



PRESS RELEASE

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".

Hannah Lavery is an acclaimed spoken word artist and playwright. Most recently she created *Disco with Mum* for National Theatre of Scotland's *Scenes for Survival* series. Her acclaimed autobiographical solo show, *The 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. Hannah is an Associate Artist with National Theatre of Scotland.

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](#) and [National Theatre of Scotland website](#)

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/
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

NATIONAL THEATRE OF SCOTLAND PRESS OFFICE CONTACTS:

Jane Hamilton – Media and Communications officer –

jane.hamilton@nationaltheatrescotland.com

M: +44 (0)7967 742491

Emma Schad – Head of Communications –

emma.schad@nationaltheatrescotland.com

Tel: +44 (0)227 9016 M: +44 (0)7930 308018

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

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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.

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 Imagine'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 Imagine 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.

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.

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 Women*, 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.

