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PRESS RELEASE: 04 February 2021

**Short film created for Scenes for Survival digital project achieves success at international film festivals.**

**Danni The Champion**

Written by **Iain Finlay Macleod,** d**i**rected by **Laura Cameron-Lewis** and performed by **Francesca Taylor Coleman**

**Produced by the National Theatre of Scotland, in association with** [**BBC Scotland**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/scotland)**,** [**Screen Scotland**](https://www.screen.scot/)**,** [**BBC Arts’ Culture in Quarantine project**](https://www.bbc.co.uk/arts)**,** [**An Lanntair**](http://lanntair.com/) **and** [**Studio Fir Chlis**](https://studiofirchlis.com/) **with support from** [**Hopscotch Films**](http://www.hopscotchfilms.co.uk/)**.**

***Danni the Champion*** is a powerful short drama from writer Iain Finlay Macleod, focussing on Danni, a teenager frustrated with her slow-paced island life.

The short film, directed by Laura Cameron-Lewis from new Isle of Lewis based production company Studio Fir Chlis, has now been selected for screening at nine international film festivals to date. The film was shot on location on the Isle of Lewis and is performed by Stornoway actor Francesca Taylor Coleman making her professional debut. The film features both English and Gaelic.

Festivals include: 30th Flickerfest International Short Film Festival 2021, Venice Shorts 2020, Chicago Indie Film Awards 2020, Breakout Film Festival 2020 & 2021, Short to the Point October 2020, 59th Ann Arbor Film Festival, Montreal Independent Film Festival and Tokyo International Short Film Festival 2021.

Young Danni isn’t like the other girls in town. She’d rather be watching drag races down at the airport or tearing about behind the wheel of her brother’s car, Lynyrd Skynyrd tunes blasting on the stereo. Showing the audience her life on the island and how stifled she feels by her passive-aggressive parents, she dreams of hitting the road and showing everyone what she can do.

Director, Laura Cameron-Lewis, says ‘*I’m really thrilled to see such a great response to the film, it was such a meaningful piece for us, so it’s great to see it taking off like this. It excites me so much to think of Australians on Bondi Beach right now, looking in on Stornoway harbour! It’s an honour to be selected for these awards and festivals such as the 59th Ann Arbor Film Festival, and to know that for an international audience there’s an interest in experiencing the language and life of a young Gael in the Hebrides.’*

*Danni the Champion* was originally part of Scenes for Survival, the acclaimed online season of short works created by the National Theatre of Scotland in response to the ongoing COVID-19 outbreak. 55 short films were released across BBC platforms from May to September 2020, achieving over 17 million audience views to date.

***Danni the Champion*** can be viewed here on BBC iplayer

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p08qw6f3>

and here on the National Theatre of Scotland website along with an accompanying BSL intro video and an audio described version.

<https://www.nationaltheatrescotland.com/latest/danni-the-champion>

***\*\*\*\*\**** *‘Visually thrilling and pulsing with humanity. Danni The Champion is a gorgeous piece of work…gender, identity, hope and despair’* Joyce McMillan, The Scotsman

\*\*\*\*\**‘Sparkling and challenging…an explosion of images and settings…a brave and fun performance from Francesca Taylor-Coleman’* Liam Offord, A Younger Theatre

**Press Images: *Danni the Champion* images available via** [**dropbox**](https://www.dropbox.com/sh/z4tmxkqle5p4pze/AABnlKEzA34fZ2vOqHdYticha?dl=0)

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**Artists Biogs**

**Laura Cameron-Lewis**

Laura Cameron-Lewis Born in Fife, Laura was a member of Carnegie Youth Theatre and Kelty Musical Association before she studied on the Performing Arts NC and Acting HNC at Edinburgh’s Telford College, training includes with Derevo theatre company, Angela De Castro, and Gardzienice in Poland during her BA (Hons) Theatre (Devised) at Dartington. She then undertook an MPhil (Research) at Glasgow University in Compositional Strategies for Pervasive Performance under Dee Heddon and Simon Murray. National Theatre of Scotland work includes: Highway Diner’s, Scale of Tears; and Quantum Physical. Other theatre work includes: the new musical, How the Light Gets In with Shona Reppe, Soil and Soul and the Royal Lyceum’s The Illiad, Whatever Gets You Through the Night The Arches/Pachamama/Biphonic; (g)Host City Edinburgh’s Virtual Festival, The Selfish Giant The Arches Theatre Company, Works of Temporary Solace, This is How We Say Goodbye, Franz Ferdinant Impromptu all by Highway Diner and Dig for Fire, and Andromache by Laboratorium-33. TV work includes Gary the Tank Commander The Comedy Unit, Children of Hoarders and Demented for Studio Fir Chlis. Film work includes Whatever Gets You through the Night The Arches / Pachamama/ Biphonic / Daniel Warren, and How the Light Gets In Ootlands and Studio Fir Chlis. Laura won the Scotsman Fringe First award for Highway Diner’s Works of Temporary Solace, and was one of the key creatives on the Creative Scotland Award winning Whatever Gets You Through the Night.

**Iain Finlay Macleod**

Iain Finlay is from the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland. Some of his plays are *Whisky Galore, Somersaults* (National Theatre of Scotland), *The Bends* (RSAMD), *The Devil Masters, The Pearlfisher, I was a Beautiful Day, Broke and Homers* (Traverse Theatre). Iain Finlay wrote *St Kilda - The Opera*, a large scale multi-discipline theatre piece which was shown at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2009. This was shown simultaneously in five different countries in 2008. Iain Finlay was an Associate Artist at the National Theatre of Scotland from 2013-2015 . He was the Robert Louis Stevenson Fellow in 2009-2010. He was writer-in-residence at Sabhal Mor Ostaig, the Gaelic College in Skye, for two years. He was also Associate Playwright at the Scottish Playwright’s Society for two years. Iain Finlay is currently working on a play called Archipelago with French theatre company Eolie Songe, which brings together twenty five actors from France, Spain, Turkey and Greece.

**Francesca Taylor Coleman**

Born in Dundee, Francesca studied through Gaelic Medium Education on the Isle of Lewis. She was a member of Stornoway Thespians and Northern Lights Youth Theatre and took drama classes with Laura Cameron-Lewis through An Lanntair. She is going on to study Acting and Performance HNC at Dundee College. National Theatre of Scotland work includes: *Danni the Champion*and this is her first professional role. TV work includes: *Danni the Champion,* National Theatre of Scotland. Francesa won the Drama Prize at the Nicolson Institute Secondary School on the Isle of Lewis.

**Music by The Keening | caoineadh**

**Fois Anama / White Noise** All songs written and performed by Laura Cameron-Lewis and Andrew Eaton-Lewis. https://thekeeningcaoineadh.bandcamp.com/

**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)

**Studio Fir Chlis**

A new production company based in the Hebrides, making documentaries and innovative drama for film, television and live events. Directed by Laura Cameron-Lewis, productions in development with leading talent include: Alan Bissett, Shauna MacDonald, John Stahl, Brìghde Caimbeul, Ron Coleman, Roberto Trotta and Shona Reppe. www.studiofirchlis.com

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