



SPOTLIGHT

on your
National Theatre of Scotland

A Quarterly Update
For Donors and Supporters
August 2023



WELCOME

from Jackie Wylie, Artistic Director and Chief Executive

Welcome dear donors and supporters to this latest edition of Spotlight. It's Festival time again and, as ever, we're delighted to be part of this year's EIF programme, the first under new Artistic Director Nicola Benedetti. Where Do We Go From Here? is the theme and provocation Nicola and her team have chosen to guide this year's programme.

Nicola explains: "We have searched for connection and commonality across a broad spectrum of the arts, of cultures and of artistic collaborations to create a programme that offers a fresh perspective on what binds and defines us."

Thrown is our contribution to this year's EIF programme and this debut play by Nat McCleary is very much "a fresh perspective on what binds and defines us" – in this case literally, as it follows the story of an unlikely Gaelic backhold wrestling team, comprised of five very different women grappling with questions of identity that reach across nationality, class and gender. It's a plea for mutual understanding and empathy in a world divided, where dialogue is so frequently replaced by intransigence and staunchly oppositional views.



There's a seam running through Scottish theatre over the years, one that reveals a nation constantly trying to understand itself, in search of identity. Thrown picks up the conversation in 2023 and wrestles with it for 80 rollicking minutes of physical and verbal fireworks, performed by an outstanding ensemble, who will make you laugh, cry and consider what it means to be Scottish today.

This edition of Spotlight also gives you an insight into the design and production of a brand new tartan, named Homegrown, created specially for the show and representative of Scotland's diverse, intersecting identities, "belonging in tension."





Dracula Company

Meanwhile the company of *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning* are now in rehearsals ahead of their Scotland and UK tour. We've had glimpses of incredible costumes and rehearsal sets, and strange, eerie sounds have been seeping down the corridors of Rockvilla. I'm so excited for you to experience this thrilling, contemporary re-telling of Bram Stoker's classic tale, transposed to the wild landscapes of North East Scotland which originally inspired the novel. Leading the team is the tantalising combination of Sally Cookson, a truly world-class director, and writer Morna Pearson, who brings her trademark Doric-laced, dark humour and love of all things grotesque to what promises to be a breathtaking gothic production. Set in an Aberdeenshire psychiatric hospital in 1897, this unique adaptation places the character of Mina Murray at the centre of the action, with an all female and non-binary cast exploring the dynamics of power, addiction, sexuality and agency, all present in the original novel, from an alternative perspective.

We're delighted the show will have its world premiere at His Majesty's Theatre in Aberdeen, the very place where *Dracula* writer Morna Pearson had her first, transformative experience of live theatre many years ago. Our First Nights programme creates similar opportunities all over the country – find out more later in this edition.

Dracula: Mina's Reckoning is the second classic novel updated for contemporary audiences in our 2023 programme, following on from the success of *Kidnapped* earlier in the year. I'm delighted that another NTS reimagined classic, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, will receive its world premiere at the Edinburgh International Film Festival on 21 August, before its UK broadcast premiere on Sky Arts later this year. Filmed largely within the atmospheric setting of Edinburgh's historic Leith Theatre, the production was originally presented in February 2022 as a live, cinematic experience in the venue.

Now more than ever, we rely on income sources beyond our core government funding. One of these is corporate sponsorship and corporate philanthropy. In a bid to widen our profile within the business sector, we were delighted to co-host a special event at Rockvilla last month with our friends from the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI), Scotland's independent membership network representing private, public and social economy sectors. Off the back of the SCDI's recently published Business Purpose Commission, we welcomed an audience of stakeholders for a conversation on the role businesses might play in supporting arts and culture as part of their purpose in contributing to a healthy society. It was a hugely insightful event and we hope the start of a much bigger conversation. If your business is interested in finding out more about corporate partnerships with NTS, there's more information [here](#)... Thank you so much for your support of our National Theatre of Scotland. We're so grateful to have you as part of the team.

Best wishes,

Jackie

Artistic Director and Chief Executive







"Thrown is sen-bloody-sational."

CORR BLIMEY



"An impressively brave and vivid Scottish play"

THE SCOTSMAN

"An emotional powerhouse that simply has to be seen."

PAGES OF ESPRESSO



Thrown- Julie Howden

THROWN

Johnny McKnight, Director on the concept of “Team”

“Thrown asks many questions but the ones I find myself continually coming back to are - what is ‘team’ and why does it matter?”

In the case of Thrown, ‘the team’ is the fantastic cast, creatives and production team who’ve come together to present the work with a wit and humour that makes it a pleasure to step into the ring every day; it’s the audience who have dared and dreamed enough to give us their precious time to engage with the work.

Team is the belief that making live theatre is important. That what we do will not only grow our team but keep the sport of theatre fit and robust, so long as we keep reimagining, growing, expanding our voices and viewpoints. I think collective experience is something we not only crave, but need.”



Nat McCleary, Johnny McKnight and Kara Jackson - Julie Howden

We are incredibly honoured and excited to announce that a new tartan has been created for our production of *Thrown*. Artists Nat McCleary and Sabrina Henry, and Glasgow weavers, Vevar have collaborated to create the new tartan named Homegrown, and is being launched as part of the costume design for the upcoming tour.

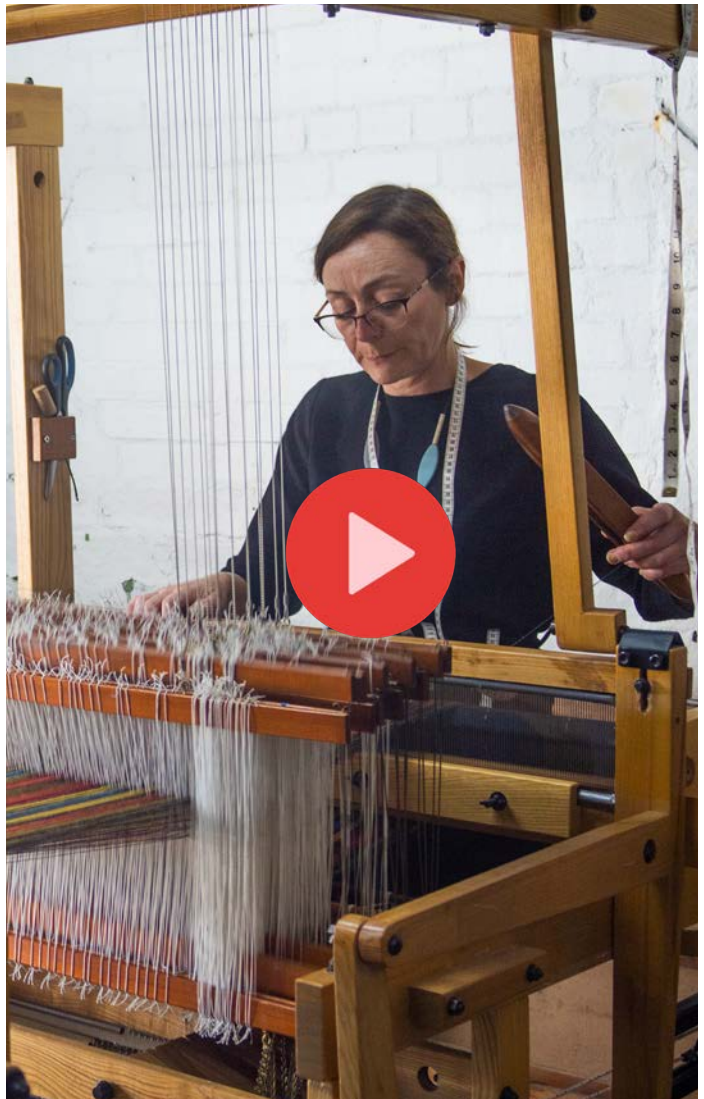
Homegrown has been created by Glaswegian weavers, Vevar which was founded in 2020 by weavers Christopher McEvoy and Chantal Allen. Based in the East End of Glasgow, the city's historical weaving heart, they undertake various projects across art, design, and architecture as well as producing a line of lifestyle products that are uniquely Glaswegian. Whilst proud of their roots, they strive to innovate and challenge what is thought of as Scottish textiles.

Nat McCleary, writer said

“Homegrown is a new tartan telling a visual story of discordant unity; of belonging in tension.

It had always been my intention to create a tartan as a legacy of the play. My family name comes from an Irish slave trader and I didn't want to adopt a tartan that I didn't feel connected to. I knew I wouldn't be the only person who, for many reasons, may feel that tartan was off-limits or couldn't be authentically engaged with, so I resolved to create one for those of us home-grown. Tartan doesn't have to be significant to everyone, but for those to whom it is, this tartan is a visual story of discordant unity; of belonging in tension, the mess of the past inescapably woven into the mess of the present.

This is a tartan for all of us home-grown, without long ties to the land and her traditions who yet are tied, rooted in our Scottishness, ready to unapologetically rep the sh*t out of it with aplomb.”



WELL PLAID

Talking of tartan...

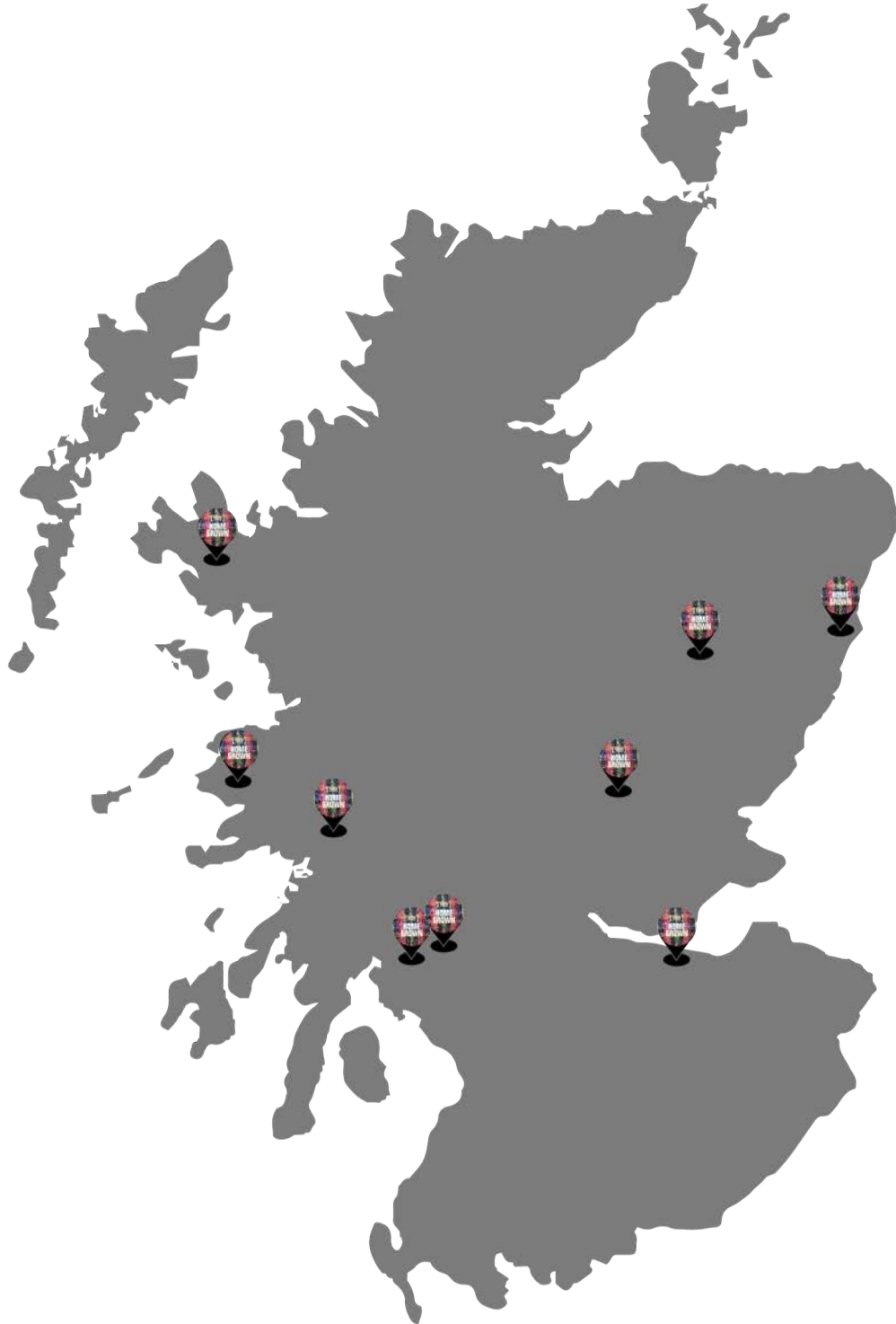
In the last edition of Spotlight, we featured the V&A Dundee's 5 star Tartan exhibition, which includes the iconic Fashion scene from our production of *Black Watch*.

NTS donors and supporters can now take advantage of a 20% discount (subject to availability) when booking for Tartan, either online or by phone.

The discount code is NTSTARTAN

Enjoy!

THROWN'S TARTAN TRAVELS





DRACULA: MINA'S RECKONING

Protect your loved ains fae the claws o' a beast...

Under the buzzing lights of a psychiatric hospital in Aberdeenshire in 1897, Mina Murray recounts her encounters with the most terrifying of beasts: Dracula. A throng of patients listen with bated breath as they are transported to a world where immortality and ultimate power is possible, even for women - but with terrible consequences...



Danielle Jam - Richard Frew

Rooted in Aberdeenshire, our upcoming production of *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning* explores Bram Stoker's connections to Scotland and the North East. Actor Danielle Jam and writer, Morna Pearson visited the atmospheric Slains Castle ahead of rehearsals starting.

It's believed that Slains Castle is where Bram Stoker found his inspiration for the setting of the tale of Count Dracula in 1897, and Danielle and Morna were certainly inspired by their visit to the remains of the castle in Cruden Bay.

After the visit Danielle Jam, who plays the role of Mina, said:

"It was brilliant to visit Slains Castle. Our version of *Dracula* is set in the North-East and Slains Castle influenced Bram Stoker in how he imagined Dracula's castle.

The local language, dialect and landscape will influence how I play the role of Mina in the production and because I'm from Aberdeen, like Mina, I feel very rooted in the world of the play. I was brought up speaking Doric and where the story is set is my home.

I'm looking forward to working with the writer, Morna Pearson who is also from the North-East. I'm excited to speak her words and to learn more about how she envisions the world of *Dracula*."

Playwright Morna Pearson was also inspired by the trip, saying:

"When researching I read about Stoker's time in Cruden Bay, I knew Slains Castle was an influence, but I hadn't appreciated how much, especially the octagonal room which features in the original novel. It was inspiring to visit the castle for the first time; it felt very warren-like and oppressive, despite not having a roof.

The novel's roots in the North-East are reflected by there being a Doric speaker in the original *Dracula* and there will be two Doric characters in my version with some others using a lighter dialect. It's fantastic that with our production's Mina, we have found a brilliant Doric speaking actor like Danielle."

[CLICK HERE TO FIND OUT MORE OR BOOK TICKETS NOW](#)

FIRST NIGHTS

Lots of you have made donations in support of our First Nights programme. First Nights was originally designed to offer young people the opportunity to experience live theatre for the first time, by removing any of the barriers preventing them from taking part – money, geography, transport, disability, caring responsibilities, or just thinking that theatre wasn't for them.

Since then, we've expanded First Nights to include people of all ages who haven't had the chance to try theatre – or haven't been for a long time – for any number of reasons. Increasingly this has seen us work in collaboration with theatres all over Scotland to identify local community groups with the venue would like to have, or may already have, a relationship. By building that relationship together, we hope to create a long-term engagement between the group and the theatre, that sees them going from First Nights to regular attendees and theatre aficionados!

One such group is the team at The Glenburn Centre, a shared community space which is home to the Easthall Park Housing Co-operative in Easterhouse, Glasgow. The Centre runs a number of groups and activities run by and for the local residents, be that children, families, adults, individuals with additional support needs - there is something for everyone.

NTS engaged with the team at The Glenburn Centre back in January 2022, introducing them to our First Nights offer via our production of *Orphans*, resulting in a connection made with the women from the Brighter Days Thursday Night Group, a group of local women of all ages who come together for a few hours a week to support and socialize with each other, doing everything from Bingo to films night, quizzes to local walks.

Since *Orphans*, the group have also attended *Burn* and *Dear Billy* via the First Nights program, always kicking off with a fish and chip tea at the Glenburn Centre and a bit of time to catch up. Best of all, the group are up front and honest about the shows they have seen through First Nights, loving some, not so keen on others, but giving them the confidence to book shows themselves and make a night out at the theatre just as much part of their group activity as a game of bingo. We're hoping to get them along to *Dracula: Mina's Reckoning* this autumn for an altogether different theatrical experience...

IN CONVERSATION WITH ALISON AND DONNA - WATCH NOW



First Nights Group from Easthall Park Housing Co-operative



First Nights Group from Lodging House Mission



First Nights Group from Loop Theatre

THEATRE IN SCHOOLS SCOTLAND

The next programme of Theatre In Schools Scotland productions head out on tour to nursery, primary and ASN schools around the country from this September.

TISS is thrilled to welcome the return of Cloud Man and Going for Gold: Me and Linford Christie to the programme plus MESS made especially for ASN pupils and The Last Forecast, a brand new dance theatre performance.

Our supporters play a big part in helping us take TISS as far and wide as possible, while enabling us to keep the cost per school as affordable as possible.



A woman with dark hair in a ponytail, wearing a white t-shirt and colorful patterned shorts, is captured in a running pose. She is on a floor that is painted with vibrant colors like blue, green, and pink, featuring a large white number '1'. In the background, there are some red stools and a green wall with some decorations.

GOING FOR GOLD: ME AND LINFORD CHRISTIE

A man with dark hair and glasses, wearing a grey jacket over a white shirt and tie, is sitting and looking towards the camera. To his left is a large, crumpled piece of brown paper with a simple line drawing of clouds and a sun. The background is dark.

CLOUD MAN

A man and a woman are lying down on a blue surface. The man is on the left, wearing a black t-shirt, and the woman is on the right, wearing a dark grey long-sleeved shirt. They are both looking towards the camera.

THE LAST FORECAST

THANK YOU VERY MUCH

Winner, of the 2020 CATS Awards for Best Ensemble (Claire Cunningham, Tanja Erhart, Vicky, Malin and Dan Daw) and Best Music and Sound (Matthias Herrmann), Thank You Very Much invites you to join an evening informed by the experiences of an international company of leading disabled performers. Through the lens of the competitive world of tribute artists, among the messiness of navigating society's ideas of normality, the ensemble takes apart the myth of how bodies should be and have been trained to be. With her characteristic wit and honesty Cunningham asks us all...what is "the wonder of you"?

Claire says: 'When I came to dance, I had the sense that having to navigate the world differently, is what choreography is. Surely we should be looking at the people who are already doing this: the people who have been actively excluded from choreographic spaces. Thank You Very Much studies a group of performers, the tribute artists, who are excluded from choreographic notions of high art, and maps their processes onto a choreography that celebrates difference, ultimately questioning the normative idealism of the theatre itself.'

A lot of the work I did with Jess Curtis was about recognising the ableism built into the theatre system: that expects a bi-pedular body that can walk up and down some stairs, fully sighted and fully hearing. They expect people to sit still and sit silently for 80 minutes without needing to leave. Theatre has been built with the expectation 'sit still, be quiet, don't leave.' And there are a whole bunch of people who have not been able to come because it is not welcoming. My work is about confronting that and asking how do I make a space that is welcoming and safe to a broader type of audience.'

The piece was originally commissioned by the National Theatre of Scotland and the Manchester International Festival and was performed in Glasgow, Manchester, Duesseldorf and London. In 2021, it returned to tour a series of festivals in Germany, Sweden and Switzerland. The European odyssey continues this year; the show has enjoyed standing ovations across the board at venues across the continent, including the esteemed Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels. This year's triumphant tour will conclude with two nights each in Poznan and Oslo.



Thank You Very Much - Martine Dewil



Thank You Very Much - Martine Dewil

NTS PUPS IN THE SPOTLIGHT!

Our creative family adores having our loyal canine companions by our side, adding a touch of love and charm to our bustling workspace. In this special segment, join us in celebrating the talented pups who brighten our days with their heartwarming tales and pawsome performances.

We recently celebrated 'Bring your dog to work day' and took the opportunity to take pics of our pups enjoying their day around Rockvilla.



SADIE

DEPARTMENT: Creative Engagement

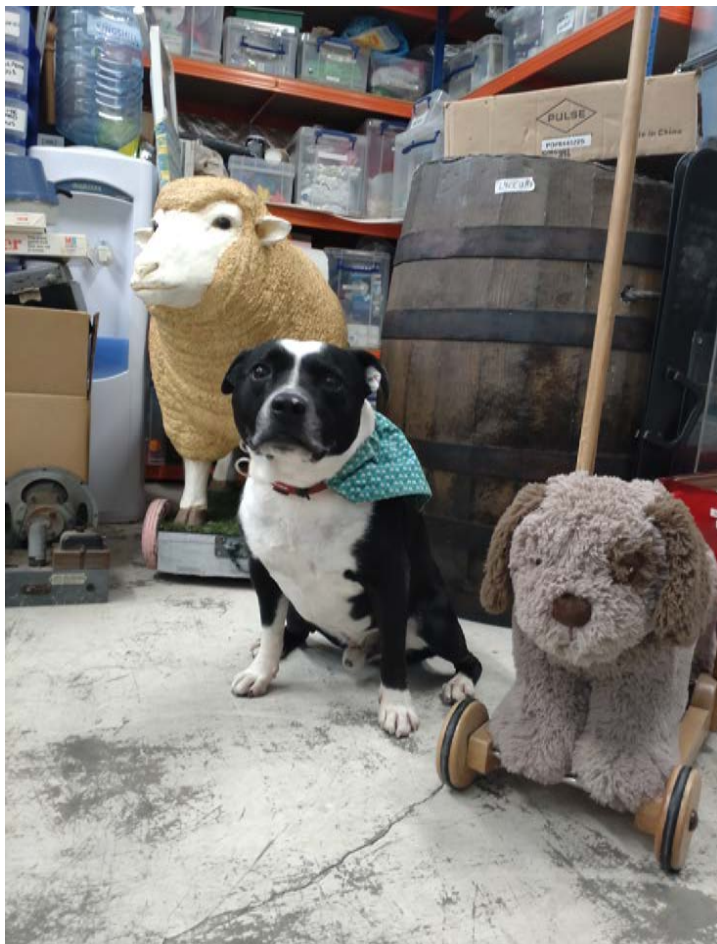
Usually seen carrying her favourite toy around, Sadie is a lovable sweetheart - and a keen reader!

JELLYBEAN

DEPARTMENT: Audience and Media

Usually found where ever there is food and people! Jellybean has a passion for fashion!





WILSON

DEPARTMENT: Finance and Administration

The biggest softie in the office! Wilson loves a hug and a belly scratch. Wilson is a friend to all.

DORRIS

DEPARTMENT: Executive Assistant

Though she be little, she be fierce - no truer words could be said about Dorris! Can usually be found plotting to take the creative world by storm...or sunbathing.



NEXT TIME

- Dracula: Mina's Reckoning On Tour
- Moorcroft on Tour
- 2024 Season Reveal

Huge thanks, as ever, to all of you for helping us create Theatre Without Walls!

With love from the Development Team: Stella, Adam and Anne-Marie

