nigel Charnock, Wendy Houstoun, Matthias Sperling, and Trisha Brown. In 2017 she gained a 1st degree Masters in Creative Practice where she began researching the intimate piece “Our Hands”. Vicky performs and facilitates workshops in a variety of different contexts and settings. She also has a long-standing collaboration with artist Dinis Machado. Vicky had a baby in March 2020 and is welcoming a return to work with her family.

**Luke Pell** is fascinated by detail, nuances of time, texture, memory, and landscape [Luke Pell](https://lukepellmake.org/) is an artist based in Scotland who makes work across forms, through conversation with people and place. Luke imagines alternative contexts for performance, participation and discourse that might reveal wisdoms for living. Working with words and/as movements to draw together seemingly unrelated constellations of bodies and thought their poetic-choreographic practice takes form as intimate encounters in print and in person. Luke’s work has appeared throughout the UK and internationally. As a maker, curator and dramaturg Luke is often a companion to other artists and organisations thinking through practice to navigate processes of emergence, creation, re-imagination, and change. Collaborating regularly with: Claire Cunningham - including on *Thank You Very Much* and *The Way You Look (At Me) Tonight with Jess Curtis;* with Janice Parker*;* Robert Softley-Gale *Purposeless Movements* for Birds of Paradise Theatre and Caroline Bowditch’s *Falling in Love with Frida.* In 2018 he was Guest Dramaturg with South East Dance as part of their Dramaturg in Residence Programme, and dramaturg for Mirjam Gutner’s Skinned. Luke was a Dance Base (Edinburgh) Associate Artist 2017-2020 and is an Associate Artist with Fevered Sleep.

**Dan Watson** is a London based artist working somewhere between dance, performance and messing about. Dan was a formative member of StopGAP Dance Company before moving on to perform with such artists as Gecko, Wendy Houstoun, Nigel Charnock, Stan Wont Dance, 5 Men Dancing, Slung Low Theatre, Protein Dance, Sweetshop Revolution, Seven Sisters Group and Freddie Opoku-Addaie amongst others. He was a collaborating artist on UNDER directed by Miguel Moreira (Utero) and features in the award-winning short film *You*, directed by Graham Clayton Chance. As a maker he has created the solos *Semi Detached*, *Precariously,* *Sweetest Things* and *VENUS*; and the duets *Jacket Dance* and *Largely Unsung* and has been commissioned by StopGAP, Flight Effect and Them Two Dance. Dan was the Choreographic Assistant on the Universal/Working Title movie of the musical *Les Miserables.*Other choreographic/movement work includes *Rita, Sue and Bob Too* (Out Of Joint), *Dancehall* (CAST) and *The National Commemoration of the Battle* *Of* *The Somme* in Manchester, choreographing a cast of over 350 volunteers and professionals to perform to an audience of 19,000 people. Most recently Dan was co-director/creator on *A Little Space*, a collaboration between Gecko and Mind The Gap.

**Bethany Wells** trained in architecture, and is a performance designer working across dance, theatre, and installation, with a particular interest in site-specific and devised performance. She sees all design as a form of activism and is interested in exploring what can be achieved politically and socially by the collective live experience of performance. She is an Associate Artist with Middle Child, Hull. Recent work includes: *All That Lives* (Grief Series, Leeds International Festival) *Us Against Whatever* (Middle Child)*War of The Worlds*, (Rhum + Clay), *Rallying Cry*, (Battersea Arts Centre), *Busking It*, (High Tide), *DISTANCE*, (Park Theatre), *A New And Better You*, (Yard Theatre), *TRUST*, (Gate Theatre), *Party Skills for the End of the World*, (Nigel Barrett and Louise Mari), *The Department of Distractions*, (Third Angel), *All We Ever Wanted Was Everything*, (Middle Child). An ongoing project, WARMTH, is a wood-fired mobile sauna and performance space, commissioned by Compass Live Art.

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Creative Scotland** is the public body that supports the arts, screen and creative industries across all parts of Scotland distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery. Further information at [creativescotland.com](https://www.creativescotland.com/). Follow us on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/CreativeScots), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/CreativeScotland) and [Instagram.](https://www.instagram.com/creativescots) Learn more about the value of art and creativity in Scotland and join in at [www.ourcreativevoice.scot](http://www.ourcreativevoice.scot/)

**About Manchester International Festival & Factory International**   
  
Factory International is the organisation behind both Manchester International Festival (MIF), and the landmark new space which will open in 2023, creating a global destination for arts music and culture in the heart of Manchester. Factory International will commission and present a year-round programme of original creative work, music and special events at its new venue, online, and internationally through its network of co-commissioners and partners. It will also stage the city-wide Manchester International Festival (MIF) every other year at its new home and in spaces and venues across Greater Manchester.

Factory International builds on the legacy of Manchester International Festival, one of the world’s leading arts festivals, and the first to be entirely focused on the commissioning and producing of ambitious new work. Staged every two years in Manchester since 2007, MIF has commissioned, produced and presented world premieres by artists including Marina Abramović, Damon Albarn, Laurie Anderson, Björk, Boris Charmatz, Jeremy Deller, Idris Elba and Kwame Kwei-Armah, Elbow, Tracey Emin, Akram Khan, David Lynch, Ibrahim Mahama, Wayne McGregor, Steve McQueen, Marta Minuj***í***n, Cillian Murphy, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy, Yoko Ono, Thomas Ostermeier, Maxine Peake, Punchdrunk, Skepta, Christine Sun Kim, The xx, and Robert Wilson.

These and other world-renowned artists from different art forms and backgrounds create dynamic, innovative and forward-thinking new work reflecting the spectrum of performing arts, visual arts and popular culture, staged across Greater Manchester – from theatres, galleries and concert halls to railway depots, churches and car parks. Working closely with cultural organisations globally, whose financial and creative input helps to make many of these projects possible, much of the work made at MIF also goes on to travel the world, reaching an audience of 1.6 million people in more than 30 countries to date.

MIF23 takes place 29 June to 16 July 2023, opening with *You, Me and the Balloons* a major exhibition at Factory International’s new cultural space, celebrating three decades of Yayoi Kusama’s spectacular inflatable sculptures, shown together for the first time.

factoryinternational.org  
   
**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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