

**PRESS RELEASE**

* **Two urgent digital artworks to be presented at Festivals in Edinburgh in August from award-winning poet, playwright, performer and director Hannah Lavery.**
* ***Lament for Sheku Bayoh* a co-production with Edinburgh International Festival and the Lyceum Theatre, to be performed live on stage, and accompanied by free digital version for one week (25 to 31 August) and soon to be launched education resource and access to the digital version for schools**
* ***Thirteen Fragments* – a short digital artwork and co-production with Royal Society Edinburgh to be presented alongside a panel discussion in response to the RSE commission addressing how Scotland can emerge from the pandemic.**
* [**Link to images**](https://www.dropbox.com/s/mnryxkcfwk0nx3n/13%20Fragments_3-%20Beth%20Chalmers.jpg?dl=0)

National Theatre of Scotland’s Associate Artist, Hannah Lavery, brings two urgent and compelling pieces of work to live and online audiences in August 2021. *Thirteen Fragment*s and *Lament for Sheku Bayoh* are both timely, contemporary responses to recent events: the experience of women in Covid and the death of a black man in police custody in Scotland.

World premiere digital artwork ***Thirteen Fragment*s**, created in partnership with the Royal Society of Edinburgh, features spoken word and movement and explores female resilience during the pandemic. ***Thirteen Fragments*** is presented online as part of the RSE’s summer events programme, Curious from 9- 27 August.

Acclaimed production ***Lament for Sheku Bayoh***is a powerful and artistic response to the tragic death of Sheku Bayoh. It is presentedliveon stage at the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh during the Edinburgh International Festival from 25 - 28 August and online from 25 – 31 August as part of Edinburgh International Festival At Home in partnership with abrdn.

**Hannah Lavery** is an acclaimed spoken word artist and playwright. Most recently she created *Disco with Mum f*or National Theatre of Scotland’s *Scenes for Survival* series. Her acclaimed autobiographical solo show, T*he Drift,* about identity, belonging and grief produced by the National Theatre of Scotland toured Scotland in 2019 and was featured as part of *Ghost Light,* for the Edinburgh International Festivals’ *My Light Shines On* programme in 2020.

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**National Theatre of Scotland and The Royal Society of Edinburgh present**

***Thirteen Fragments***

Writer, performer and director **Hannah Lavery**, Composer and musician **Beldina Odenyo/Heir of the Cursed**, Choreographer and performer **Natali McCleary**, Filmmaker **Beth Chalmers**

**Commissioned by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE) as part of its Post Covid-19 Futures Commission**

**A short digital artwork featuring spoken word and movement exploring female resilience in Scotland, will premiere online on 9 August during the RSE’s summer events programme, *Curious*, which runs during August 2021.**

*Thirteen Fragments* is a co-production between National Theatre of Scotland and the RSE; a new short digital artwork featuring spoken word and movement, created by award-winning writer and performer Hannah Lavery collaborating with musician Beldina Odenyo, choreographer Natali McCleary and filmmaker Beth Chalmers. The project has been commissioned as part of the RSE Post Covid-19 Futures Commission.

***Thirteen Fragments*** is an artistic response to the RSE’s Covid Commission which addresses how Scotland can emerge from the Covid pandemic as a more equitable society and is rooted in lead artist Hannah Lavery’s experience of the last year as a woman of colour. RSE Fellows have informed research on the piece including Talat Yaqoob (consultant and researcher on women’s equality and race equality) and Zinnie Harris (playwright, screenwriter and director).

***Thirteen Fragments*** is a spoken word dance piece where bursts of poetry sit within an original soundscape alongside shards of song and of movement. The coming together of Beldina Odenyo’s music, Natali McCleary’s movement and Hannah’s words sees the poetry take shape and given physical life, reflecting individual responses of the artists. Intimately filmed by Beth Chalmers, the piece explores the meaning of female resilience in Scotland today and aspirations for the future. ***Thirteen Fragments*** of anger, of love, of death, of exhaustion and of hope.

An accompanying digital panel discussion event involves Hannah Lavery in conversation with Talat Yaqoob and Zinnie  Harris, Their discussion, which takes the film as starting point, focuses on some of the themes that the work highlights including the impact of Covid on women and wider society and the role that art and creativity play in the pandemic.

Hannah Lavery says: *"Inspired by the work of the RSE fellows, I wanted to make a film that would speak to the experience of women and especially women of colour, using poetry, dance, music and film. I have been so lucky to have been joined by a dream team of women collaborating with dance, music, and film to create a provocation and also a meditation on the time we are living through and what that means for us all as we look toward the future."*

Dr Rebekah Widdowfield, CEO of the Royal Society of Edinburgh said,

*“Creativity sparks debate and dialogue which is why this collaboration between the RSE and the National Theatre of Scotland is so important. This piece explores the impact of Covid on women and questions whether it has changed attitudes and mindsets. It represents a valuable contribution to the work of the RSE’s Post Covid Futures Commission connecting with key themes including resilience and inclusivity and we are very much looking forward to premiering it in August as part of our summer events programme, Curious”.*

*Thirteen Fragments* premieres online as part of the RSE’s summer events programme, Curious on 9 August 2021 at 7.30pm with an accompanying panel discussion. The event is free and ticketed.

**Booking links for premiere**

[RSE Eventbrite](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/thirteen-fragments-tickets-162677770591?aff=Curious21) and [National Theatre of Scotland website](nationaltheatrescotland.com/events/thirteen-fragments)

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Following the premiere, *Thirteen Fragments* and the digital discussion will be available to view on the RSE’s Curious and National Theatre of Scotland’s websites.

[rse-curious.com/](http://www.rse-curious.com/)

nationaltheatrescotland.com

 Access: Audio Description and captioned versions available

A preview link for press will be made available ahead of the premiere -please do contact NTS press office (details below) for early access

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**A National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival and Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh co-production**

***Lament for Sheku Bayoh***

Written and directed by **Hannah Lavery**

Designer **Kirsty Currie,** Composer **Beldina Odenyo,** Lighting Designer **Emma Jones,** Movement Director **Natali McCleary,** Video Designer **Ellie Thompson**

Cast: **Saskia Ashdown, Patricia Panther,** and **Courtney Stoddart**

**At the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh as part of the Edinburgh International Festival with performances from 25 – 28 August 2021 and online from 25 to 31 August.**

**Opening Performance 25 August 2021**

A young black man lost his life. Six years ago. In police custody. In Scotland.

Soon after 7am, on a Sunday morning - May 3rd, 2015, Sheku Bayoh, a 31 year-old gas engineer, husband and father of two died in police custody on the streets of his hometown, Kirkcaldy in Fife.

***Lament for Sheku Bayoh*** is an artistic response to this tragedy, an expression of grief for the loss of the human behind the headlines and a non-apologetic reflection on identity and racism in Scotland today.

Written and directed by acclaimed spoken word artist and theatre-maker Hannah Lavery, ***Lament for Sheku Bayoh*** was originally commissioned and presented as a rehearsed reading by the Lyceum Theatre, supported by the Edinburgh International Festival as part of the 2019 International Festival’s *You Are Here* strand. In November 2020 ***Lament for Sheku Bayoh*** was performed live on the Lyceum stage and streamed to paying audiences at home.

Now being performed on the Lyceum Theatre’s stage for a live audience as part of the Edinburgh International Festival, ***Lament for Sheku Bayoh*** urgently questions, is Scotland really a safe place?

The digital stream of the production as filmed on the Lyceum’s stage in 2020 is available to watch online for free from 25 – 31 August as part of Edinburgh International Festival at Home in partnership with abrdn. See [eif.co.uk/at-home](https://www.eif.co.uk/at-home) for information.

**\*\*\*\*\* “***Timely and necessary… both beautifully staged and unerringly brutal.*” The Stage

**\*\*\*\*\*** *“Disquieting, profoundly affecting and humbling piece of theatre.”* All Edinburgh Theatre

***Lament for Sheku Bayoh*** is performed by Saskia Ashdown, Patricia Panther, and Courtney Stoddart. The production features music from Beldina Odenyo, AKA Heir of the Cursed.

After Sheku Bayoh lost his life in 2015, his family launched a campaign seeking justice and answers about the manner of his death. In 2019 it was announced that a judge-led inquiry into the case would be held, with a view to establishing the circumstances behind the case. In 2020 it was announced that the remit for the inquiry would include examining whether Mr Bayoh's "actual or perceived race" had played any part in his death. The Sheku Bayoh Inquiry, chaired by Lord Bracadale, continues to this day with “focus and determination.”

A resource pack, which will launch the National Theatre of Scotland’s new education portal will be made available to schools throughout Scotland from 25 August. Working closely with writer Hannah Lavery, cast members and other industry professionals, the three co-producers have curated a range of audio, visual and written articles which will support teachers in facilitating positive, constructive conversations around the themes of the play exploring the wider social, historical and political aspects of Scottish identity and enriching the pupil experience of the production.

The resources have been developed with input from poet and facilitator Clementine E Burnley and includes tools from organisations such as Training for Change and The Anti-Racist educators.

**Writer & Director Hannah Lavery said**

*"I hope that Lament for Sheku Bayoh will be the beginning of a journey for audiences; that it will leave them with questions that they want answered and that it will give them an energy to pursue a better Scotland. And for some of us it will be an opportunity to be seen and heard and to have an experience and a knowledge of this country shared.*

*I think it's important for us to be able to talk about Scotland in an honest way, and to not turn our head away from the things that might feel uncomfortable or challenge the idea we have of ourselves. It's important for us all to see Sheku Bayou as a human being- hugely loved, full of promise and with dreams for his future- and to take a moment to really mourn his loss."*

***Development work is supported by the Stephen W Dunn Creative Fund.***

Dates: **Wed 25 to Sat 28 August, 7.30pm and Thurs 26 & Sat 28 August, 2.30pm**

Tickets: **£22 (concessions available)**

Online Booking**:** **eif.co.uk**

**Access: BSL** **Interpretation by Jacqui Beckford on Wed 25 Aug, 7:30pm.**

**Audio Description and Captioning on Sat 28 Aug, 2:30pm.**

**Edinburgh International Festival At Home in partnership with abrdn**

Digital performance: **Available from Wed 25 at 7.30pm to Tue 31 August at 11.59pm**

Tickets: **Free but ticketed**

Booking: [**eif.co.uk/at-home**](https://www.eif.co.uk/at-home)

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**Please do get in contact with any image /interview/preview link requests.**

**ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES**

**Saskia Ashdown** grew up in Annan, Dumfries and Galloway. She joined the National Youth Theatre before completing an honours degree at the University of Edinburgh. Theatre work includes *Jack Absolute Flies Again* (National Theatre), *An Edinburgh Christmas Caro*l (Lyceum Theatre), *Lament for Sheku Bayoh* (Lyceum Theatre), *Horizontal Collaboration* (Fire Exit), *War in America* (Attic Collective). TV work includes *Trust Me* (Red Production Company), *Clique* (BBC). Film work includes *Falling for Figaro* (WestEnd Films), T*he Last Bus* (Hurricane Films), *Special Delivery* (Shudder Films), *Joytown* (The Comedy Unit). Radio work includes *alt-delete* (BBC Radio 3).

**Beth Chalmers** is a filmmaker and photographer based in Glasgow. She holds a MA (hons) in Music from the University of Glasgow and since graduating, has worked in several roles across the arts in Scotland. In 2017, she was appointed as the Festival Photographer for the Edinburgh International Festival and thereafter joined the video team for subsequent festivals. In 2020, she was the Engagement Filmmaker at Scottish Ballet. Her work celebrates and centres around community and collaboration.

**Kirsty Currie** is a Scottish designer and model maker. She graduated from the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2018. Design credits include: *The Drift* (Scottish Tour, National Theatre of Scotland), *A State Electric* (Platform), *Propeller* (Pleasance Above, Edinburgh Festival Fringe), *The Angry Brigade* (Citizens Theatre, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), *Julius Caesar* (Chandler Studio, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland), *A Tickle in My Mind* (New Athenaeum Theatre, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). Design Associate Credits include: *The Journey* (Scott Silven), *Peter Pan* (Stafford Gatehouse Theatre/ Prime Pantomimes), *Rapunzel* (Macrobert Arts Centre). Selected Design Assistant/ Modelmaking credits include: *Ragnarok* (Tortoise in a Nutshell/Norland Visual Theatre),T*he Children* (Vienna English Theatre), *Local Hero* (Edinburgh Lyceum/Old Vic), *Pride and Prejudice sort of* (UK Tour), *A Thousand Splendid Suns* (UK Tour), *Elmer* (International Tour), *Avenue Q* (UK Tour), *The Snow Queen* (Dundee Rep), *Flight* (Vox Motus, International Tour), *Prime Pantomimes 2019 Season* (Various Venues). Website: [kirstycurrie.co.uk](http://kirstycurrie.co.uk/)

**Emma Jones** is an Associate Artist with Shotput. Credits include, *Fibres*, Stellar Quines/The Citizens Theatre *Antigone Interrupted,* *Looping,* *Drift, NQR*, *What on Earth!?*, *Kingdom*, *Dreamers*, *YAMA*, *Miann*, *Velvet Petal,* *In this Storm*, *Khaos* and *TuTuMucky* Scottish Dance Theatre; *The Little Mermaid, Talking Heads* and *Midsummer* Dundee Rep Theatre; *Hansel and Gretel, A Christmas Carol, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland* and *Peter Pan* Derby Theatre; *Plan B* for Utopia and *The North* Joan Clevillé Dance; *The View from Castle Rock* Stellar Quines; *The Lover* Stellar Quines/Scottish Dance Theatre/Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh; *Hope and Joy*, Pearlfisher/Stellar Quines; *Falling in Love with Frida* Caroline Bowditch Company; *Pinocchio* and *Rumpelstiltskin* Hiccup Theatre; *Sonata for a Man and a Boy* macrobert; *Equilux* Danza Contemporanea de Cuba; *The Guitar Man* Surrogate Productions; *Ferguson and Barton* Shotput.

**Hannah Lavery** is a poet, playwright, performer and director. *The Drift*, her autobiographical lyric play, toured Scotland as part of the National Theatre of Scotland’s Season 2019. In 2020, she was awarded a New Playwrights' Award by the Playwrights Studio Scotland and selected by Owen Sheers’ as one of his Ten Writers Asking Questions That Will Shape Our Future for the International Literature Showcase, a project from the National Writing Centre and the British Council. She was also selected as one of the Scottish Voices for the BBC Writers’ Room. In November 2020, her highly acclaimed play *Lament for Sheku Bayoh* was directed by Hannah in a co-production with the Royal Lyceum Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland and Edinburgh International Festival. Hannah is one of Imaginate's Accelerator Artists and an Associate Artist with the National Theatre of Scotland as well as Writer in Residence at Lyceum Youth Theatre and her play for children commissioned by Imaginate will be shared as a work in progress at Edinburgh International Children’s Festival in May 2021. She was also recently selected for the Adopt a Playwright Award by offwestend.com and is under commission by Pitlochry Festival Theatre to adapt *Jekyll and Hyde* for their upcoming Summer Season 2021.Her poetry has been published widely and her poem, *Scotland, you’re no mine*, was selected by Roseanne Watt as one of the Best Scottish Poems 2019. Her pamphlet, *Finding Seaglass* was published by Stewed Rhubarb Press in 2019. She has performed at many poetry nights and festivals including, Neu! Reekie!, Edinburgh Book Festival, Stanza Poetry Festival and Sonnet Youth and in 2021, she is undertaking a translation poetry project with Stanza and the Ukraine Poetry Festival. Hannah is an experienced workshop facilitator and mentor and received the Creative Edinburgh Leadership Award in 2020, for her work with the Writers of Colour Writing Group and for curating and directing a film poetry series, *Sorry, I Was On Mute*, for Fringe of Colour.

**Natali McCleary** works as an actor, writer and mover based in Glasgow whose own work focuses predominantly on intersectionality and identity - currently through the prism of nationalism. Having trained at Conservatoire London Contemporary Dance School, Nat has extensive experience as a movement director, collaborating with directors on projects for TV, film and theatre, including "Them!" NTS. As an actor and movement specialist, Nat has a unique perspective on the relationship between text, the body and narrative and particularly enjoys working with self-professed "non-movers". Nat also creates award-winning dance film and is currently in post for a recent co-commission from Dance Screen Scotland and Creative Scotland.

**Beldina Odenyo AKA Heir of The Cursed** – songwriter, sound designer, theatre-maker. Heir of The Cursed is a caulbearer born of an apparition, a primordial memory, a penny drop. She makes songs influenced by the strange nuances of life, rooted in grief, Scottish weather, the constant and the inconstant. Beldina Odenyo is a vocalist, guitarist, poet and writer creating work between the fields of music and theatre. Her work attempts to explore the differences and kinship between her dual Kenyan and Scottish heritage through words, music and visual art.

**Patricia Panther** is an Actress, Composer and Sound Designer based in Glasgow. In her work as a sound Designer and Composer a variety of found sounds, electronic and acoustic instruments are used to create a fusion of varying musical styles for live performance, Film and Theatre Sound Design. Acting credits include; *The Last Bus* (Hurricane Films, Head Gear Films), *Trust Me* (BBC One), *Scot Squad* (BBC One), *Logan High* (BBC One), *First and Only* (Encaptivate Films), *Arabian Nights* (Lyceum Theatre), *A Pageant of Great Women* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland). Composer credits include; Composition and Sound Design for *Fibres* (Stella Quines and Citizens Theatre), *Ghost Light* (Edinburgh International Festival, National Theatre of Scotland and BBC Scotland), *Future of Theatre Podcast* (Traverse Theatre), *Glasgow Girls* (National Theatre of Scotland and Raw Material), *The Last Queen of Scotland* (Dundee Rep, Stella Quines and National Theatre of Scotland), *Rites* (Contact Theatre and National Theatre of Scotland), ONCE YOU SEE THE SMOKE (Scottish Youth Theatre), SONIC SÉANCE (Project X, Tramway and CCA). Patricia also leads youth group workshops, introducing young creatives to theatre, music production and performance.

**Courtney Stoddart** is an acclaimed Scottish-Caribbean poet and performer, born and raised in Edinburgh. Her work focuses on racism, imperialism, womanhood and growing up in Scotland. She writes with the intention to challenge the dominant power structures of our times and intertwines social, political, and historical discussion into rhythm and rhyme. Having only started performing in April 2019, Courtney has had a meteoric rise, performing on both national and international stages within the last year. Including performances at venues such as the Traverse Theatre, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Leith Theatre and HOME Manchester. In June 2019, Courtney took part in the BBC Radio 1xtra and BBC Contains Strong Language Festival Word’s First Talent Scheme, making it to the final 12. She was selected to be published in an anthology by Own It! London and edited by Jude Yawson, co-writer of Stormzy’s *Rise Up: The Story So Far*. Courtney has featured in various theatrical productions, including *Lament For Sheku Bayoh* at the Lyceum Theatre during Edinburgh International Festival 2019 and *Memory is a Weapon*, directed by Firdoze Bulbulia. She was chosen to represent Scotland at Flup Festival in Rio de Janeiro in the October of 2019. Courtney currently runs a mentorship programme with Scottish BAME writers network. She has appeared on a panel at the Edinburgh International Book Festival and was recently interviewed on BBC Radio Scotland’s Afternoon show with Jess Brough.

**Ellie Thompson** studied at The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in London. After graduating she has worked in various video roles including video supervisor, associate designer and video designer for theatre productions. Since 2014 she has collaborated with Katie Mitchell on *Forbidden Zone* (Salzburg Festival, 2014) as Video Production Technician then as Associate Video Designer on *Reisende Auf Einem Bein* by Herta Müller (Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg 2015), *Schatten*, by Elfriede Jelinek (Schaubühne, Berlin 2016), *La Maladie de la Mort* by Marguerite Duras (Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris 2017), *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf (Schaubühne, Berlin 2018) and finally as video designer for *Judith: Concerto for Orchestra / Bluebeard’s Castle* (Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich 2020). Also designing *The White Bike* by Tamara von Werthern, directed by Lily Mcleish (The Space, London 2017). Most recently she was Associate Projection Designer for *The Journey*, Written by Scott Silven and Rob Drummond, directed by Allie Butler (Virtual production, World tour 2020).

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

**Edinburgh International Festival** is the world’s leading performing arts festival, featuring the finest performers from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre. Created in 1947 to celebrate the enduring human spirit, the International Festival normally serves as an annual cultural exchange, every August, for an international audience exceeding 400,000 per year. The 2020 Edinburgh International Festival was cancelled for the first time in its history due to concerns around the Covid-19 pandemic, but will pioneer the return to live performance in Scotland in 2021 with 170 music, theatre, opera and dance performances. For more information visit [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk).

**The Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh** is the leading producing theatre in Scotland and one of the United Kingdom’s most prolific theatre companies. Our beautiful, intimate Victorian theatre was built in 1883 and has played a significant role in the cultural and creative life of the city and surrounding area for over 130 years. Since 1965, the current Lyceum company has developed a reputation for innovative, high-quality theatre, drawing upon the considerable talent in Scotland as well as developing award winning work with partners across the globe to make theatre in Edinburgh, that can speak to the world. We believe that making and watching theatre together is life enhancing. We are committed to being a theatre rooted in our community, a truly civic theatre entertaining, challenging and inspiring all the people of Edinburgh. To reach the widest possible audience we find new ways to open our doors and our stage to the public, as well as reaching out into Edinburgh’s schools and neighbourhoods with a range of programmes taking place beyond our walls. Under Artistic Director David Greig, The Lyceum has continued to seek out new artistic partnerships, casting 100 local citizens in our main stage production of *The Hour We Knew Nothing of Each Other* and 50 more in *The Suppliant Wome*n, the acclaimed production that opened David’s first season. Since then we have made work with Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne; DOT Theatre, Istanbul; Bristol Old Vic; National Theatre of Scotland; Citizens Theatre; Scottish Dance Theatre; Stellar Quines; Lung Ha; and Fuel. For more information please visit lyceum.org.uk

**The Royal Society of Edinburgh** The RSE’s Post Covid Futures Commission was established to support Scotland in emerging as positively as it can from the current pandemic. Four working groups were established examining Building National Resilience; Data Evidence and Science; Inclusive Public Service and Public Debate and Dialogue. Post Covid Futures Commission. For outputs to date and more details go to: www.rsecovidcommission.org.uk

**The RSE**, using the expertise of its Fellows, delivers its mission by:

* Inspiring and supporting young talent through a wide-ranging programme of research grants and awards
* engaging the public across Scotland on key contemporary issues through its outreach programme RSE@ and a wide-ranging programme of public events
* providing impartial advice and expertise to inform policy and practice through in-depth examination of major issues and providing expert comment on topical matters
* promoting Scotland’s interests overseas through building relationships with sister academies across the world and facilitating research collaborations.

 



