



## NPCS selected plays

### **And The Earth Opened Up Under Her**

**By Carmen Marcus (producing partner Pilot Theatre)**

#### **Play synopsis**

**And The Earth Opened Up Under Her** is a lyrical working-class reimagining of the classical Persephone and Demeter myth. Brigid runs away from Ireland with her two teenage daughters, Sky and Lark, to a ramshackle seaside town in the North of England in search of peace. But the world is full of roads leading to hell and Sky and Lark manage to find themselves lost in the dangerous underworlds that open up for teenage girls. Sky pursues a man who cruelly plays with her, and Lark starves herself to stay a child. It is up to Brigid to find her daughters and drag them back out of hell, on her Raleigh shopper bike with the help of Bede, the Irish Wolfhound.

#### **Biogs**

**Carmen Marcus** is a working-class published novelist and poet from the wild North East coast. Her debut novel, **How Saints Die**, was published by Harvill Secker in 2018. It won New Writing North's Northern Promise Award and was long listed for The Desmond Elliott Prize. She was named as a BBC Radio 3 New Voice 2015. Her poetry has been commissioned by the BBC, The Royal Festival Hall and Durham Book Festival. She most recently appeared on BBC Radio 3's The Verb reading from her poetry collection **The Catch**, the story of the North's lost fishing communities.

**Pilot Theatre** are an international touring theatre company based in York. They are committed to creating high quality theatre for younger audiences, and will be many people's very first encounter with this form. Across all their projects they seek to create a space where young adults can encounter, express, and interrogate big ideas that are

relevant to our lives right now. They also make work outside of traditional theatre buildings, where their projects pursue a relationship with their audience that is often playful, interactive and participatory. Pilot has a proud history in supporting and developing artists from all backgrounds, especially those who are early career in theatre, and is thrilled to be part of the inaugural NPCCS scheme.

## Quotes

### **Carmen Marcus said:**

“As a working-class daughter of a Yorkshire fisherman and Irish chef, my early experiences of drama were off stage at family gatherings when stories were told or old wounds opened. I didn’t think those stories of wrecks and rescues, ghosts and grievances were real poetry. I didn’t think my experiences of danger and loss were important until I read the classics and saw how these story roots connected. Being selected for NPCCS means that I will get to work with the brilliant Pilot Theatre to bring these stories to the stage.”

### **Esther Richardson, Artistic Director and Joint CEO of Pilot Theatre, said:**

“We are thrilled to be part of the NPCCS scheme which gives us the opportunity to support Carmen in writing her first full-length play. The investment helps us extend the impact of our Northern Girls project across Yorkshire and Teesside, which is how we first met Carmen, and began working with her. We can’t wait to share her extraordinary voice more widely.”

## Attrition

**By Tatty Hennessy (producing partner RJG Productions Ltd)**

### **Play synopsis**

Violet’s village is falling into the sea. The cliff is crumbling, the ground giving way beneath her. There’s a hole where the bus stop used to be, the café is under the waves. The council have swooped in with an evacuation order; their homes aren’t safe. The ocean has won. But Violet won’t move.

**Attrition** is a story about climate change and coastal erosion told through a family drama, of three women in a house on a cliff edge, trying to understand each other before they are swept away. It’s a play that explores generational difference, loss and motherhood, inspired by the true stories of British coastal towns under evacuation orders, and those that have already fallen into the sea.

### **Biogs**

**Tatty Hennessy** is a playwright and screenwriter and graduate of the Royal Court Playwriting course and the Channel 4 Screenwriting Programme. Her play **A Hundred Words for Snow**

was nominated for four OffWestEnd Awards and has been translated into several languages and performed around the world. Other work includes **Animal Farm** and **F.Off** for the National Youth Theatre, **Something Awful** (VAULT Festival), an adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's novel **The Sleeping Sword** (Watermill), and **a great big woolly mammoth thawing from the ice** (Burning Coal, North Carolina). She is also developing work for television.

**RJG Productions Limited** is a London-based theatre company run by Rebecca Gwyther. Recent productions include **Amélie the Musical** (Criterion Theatre, West End), the original production of **ANNA X** by Joseph Charlton (VAULT) and award-winning **A Hundred Words for Snow** by Tatty Hennessy (Trafalgar Studios and UK Tour). Other credits include **Precisionism** (film and UK Tour), **What Goes on in Front of Closed Doors** (Edinburgh Fringe and UK Tour), **Finders Keepers** (Edinburgh Fringe) and **Glockenspiel** (Tristan Bates Theatre).

### Quotes

#### Tatty Hennessy said:

"I'm so excited to be selected for this with **Attrition**, it's an idea I've been interested in for a long time and this commission gives me the time, space and financial security to really commit myself to it fully. It's been such a difficult year for writers, shows getting cancelled and new opportunities thin on the ground, so this really feels like a huge lift and I'm grateful to be part of this cohort of artists. And I can't wait to read all the other scripts too!"

#### Rebecca Gwyther of RJG Productions Limited said:

"New work and independent producers remain an essential part of British theatre and this grant is providing an incredible opportunity for me to commission and work with one of the best writers of our time. The ongoing impact of the pandemic is massive and has been particularly evident in the financial strains of creating new work for independent artists and producers. The support that this scheme provides will be a game-changer for the **Attrition** team and the future of new writing."

### Beldam

By Tallulah Brown (producing partner Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds)

#### Play synopsis

Bury St Edmunds, 1645. The town prepares for a witch trial. Pamphlets are circulated describing these creatures of Satan. Men take to the stand. Women wait for their fate to be decided. **Beldam** is about these women.

Wise women were traditionally called on for remedies and tinctures. They'd assist pregnancy, help with childbirth, even concoct love potions. Sisters Mary and Rose are in trouble when their local wise woman is accused of consorting with the devil. Witch paranoia takes off and to be an outspoken, unmarried, misfit woman was to be in mortal danger. A

wild play with songs and a community chorus about the resistance of women. We know from the pamphlets what happened, but **Beldam** asks how.

## **Biogs**

**Tallulah Brown** is a published playwright and screenwriter. Her plays include: **Silver Darlings** (BBC Radio 3); **When The Birds Come** (Edinburgh Fringe); **Songlines** (HighTide); **Sea Fret** (Old Red Lion Theatre). She has written as part of Soho Theatre's Young Company, Channel 4's 4Screenwriting, the BBC TV Drama Programme and was featured on the BBC's New Talent Hotlist. In 2019 her TV pilot **Leafy** received five nominations for The Brit List. She is currently working with Sister Pictures and the BBC on her original TV drama **Adult Child**.

**Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds** is a vibrant, 200-year-old, Grade I-listed theatre built in 1819 and restored to its original Regency design in 2007. It is a major cultural and social asset to Bury St Edmunds and a key part of the town's heritage and tourism industries. Theatre Royal is a proud producing theatre, staging three in-house productions each year, with a thriving Creative Learning programme that works with schools and communities across the region.

## **Quotes**

### **Tallulah Brown said:**

"I'm thrilled to be working over the next two years with Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds and their extended community to create a bold and ambitious play. Music is integral to my idea and I'm hugely grateful for the opportunity to create a contemporary, original score with my band Trills. Artistic Director Owen [Calvert-Lyons] immediately understood my intention with this dangerous and complicated play: to be an incantation, a shapeshifting, Wyrd piece of theatre with songs, that is both a call to arms against modern-day misogyny and a celebration of women who refuse to conform."

### **Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds Artistic Director Owen Calvert-Lyons said:**

"When Tallulah brought her idea to us, we were already looking at the Bury witch trials and how we could address this dark past on our stage. We are interested in exploring contemporary misogyny, and how these power structures go all the way back to these trials and further. Theatre Royal Bury St Edmunds is committed to telling powerful, contemporary stories which help us to understand ourselves and our place in the world. The WGGB NPCS award enables us to take this work a step further, by working with a brilliant Suffolk playwright to tell a really important story with and for our community."

## **Brenda's Got a Baby**

**By Jessica Hagan (producing partners New Diorama/Soho Theatre/Nouveau Riche)**

### **Play synopsis**

A comedy about black womanhood, sisterhood, motherhood – and babyhood.

After an unexpected break up with her long-term boyfriend Dami and being beaten down by constant comparison to her married little sister, Brenda embarks on a crazed 365-day journey to become a mother.

This fast-paced, fearless and satirical comedy cross examines the pressures placed on modern women through the lens of a young Black British woman navigating the nuances of sibling rivalry and racialised healthcare systems. **Brenda's Got A Baby** takes a daring dive into the world of dating, conception and modern fertility solutions; an unending series of awkward conversations, embarrassing encounters and defiant decisions.

### **Biogs**

**Jessica Hagan** is a Ghanaian-British playwright, screenwriter and spoken word artist. Her debut play **Queens of Sheba**, produced by Nouveau Riche, won the Underbelly and New Diorama Untapped Award in 2018. The production sold out its Edinburgh run, winning a Stage Award. The show then embarked on a 10-city sold-out national tour and won an Offie Award, followed by multiple sold-out runs in the Soho Theatre main house.

Jessica spends her time between London and Ghana, working with emerging playwrights and creative organisations, including the British Council.

**New Diorama Theatre** (NDT) is a pioneering London studio theatre, home for the country's best independent theatre companies. Since opening, NDT's work has received three Peter Brook Awards, three Stage Awards and seven OffWestEnd Awards. NDT frequently tours nationally and internationally, including regular transfers Off-Broadway.

In 2021 they opened the revolutionary NDT Broadgate, a 20,000-square-foot rehearsal and development complex offered entirely free to thousands of artists post-Covid recovery. Our recent Nouveau Riche co-production **For Black Boys Who Considered Suicide When The Hue Gets Too Heavy** transferred to the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs for an extended, sold-out run.

They won The Stage's 2022 Fringe Theatre of the Year, for the second time in the venue's short history.

**Nouveau Riche** is a diverse, multi-award-winning creative movement led by Artistic Director Ryan Calais Cameron. Previous shows include **Queens of Sheba** which won the Underbelly

and New Diorama Untapped Award for its Edinburgh run before touring, and playing multiple runs at the Soho Theatre main house.

**For Black Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When The Hue Gets Too Heavy**, written by Artistic Director Ryan Calais Cameron, was a co-production with New Diorama Theatre which, following a sold-out run, transferred to the Royal Court Theatre Downstairs, again selling out and extending its run.

**Soho Theatre** is London's most vibrant producer for new theatre, comedy and cabaret.

They are working to pursue creative excellence, harnessing an artistic spirit that is based in their new writing roots, the radical ethos of the fringe and the traditions of punk culture and queer performance. They champion voices that challenge from outside of the mainstream, and sometimes from within it too. To create theatre they nurture new playwrights, commission new work and produce new plays. Writers including Debbie Tucker Green, Chris Chibnall, Theresa Ikoko and Vicky Jones who had early work produced at Soho.

They're opening a new venue Soho Theatre Walthamstow in 2023.

## Quotes

### **Jessica Hagan said:**

"I'm completely overjoyed that the NPCCS has decided to support this wonderful partnership between New Diorama Theatre, Soho Theatre and Nouveau Riche! After such huge success with my debut play **Queens of Sheba**, I've been extremely nervous about my next piece of work. Being selected for this scheme has given me the room and confidence to create another (hopefully) award-winning, ground-breaking play - thank you!!!"

### **David Byrne, Artistic Director and CEO, New Diorama Theatre, said:**

"I must be one of the luckiest artistic directors in the country to be able to commission a new play from Jessica Hagan. Being supported by the NPCCS makes it possible for us to give Jess the resource, money and space needed to make her next show the success it deserves to be. We couldn't be more delighted to have been selected for this amazing opportunity."

### **Sarah Jordan Verghese, Producer, Nouveau Riche, said:**

"We are so excited and honoured to be working on Jess's new play. After the huge success of **Queens of Sheba**, we know this one will be another banger! This support from the NPCCS means we are able to make this show the absolute best it can be."

**David Luff, Creative Director, Soho Theatre, said:**

“We are very grateful to receive support from NPCS in order to co-commission Jessica Hagan with New Diorama Theatre. As a theatre that passionately believes in the importance of new theatre writers, funding schemes such as NPCS are critical in enabling theatres to extend the support that they can offer. We can't wait to start this exciting new journey with Jessica and NDT in the development of this fantastic new play.”

## **Cheap as Chips**

**By Kat Rose-Martin (producing partner Leeds Playhouse)**

### **Play synopsis**

Vic and Zara are chalk and cheese sisters from Bradford. When their father passes, they need cash quick. And so they dip their pedicured toes into the world of adult services.

But is selling worn knicks really the secret to financial security? Or will stripping back the layers of fakery reveal a dirtier secret about the desperate truth of working-class ambition?

**Cheap as Chips** is a saucy comedy drama that interrogates the question: Can we ever protect our sisters and mothers and daughters from exploitation?

### **Biogs**

Bradford-born and based **Kat Rose-Martin** is a writer/actor and inaugural winner of the Kay Mellor Fellowship. She was part of BBC Writersroom Northern Voices, and Sky Comedy Rep.

Theatre credits include: **Aphra Behn** (Shakespeare's Globe); **Jane Hair** (Bronte Society); **Shit but Mine** (Paines Plough); **Whoosh** (Pilot Theatre); and development of **£1 Thursdays** (Stockroom, formerly Out of Joint); **End Cubicle** (HighTide/Sheffield Theatres).

TV credits include: **Holby City** (Xmas special), **The Dumping Ground** (2022) and **Waterloo Road** (2023). She has original projects in development with Starz, Warp, Dancing Ledge, Urban Myth, and BBC Comedy/Avalon. Her dramedy **Ursula** (Red Productions) made The Brit List 2021.

**Leeds Playhouse** has been welcoming audiences in the heart of Yorkshire for over 50 years, creating work which is pioneering and relevant. The Playhouse recently underwent a £16m transformation which includes improved access, a new entrance and studio theatre.

A dedicated collaborator, Leeds Playhouse works with distinctive voices from across the UK. Its Artistic Development programme, Furnace, works with theatre-makers, providing a creative space to refine their practice at all stages of their careers.

The sector-leading Creative Engagement team works with over 12,000 people every year, including refugees, young people, schools, older people and people with learning disabilities, and the Playhouse pioneered Relaxed and Dementia-Friendly performances.

## Quotes

### **Kat Rose-Martin said:**

“I’m chuffed to bits! The reality of having a real play commission with my local producing house, and getting to collaborate with the delightfully creative team at Leeds Playhouse, is still sinking in. I’ve been working for years, developing my craft, but as a newer voice, I’m always conscious that I’m a bit of a risk. Because of this support, I can take the time to really hone what I want to say and make sure that it’s landing on the page. Then hopefully for an audience.”

### **Amy Leach, Deputy Artistic Director, Leeds Playhouse, said:**

“We are thrilled and grateful that Kat has been selected as one of the writers for the New Play Commission Scheme. Kat is a brilliant artist, a unique voice speaking truths about working class lives now, in 2022, that are rarely heard. We were delighted to work with Kat as our Kay Mellor Fellow at Leeds Playhouse in 2020/1 and this will be a fantastic next step in our support of her writing journey, enabling an exceptional voice to be commissioned and heard.”

## Escalate

**By Tyrell Williams (producing partner Eleanor Lloyd Theatrical Productions Ltd)**

### **Play synopsis**

When Sabrina and Lucien, a happily married couple with two children – a five-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl – are expecting a new addition, they cannot foresee what is around the corner. Having a soured relationship with the hospital after refusing to have her first two children immunised, also worried about the standards of Black maternity care, Sabrina gives birth at home.

However, there’s immediate concern over the baby’s health from the medical professionals, but Sabrina believes it to be hyperbolic; refusing to respond to the medical professionals’ concerns, the matter is quickly escalated as a safeguarding issue.

Based on a true story, **Escalate** explores the systemic pillars and their procedures in relation to Black people, particularly Black women.



## Biogs

**Tyrell Williams** is a writer /director. A 10-minute version of his first play, **Red Pitch**, won 'Audience Favourite' at the Young Harts Writing Festival at the Lyric Hammersmith, and a developmental production was then presented as part of the Untold Season at Ovalhouse in 2019. In 2022 it had a full run at the Bush Theatre, London, opening to critical acclaim. He has original television scripts in development with Fudge Park and Slam Films plus he's written an episode for a major remake of a classic for Apple/Paramount. Tyrell co-created/wrote and directed viral web series #HoodDocumentary.

**Eleanor Lloyd Productions** is an independent theatre producer of shows in London's West End, on tour and internationally.

Current productions include: **Witness for the Prosecution** (Olivier Nomination – Best Revival, London County Hall), **Best of Enemies** (West End), and **The Collaboration** (Broadway).

Past productions include: **The Collaboration** (Young Vic), **Constellations** (Olivier Nomination – Best Revival, Vaudeville Theatre); **A Christmas Carol: a Ghost Story** (Alexandra Palace); **Emilia** (three Olivier Awards, Vaudeville Theatre); **Nell Gwynn** (Olivier Award – Best New Comedy, Apollo Theatre); three seasons of **1984** (Playhouse Theatre); **My Night with Reg** (Olivier Nomination, Apollo Theatre); **Handbagged** (Olivier Nomination, Vaudeville Theatre).

## Quotes

### **Tyrell Williams said:**

"I'm incredibly excited and honoured to have been given the support to develop new work under this phenomenal scheme. Working alongside Eleanor Lloyd Productions, I feel extremely optimistic and eager to get going. I am grateful."

### **Eleanor Lloyd Productions said:**

"We are thrilled to be working with Tyrell Williams and the Writers' Guild on this project.

"After seeing **Red Pitch** it was clear that Tyrell was a writer we wanted to hear more from, and the NPCPS has made that possible. He writes about universal themes, such as friendship and belonging, but with such heart and hyper specificity that you can't help but get lost in the narrative.

"In a challenging environment for new plays we are very proud to work alongside the NPCPS in bringing this new and important story to the stage."

## Miss Philippines

By Rogelio Braga (producing partner New Earth Theatre)

### Play synopsis

Calle Real, a slum community in Manila, is gearing up to its fabulous annual Gaga Ganda Gay Beauty Pageant. Pageant matron Madame Stella is summarily executed by the police under fascist rule, leaving Mimi, her young transwoman assistant, to continue the tradition of crowning the next Miss Philippines. Mimi rallies the women of Calle Real to mount the pageant with gowns, glitter and plenty of sass to defy all odds in the middle of President Duterte's bloody 'War on Drugs'.

### Biogs

**Rogelio Braga** is an exiled playwright, novelist, essayist, publisher, and human rights activist from the Philippines. They had published two novels, a collection of short stories, and a book of plays before leaving the archipelago in 2018. Braga was a fellow of the Asian Cultural Council in New York for theatre in South East Asia in 2016. Their book of stories in translation **Is There Rush Hour in a Third World Country** will be released in December by the South London radical press, The 87Press. **Miss Philippines** is their first play written entirely in the English language.

**New Earth Theatre** presents and develops work with British East and South East Asian (BESEA) artists that asks key questions of identity, of the world we live in and our place in that world. They produce touring plays and readings across the year, nurture BESEA talent through their Academy acting, writing, offstage courses and Professional Writers Programme, as well as bringing artists to communities, museums and schools.

**Rogelio Braga said:** "Miss Philippines explores the intersections of the UK's Hostile Environment policy and the effects of the killings in the Philippines to its citizens: the bifurcated realities of a Filipino's life in diaspora in the UK. Our spaces to artistically express ourselves and critically engage the public without the fear of repercussions from the fascist government in the Philippines are getting smaller by the day and **Miss Philippines** is a bold declaration of solidarity to the struggle of Filipino writers in the archipelago and in the diaspora to protect the freedom of expression in the Philippines."

**New Earth Theatre said:** "Rogelio is the first Filipino writer ever to seek and be granted exile in the UK. What more of an important act can we do, than give them the space and time to research, listen and use their voice informed by others, to tell the story they need to tell. We are deeply grateful to the panel that they have recognised the importance and potential of this commission and it is an honour and a privilege to develop this play alongside Rogelio and the community with the ultimate goal of producing it for audiences in the UK and beyond."

## **Morgiana, Sinbad & the Jewel of the Lost Lagoon**

**By Shamser Sinha (producing partner The Egg Theatre, Theatre Royal Bath)**

### **Play synopsis**

Morgiana's captured stealing the Sultan's diamond. Impressed with her prowess, the Sultan promises her riches if she retrieves the jewel of the Lost Lagoon – guarded by a Kraken. But she'll be joined by Sinbad – the only one who can sail there – and the father who abandoned her. Through their adventures, Morgiana and Sinbad will bond – or not. They'll encounter the Mermaid Cecelia, Maya the Angry Megalodon Pup, The Cyclone-causing Cyclops Siblings, and The Kraken of A Thousand Eyes.

This is a Christmas story of adventure, found families, a daughter who happens to be neurodiverse, and a father struggling with parenthood.

### **Biogs**

**Shamser Sinha** is a Suffolk-based playwright, sociologist and volunteer child/youth worker. His play **Samphire** will be produced by the National Theatre Connections programme in 2023. Other plays include **Our White Skoda Octavia** (Eastern Angles, Derby Theatre, and Essex Cultural Diversity Project and national tour), **Three Sat Under the Banyan Tree** (Polka Theatre/Tara Arts and national tour), **Khadija is 18** (The Finborough Theatre) and **The Dissidents** (Tricycle Theatre, now Kiln Theatre). He writes non-fiction too, being the co-author of **Migrant City**, and is under contract to Routledge for a further book.

**The Egg's** aim is to create exceptional theatre for children and, by so doing, begin to address how the UK perceives young people and their place in society. The Egg, part of Theatre Royal Bath, has established itself at the forefront of professional theatre for children and young people in the UK, with a local, national and international reputation. Since opening in 2005, The Egg has presented over 700 plays, hosted hundreds of theatre companies, and introduced thousands of young people to live theatre. The Egg's founder and director is Kate Cross MBE.

### **Shamser Sinha said:**

“This is a chance to write with the support of a theatre which gets my writing, and for an audience of children and everyone older. Getting an opportunity to write a new story, which invites children into its audience, is challenging to find. I personally think this is so because of the barriers to equity, diversity and social justice particularly apparent in theatre for children. And so this chance is precious – and for that I am massively grateful.”

**Kate Cross, founder and director of The Egg, said:**

“We are delighted to be part of this scheme, working with Shamser for the first time. The Egg Christmas show is one of its major events, enjoyed by hundreds of families every year. Shamser brings his unique passion for global stories and myths into our repertoire for the very first time. This project also contributes to the launch of The Egg’s new post-pandemic Incubator – a development programme exploring inclusive practice across creation and producing processes.”

## **My Mother’s Funeral: The Show**

**By Kelly Jones (producing partner Mercury Theatre)**

### **Play synopsis**

Theatre-maker Abi’s mum is dead and until now she hadn’t realised funerals are so expensive! Unless Abi can find money, in 30 days her mum will be given a pauper’s funeral. No guests, no flowers, placed in an overcrowded plot. Council property.

Time running out, grief taking hold, Abi’s brother can’t forgive the past. With no will, assets, life insurance – things are not looking good.

Abi decides to put on a show about it, place her real-life trauma centre stage, giving mum the send-off she deserves, but at what cost? **My Mother’s Funeral: The Show** is about being a benefit class artist and the approach towards our trauma stories. Asking if death is unifying, why are we all not afforded the same dignity?

### **Biogs**

**Kelly Jones** is a gay playwright from Dagenham. She was the winner of the BBC Wales Drama Award 2014 and part of the invite-only Emerging Playwrights Programme at The Bush Theatre 2018, HighTide’s inaugural playwrights cohort, Mercury Theatre’s East England Voices and BBC Drama Room 20/21. Her recent credits include **When You See Me** (Working-Class Artists/Scottee and Friends), **Bump** (HighTide Theatre), **Room to Escape** (BBC Arts), **Comma** (Sherman Theatre), **Garden Paradiso: Shorts** (Mercury Theatre) and **The People’s Platform** (Common Wealth). Kelly writes autobiographically, with an emphasis on queerness, class, and her relationship to home.

**Mercury Theatre** is an artistic powerhouse in the East, a vital, vibrant, welcoming centre for people of Colchester, Essex and beyond. The award-winning theatre presented in the auditorium and in the studio transforms and enriches lives in the local community. Through Mercury productions and Mercury Originals (a Mercury production written by an East-based playwright) the company produces world-class theatre, reinventing familiar stories and conjuring bold new ones. The Mercury talent development programme seeks out fresh voices and stories that encourage people to see through the eyes of others.

## Quotes

### Kelly Jones said:

“I am delighted to have been selected in partnership with The Mercury for the inaugural NPCCS scheme with **My Mother’s Funeral!** The reality for me is that without a scheme like this, I wouldn’t be able to afford to prioritise working on this play over paid non-theatre work. With commissions in short supply this is the reality for many working and benefit class artists, like myself. Now, with the support from NPCCS, I will be able to focus solely on the writing and give this play the time and space it needs, as I prepare it for production. Thank you!”

### Mercury Theatre said:

“At the Mercury we connect with the theatre-makers of tomorrow by seeking out our region’s boldest, most talented, theatrically-daring artists, providing them with the support and space to research, explore and test their ideas. We are thrilled to be able to partner with Kelly through the NPCCS scheme with her piece **My Mother’s Funeral**. This scheme will enable a vital piece of work by a brilliant writer in the East to be commissioned and produced.”

## No Dog, No Danny

By Philip Meeks (producing partner The Playground Theatre)

### Play synopsis

Pantomime season in Croydon. Twenty-something theatre manager Benjamin finds himself looking after the fabled female impersonator Danny La Rue and his eccentric entourage. His wily dresser Annie and his ancient dog Jonty. Of course, Benjamin remembers who Danny is. Or was. His gran had been a huge fan. But now Danny’s tired and scared of the future. He decides to tell Benjamin his secret story before it’s too late. A love story from a lost time that’ll make Benjamin view his own life differently as he begins to understand why, without his precious dog, there really can be no Danny.

### Biogs

**Philip Meeks** is a playwright from the North East who started writing professionally in his 30s. His plays include **Murder, Margaret and Me** and **Edith in the Dark**, which are published by Samuel French. Other plays include **Harpy, Twinkle, Dandelion, Fireflies in Jarrow** and **Kiss Me Honey, Honey!** which won a Fringe First. He recently adapted **The Legend of Sleepy Hollow** with a gay twist for young adult audiences. His work for Radio 4 includes **Twenty Odd and Nine Bob Notes** both featuring voices from the LGBTQI+ community that often remain unheard. Philip began his career writing on **Emmerdale**.

**The Playground Theatre** is a multidisciplinary performing arts incubator and venue in West London, offering a unique development space for artists and the arts community to explore new ideas. It has garnered an international reputation that attracts leading creatives from the UK, Japan, Russia, Poland, Italy, Lithuania, and beyond. Projects conceived have gone on to such venues as The Young Vic, The Hampstead Theatre, The Barbican Theatre, and The West Yorkshire Playhouse, and have won commendations such as The Samuel Beckett Award for Innovative Theatre.

**Philip Meeks said:**

“This generous scheme has captured the imagination of many, revealing how proactive and creative the Writers’ Guild of Great Britain is in supporting its members and the wider worlds in which they work. I’m thrilled to be a recipient and to be working with the brilliant Anthony Biggs and the Playground Theatre to launch this new play in a truly immersive production. We will also use the play’s theme of coming out across the generations to build upon the venue’s excellent reputation for community involvement by generating outreach work aimed at the elder LGBTQI+ community in West London.”

**Anthony Biggs, Co-Artistic Director of The Playground Theatre, said:**

“We are thrilled to have been selected for this wonderful scheme with Philip Meeks. The NPCIS is a ray of light in challenging times. It offers a relatively new producer like The Playground the opportunity to commission exciting new work with an established and gifted writer.”

## **Peak Stuff**

**By Billie Collins (producing partner ThickSkin)**

### **Play synopsis**

**Peak Stuff** is a lyrical, theatrical, multi-thread dive into young people's relationship with stuff. In an age of fast fashion, planned obsolescence, NFTs, thrifting, hoarding, minimalism, retail therapy, climate crisis and click and collect – what does it actually mean to ‘own things’? When do we become consumers? How does our stuff define us? And do we know how to stop? **Peak Stuff** uses one performer and multiple stories to chip away at the role consumer culture has to play in coming-of-age and its impact on our sense of identity, consciousness and choices.

### **Biogs**

**Billie Collins** is a writer from the Wirral, based in Manchester. Her debut play, **Too Much World At Once**, was commissioned by Box of Tricks and will be produced at HOME Manchester in March 2023, before going on tour. She was selected for the 2022 BBC

Writersroom Northern Voices scheme, is an Associate Artist at the Oldham Coliseum Theatre, and has an original children's animated series in development with Toastie Animation. Billie has also previously written audio drama for BBC Sounds and was shortlisted for the 2021 Papatango Prize.

**ThickSkin** is reinventing theatre for the next generation. We are reimagining what theatre can be and looking to share human stories through quality, future-facing, multi-disciplined formats. We're developing 360° artists of the future for a hybrid world where physical and digital collide in more ways than ever before.

An award-winning theatre company, ThickSkin creates work across live and digital platforms. We produce bold and ambitious theatre; using our distinctive physicality and cinematic style to reach and inspire young, new and diverse audiences across the world. We nurture talented theatre.

## Quotes

### Billie Collins said:

"I'm buzzing to be working with ThickSkin on **Peak Stuff**. As an emerging writer, it's no small thing to be given the space to experiment and take creative risks – and I can't wait to co-create something totally new with a company whose work is consistently ambitious, bold and innovative."

### Neil Bettles, Artistic Director of ThickSkin, said:

"For me it is crucial that we make space for new talent and provide a nurturing environment that allows people to thrive. We will always push for the highest production values, and I firmly believe that developing new talent means setting a high bar whilst also maintaining a supportive and collaborative working environment where people can learn and grow. Billie is a brilliant young talent and I am incredibly excited to develop a new play with her that will challenge and push the boundaries of how we make our work."

## Prinzhorn

### By Hattie Naylor (producing partner Dash Arts)

### Play synopsis

The Exhibition of Degenerative Art (Nazi Germany, 1937) showed work that included paintings from the neurodivergent and Schizophrenia patients from the Heidelberg Sanatorium: work collected by Dr Hans Prinzhorn. These individuals (murdered by the

regime in the 1940s) inspired Jean Dubuffet's (who saved the Prinzhorn collection after the War) Art Brut, becoming Outsider Art, which leads to the ground-breaking Turner Prize 2021. The play dramatises these marginalised and unheard artists' story, the extraordinary times they lived in, and gives these silenced individuals the voice they were denied in their own lifetime. The play includes the wide sweep of how art changes, jumping through time periods, exploring how these individuals revolutionised art, helping it to become Art for All.

## **Biogs**

**Hattie Naylor's** credits include: *Human with Extraordinary Bodies* (National Tour), *The Marxist in Heaven* (Connections, National Theatre), *The Night Watch* (Manchester Royal Exchange), *Going Dark* with Sound&Fury (Fuel/Young Vic), and *Bluebeard* (Gallivant/Bristol Old Vic). She regularly collaborates with Andrew Kötting. *Lek and the Dogs* 2017 (London Film Festival, MUBI, BFI Player) was based on Hattie's Olivier-nominated and Tinniswood-winning play *Ivan and the Dogs* (ATC/Soho Theatre), while *Diseased and Disorderly* (Tyke Films) was shown at the London Film Festival and Raindance. This year she won BBC Best Audio Drama for her gothic thriller *Dead Weather*. She is a senior lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University.

**Dash Arts** creates award-winning exceptional artistic experiences that bridge divides across art forms, cultures, languages, and communities.

Dash Arts seeks to fuse local and global perspectives, cut through stereotypes and generalisations and remove international cultural barriers. Their productions, co-commissioned and co-produced with partners including National Theatre, Sadler's Wells, Curve Leicester, Edinburgh International Festival, Lincoln Center Festival and Luminato Festival, Canada, have had widely-acclaimed major tours in the UK, Europe, Australia and North America and won numerous awards and nominations including Olivier, Evening Standard, TMA, Herald Angel and Dora Awards.

## **Quotes**

### **Hattie Naylor said:**

"I have been a member of the WGGB for many years, and value immensely the work they undertake in supporting and championing writers and the opportunities and resources they provide. This award will enable me to work on a project close to my heart, at a crucial stage of its development. I am hugely grateful for the belief placed by the NPCA in me, this project, and the collaboration with Dash Arts."

### **Josephine Burton, Artistic Director and Chief Executive of Dash Arts, said:**

"Hans Prinzhorn enabled so many people to see the world differently thanks to his publishing of the work of 18 neurodivergent artists in 1921. This work influenced the course of 20th century art and continues to create ripples today. We are so grateful for this



opportunity to bring his story and the lives of the artists to the stage and a wider audience so that they might continue to inspire us today.”

## **The Conference of the Trees**

**By Majid Adin and Yara Rodrigues Fowler (producing partner Good Chance Theatre)**

### **Play synopsis**

An oak tree waits outside a pub on Finchley Road. Elizabeth Bishop strides through the dreams of a man in Coventry. A man in the airport flaps his wings like a bird as he waits at passport control. Six strangers from across the world meet to write poetry, open their hearts and let their imaginations run wild.

Inspired by **The Conference of the Birds**, **The Conference of the Trees** traces the quest of a thousand-year-old Sufi poet to find utopia. From writing in car parks and community centres, to the fantastical quest of an oak tree in search of his cousin, the play meets six people determined to archive the world they have seen and imagine it otherwise.

### **Biogs**

**Majid Adin** is an Iranian fine artist and animator who fled Tehran due to the political nature of his work. He created the official music video for Elton John’s **Rocket Man**, re-contextualising the lyrics as a refugee’s journey to Europe, viewed by over 160 million people worldwide. Majid was awarded the 2018 Groucho Maverick Award, his work has been exhibited at the Venice Biennale and the House of Illustration, and he has been commissioned by UNHCR and Choose Love. Majid’s forthcoming first graphic novel is **Hamid and Shakespeare** and he is a Trustee of Good Chance.

**Yara Rodrigues Fowler** is a novelist from South London. She has written two novels, **Stubborn Archivist** (2019) and **there are more things** (2022). **Stubborn Archivist** was nominated for the Dylan Thomas Prize, the Sunday Times Young Writer of the Year Award and the Desmond Elliott Prize. **there are more things** was shortlisted for the George Orwell Prize for Political Fiction and for the Eccles Centre and Hay Festival Writer’s Award (as a work in progress). She is interested in making work that creates revolutionary desire. Yara is also a part time climate justice organiser.

**Good Chance**, creators of **The Jungle and The Walk**, is a dynamic English theatre company co-creating ground-breaking, heart-thumping, highly relevant “theatre that shakes hands with the world” (**Sunday Times**). We have a proven track-record of devising and producing ambitious high-quality original theatre, art and participation programmes that support

under-represented artists to create new work and access new platforms, help the widest range of audiences respond to our increasingly complex world and give diverse participants across the country opportunities to take part and make connections.

**Majid Adin said:**

“A couple of years ago, I never thought I could be an author, especially a playwright. But this commission has made me believe that I can. We grow up and come from vastly diverse cultures and countries, but I find through the process of writing how these borders are fake – all of us as humans from different parts of the world are so close to each other. But as I step into the galaxy of theatre, this success encourages me to learn more and to write, write, and write.”

**Yara Rodrigues Fowler said:**

“This isn't a traditional play, it's collaboratively written, and features talking trees and poetry. It's about ecology and friendship, poetry and imagination, utopia and a world without borders. By imagining these things we hope we can build them. Thank you to the NPCCS for this funding.”

**Good Chance Theatre said:** “We are absolutely thrilled to be working alongside the Writers' Guild and to join such a prestigious network of talented and innovative writers, each of us simultaneously challenging ourselves to create bold, new work that sparks meaningful change. This unique opportunity for Majid and Yara to explore and champion voices from across the world is one we will cherish, and we can't wait to see what the future holds for **The Conference of the Trees** and our blossoming partnership under the NPCCS.”

## **The Makina Project**

**By Garry Lyons (producing partner Sunderland Culture)**

### **Play synopsis**

This project explores mákina, a form of high energy dance music unique to the North East and associated with the New Monkey night club in Sunderland, where it first flourished in the late 1990s. Born out of rundown council estates and army tours of Iraq and Afghanistan, mákina – a mix of hard trance and Spanish techno – became the soundtrack to a city experiencing post-industrial trauma, with the closure of its shipyards and glass-making factories and the decline of its beloved football club. Building on stories collected from interviews with people involved in mákina, Garry Lyons will develop a music-drama for The Fire Station, Sunderland's new 550-seater venue, that celebrates and shines a light on the mákina phenomenon.

## Biogs

Garry Lyons writes for theatre, television and radio. His plays include **Frankie and Tommy** (Lyric, Hammersmith), **Wicked, Yaar!** (National) and **Mohicans** (Donmar Warehouse). His large-scale adaptation of **The Secret Garden** was a co-production by Leeds Playhouse and Birmingham Rep. For television, he wrote and produced the RTS Award-winning **Decisions** (Channel 4). Other TV credits include **The Bill**, **Soldier Soldier**, **Heartbeat**, and multiple episodes of **The Worst Witch**. Radio includes **Amazonia** (BBC Radio 4) with Rory Kinnear and Michelle Dockery. His most recent stage plays are **The Last Seam** (Cast in Doncaster) and the forthcoming **Blow Down** (Theatre Royal Wakefield/Leeds Playhouse).

**Sunderland Culture** is an Arts Council England NPO and programmes and manages many of the city's main cultural venues.

### Garry Lyons said:

"I'm delighted and honoured to be a winner of such a prestigious scheme, and excited to be given the opportunity to work with Sunderland Culture on a piece of theatre that elevates a little-known but important slice of working-class culture."

### Helen Green, Head of Performance for Sunderland Culture, said:

"We are delighted that the NPCCS has invested in a new piece of theatre inspired by Sunderland's working-class music movement, mákina. The city's new venue, The Fire Station, wants to reflect its many different communities in imaginative and exciting ways that appeal to those who have never stepped into a theatre before."

## This Damp Won't Burn

By Josh Overton (producing partner Hull Truck Theatre)

### Play synopsis

1984, Mira and Jack meet for the first time at the opening of Hull's New Adelphi Club and, high on the mix of 50p pints and alternative music, decide they are in love after 15 minutes. Over the course of 38 years the couple grow, struggle, and change together, but the one constant is their love of music and their love of The Adelphi. **This Damp Won't Burn** celebrates the story of Hull's most infamous anti-establishment club, which helped launch the careers of iconic bands like Oasis, Radiohead, Green Day, Pulp and The House Martins, and how it gave a home and a voice to anyone who needed it and had something to say.

## Biogs

**Josh Overton** is an award-winning playwright and theatre-maker whose passion for language and lyricism can be found at the heart of all his work. Collaborating as a playwright

with theatres and companies throughout the UK and as a poet with the Loud Poets of Edinburgh, his work is political, violent, angry, campy, dumb and kind: but always pointed firmly in the direction of progress and sanity. He currently works as Co-Artistic Director of From Below, a fire circus theatre company, and has two published plays with Oberon Books and one in English and French with the Presses Universitaires du Midi.

**Hull Truck Theatre** is a pioneering theatre with a unique Northern Voice, locally rooted, global in outlook, inspiring artists, audiences, and communities to reach their greatest potential. Hull Truck Theatre produces and presents inspiring theatre that reflects the diversity of a modern Britain. They provide the resources, space and support to grow people and ideas, are an ambassador for their city, a flagship for their region and a welcoming home for communities.

**Josh Overton said:**

“Having written professionally for eight years I know how many roadblocks writers walk into when trying to scale up their work and make bigger and better stuff. The NPCCS has made overcoming those roadblocks massively easier, the idea of the scheme alone gave me the momentum (and the excuse I needed) to start having conversations about writing something for Hull Truck Theatre’s mid-scale audiences and being selected has set my career on a mega positive trajectory that I could not have made happen alone. Super psyched to get started.”

**Adam Pownall, Senior Producer at Hull Truck Theatre, said:**

“We are pleased to be awarded the opportunity to strengthen our relationship with local writer Josh Overton through a new, full-length commission supported by the New Play Commissioning Scheme. Josh is a writer of exceptional and unique talent and the opportunity to support his move from small to mid-scale is one that excites us greatly. His proposal of a new play set at one of the city’s most loved, live music venues – The New Adelphi – will have appeal to our audiences, who enjoy stories with local resonance as well as an opportunity to bring new audiences to the theatre.”

## **This is Not a Pyramid Scheme**

**By Carmen Nasr (producing partner Hampstead Theatre)**

### **Play synopsis**

Kylie recruits Leanne, Leanne recruits Nisha, Nisha recruits Sharon, Sharon recruits Iman and Iman struggles and struggles and struggles ... Five women across the UK recruit each other into what appears to be a lucrative opportunity to sell cosmetics. It soon becomes clear that the system is rigged, and they are in fact each profiting off the next woman’s increasing hardship and desperation. Until it all comes tumbling down. A dark satire, set in the

increasingly absurd world of Multi-Level Marketing companies. An industry that preys on women's vulnerabilities and exploits a culture hell-bent on promoting incessant self-improvement as the only means to personal and financial success, with disastrous consequences.

## **Biogs**

**Carmen Nasr** is a British-Lebanese writer. In 2022, her play **The Climbers** premiered at Theatre by the Lake in Keswick, and **The Maladies** was performed by the Almeida Theatre Young Company, at The Yard Theatre. In 2017 Carmen won the Channel 4 Playwrights' Scheme with **Dubailand**, which later premiered at the Finborough Theatre. Her first play **The House of my Father** was long-listed for the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting in 2015. She is currently under commission to the Kiln Theatre, the Almeida Theatre, and is also adapting the Booker-shortlisted novel **Burnt Sugar** by Avni Doshi for The Lot Productions.

**Hampstead Theatre** is a theatre with new plays and playwrights at its heart. Progressive, forward-thinking, a local theatre with international reach. A place where you can hear stories that haven't been told before, or are told in a way you haven't heard before. Plays where you care about the people, where something in the soul of the writing captures you. Hampstead is driven by the ambition to challenge, influence and shape the future of British theatre.

## **Quotes**

### **Carmen Nasr said:**

"Receiving a commission that's backed by so many different organisations, is just the kind of collective encouragement, as well as financial and creative investment that freelance writers and theatre-makers so desperately need. I'm thrilled to be writing this play for Hampstead Theatre, and really honoured to be part of the New Play Commission Scheme".

### **Hampstead Theatre said:**

"We are delighted to have been shortlisted for this unique and prestigious award. To be able, in collaboration with the Writers' Guild, to commission Carmen to write her brilliant new play is a genuine privilege."

## **Useless Fucker**

**By Vici Wreford-Sinnott (producing partner Live Theatre)**

### **Play synopsis**

Frank is holding court again. He is a central rock in the East Durham farming community, but this time it's different. He is on a hospital ward having had a massive stroke with his backside on show through the back of his gown, as he defiantly tries to right himself. This isn't what wife Stella bought into, son Jacob thinks it's now time for his inheritance as he proclaims it's over for Frank and daughter Scarlett wants to mediate everything and everyone in sight. This family, and wider village drama unfolds to reveal the smalltown mentality of special buses, special schools, and a separate special world. As old friends desert him, the sprites from the moor encourage him on to become a 'fucker', a mischief-maker, and to break every rule in the book of what is expected of him now.

### **Biogs**

**Vici Wreford-Sinnott** is a disabled theatre and screen writer/director. Recent work includes BBC short film **Hen Night**, and radio drama **The UnSung** commissioned by New Writing North. Digital works include **Funny Peculiar** and **Siege**, commissioned by ARC Stockton, HOME Manchester and Northern Stage, and published by Salamander Street. Other plays include **Butterfly** (Cultural Shift, ARC Stockton), **Lighthouse** (English and BSL play), **Another England** (National Tour), **The Art Of Not Getting Lost** (North East Tour), and **Deadly Devotchka** (Edinburgh Fringe). Vici is an Associate Artist at ARC Stockton and is under commission to Live Theatre.

**Live Theatre** is one of the country's only dedicated new writing buildings outside of London. From its quayside location in central Newcastle, it is a hotbed of politically charged new productions that have travelled around the world whilst building up an impassioned local audience. The venue has been pivotal in the careers of many of the country's leading playwrights including Shelagh Stephenson, Lee Hall, Alistair McDowall and Ishy Din, plus a newer generation that includes Alison Carr, Kema Kay, Olivia Hannah and many more. Recent productions include Patrick Marber's **Red Lion** (West End), Lee Hall's **Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour** (West End/NY) and the world premiere of Lukas Moodysson's **We Are The Best!** by Rebecca Glendenning-Laycock.

### **Vici Wreford-Sinnott said:**

"I am thrilled to have been selected by the NPCA panel to realise my play **Useless Fucker** with Live Theatre in Newcastle, where I am very excited to be working with Artistic Director Jack McNamara. It creates an opportunity to develop something on a new scale for me as a

writer which explores disability in well-rounded and surprising ways, at the heart of East Durham life. I nervously presented my self-produced, first play **Moll Cutpurse: A Comedy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** at Live Theatre many years ago and it feels truly amazing to be exploring new, ambitious work there.”

**Jack McNamara, Artistic Director, Live Theatre, said:**

“When I arrived at Live Theatre last Autumn I became immediately aware of what a creative and political force Vici Wreford-Sinnott was. I wanted Vici to pursue something close to her heart and at a different scale to that usually allocated to work with such personal and political meaning. **Useless Fucker** is a big project in every sense, at exactly the level of ambition that both Vici and Live Theatre will relish. We are hugely grateful to the NPCPS panel for backing us to think big and bring work of such a radical nature to a much wider audience.”

## **Woodhill**

**By Matt Woodhead (producing partner LUNG)**

### **Play synopsis**

“There is not a crisis in our prisons. I want to continue to deliver a safe and appropriate prison regime.”

**Chris Grayling, Chief Inspectorate of Prisons**

In 1992, HMP Woodhill was opened on the outskirts of Milton Keynes. Designed to protect and reform prisoners, it was supposed to be a flagship facility. Instead, what happened was the biggest scandal the UK criminal justice system has ever faced. 27 prisoners died by their own hand at Woodhill. Despite multiple death investigations and coroners’ reports, this number continues to rise.

This new verbatim play will examine life on the inside, the individual vs the state and the failings of the UK criminal justice system. This is a contemporary British story about how much this Government values a life. This is the story of families of Woodhill who continue to fight for justice.

### **Biogs**

Matt Woodhead is the Co-Artistic Director of LUNG with Helen Monks. Founded in Barnsley in 2012, LUNG is a campaign-led verbatim theatre company that tours work nationally. They work closely with different communities to make verbatim theatre and hidden voices heard. LUNG creates work that shines a light on political, social and economic issues in modern Britain, using people’s actual words to tell their stories. LUNG are Creative Associates on the

National Theatre's Speak Up programme. **Woodhill** will be produced for LUNG by Camille Koosyial.

## **Quotes**

### **Matt Woodhead said:**

"This award is such a game changer for LUNG. The support of the NPCS means that we can finally start work on a project that has been on pause for the last three years. This has unlocked something really special for us, we can't wait to get to work on telling this vital story. Thank you."

**For further information contact Sarah Woodley, WGGB Communications Manager:  
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