

# National Convention *of* Youth Drama 2023



## Shout Outs (Video Transcript)

**Emma:** We're going to be kicking things off with Rikki Payne from Scottish Youth Theatre.

[applause]

**Rikki:** Hello, Glasgow. My name's Rikki Payne. I'm the Creative Director of Scottish Youth Theatre. I've not been in post for very long, but in that time, I have been working all over Scotland with Scottish Youth Theatre, traveling far and wide, listening to young people and supporting the work of young artists. Scottish Youth Theatre are here so young people can make great theatre. Not the best theatre they can, but the best theatre there is. We believe in nurturing young artists, in making them into young professionals, giving them skills and confidence, and experience they need to embark on a career, in theatre, a professional career.

Over the last five years, Scottish Youth Theatre's undergone almost a perpetual cycle of adaptation and change, I think. What we're trying to do now is develop a really strong, consistent programme. The first change I think that we are looking at and exploring is really around access. All our programmes for young people are free, and the free point of access, and where we can, we will reimburse them for accommodation and travel costs. However, we understand that that's not - the economic factors are not the only barriers to participation in youth theatre and in youth theatre activities. We want to reach out more. We want to engage with more organisations, particularly organisations in spaces and places where theatre is not the go-to cultural forum.

We have moved from our Glasgow venue. We no longer live in Glasgow. Scotland is now our venue. As I've said earlier on, everyone has gone from Mull to Orkney in the past few months. Again, we're really interested in talking to youth theatres as well as talking to youth theatres in the central belt. We're really interested in talking to youth theatres and educational establishments outside that central belt as well. The last thing that's changing is really our programme and we're trying to embed some consistency in that programme so young people can look forward in the future to engaging with us at an age-appropriate level.

Our *Shapeshifter* projects are partnerships with youth theatres. Our *National Ensemble* project is going to be reinstated and that's going to be 20 young people for one month in a city in Scotland, somewhere, working with us on a piece of theatre that will be toured. Finally, we're looking at our *Trajectories* programme, which is first time commissions for early-career artists, early career young artists. Woven between them is a constant dialogue with young people, a way of identifying what their needs are.

What I would say to you is if you had young people in your groups, you think Scottish Youth Theatre would be useful, I'm here with the whole team today. The skip cap massive, although they've taken their caps off. We've got Annie, Josie, and Jamie, and myself. Please come up **[KLAXON]** Thank you, guys.

[applause]

**Emma:** Excellently demonstrated, Rikki, well done. Next up we have James Beagon from Strange Town.

[applause]

**James:** Hello, everyone. I have not practiced this. Let's see what happens. I'm James. I'm the youth theatre manager at Strange Town. We are a theatre organization based in Leith. I say 'theatre organisation' because we have many different arms. We have a youth theatre for five to 18-year-olds, a young company for 18 to 25-year-olds, an agency to put young people forward for professional work, and the touring company takes professional productions to schools and other youth venues around Edinburgh and Scotland.

I'm here mainly on a plugging mission, because we are predominantly a new writing theatre. We do not engage with devised work because I know a lot of you theatres do, but we engage with scripted work. We have a lot of scripted performances coming up, which I'm going to tell you about because I have a big list here.

Next week, let's start off with our touring company are bringing back *Storm Lantern* on Thursday 30 - Friday 31 March at the Scottish Storytelling Centre. This was our first touring production that we took out to schools in September and October 2022. We are bringing it back for two performances. It is about Sophie Schul and her final hours before she was executed for helping the German resistance in Nazi Germany.

In June '23, we have three shows at the Traverse Theatre which are being performed by our 14-18 groups. They are about childhood and heritage. We have *The Kind Complex* by Isla Cowan about memory through AI. We have *Haribo Wedding* by Andy Edwards which is about the horror of nostalgia. We have *Over the Waves*, which is by me, which is about the limits and the ownership of history, but that's not everything.

We have three more shows the week before that. Also, at the Storytelling Centre from three brand new writers in Edinburgh youth theatre circles. *Lola is Alone and She Likes It* by our eight tens, which has been performed-- Written, sorry by Josie Young, a young fox who refuses to accept help to rebuild her home. *The Wild Tides of Clevna* by Naomi Westermann, a murder mystery with extra sea monsters. *I Am Here* by Katie Fraser, a World War II true story about the evacuation of kids to Canada in the Second World War.

There is even more in December '23, we are looking to have an open call for playwrights interested in writing for young people, and if that interests you, please come and talk to me about it at lunch. We run skills groups for 5-7, 8-12, and we also run a marvelous film group, which is led by Daniel Orejon who's sat awkwardly in the middle there.

[laughter]

**James:** ...who produce and film their own content. After the pandemic, we decided rather than produce what we do, we wanted to expand and double the amount of content that we offered to people in Edinburgh. Our touring company, as I've mentioned, tours to Edinburgh schools. We have a new production coming September and October 2023 also written by Isla Cowan about climate change. Our young company recently had a scratch night on Wednesday, which was great, Andy took photos of it. It was really, really fun. We're looking for places to tour that to as well. We have an agency! Jude Coward Nicoll, who did after school drama with us from a very young age, recently won an Oscar for the boy - I got to get this right, *The Boy, the Fox, the Mole, and the Horse* because I keep on adding extra animals to that title.

[laughter]

**James:** And a BAFTA **[KLAXON]** as well.

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you, James. Just a reminder as well that this is being filmed, [laughter] so if you didn't catch all of those dates, you can refer to it afterwards. Next up we have Jenny Anderson on behalf of Kabuki UK.

[applause]

**Jenny:** Hi there. I'm Jenny, and I'm a freelance drama practitioner. The work that I've been doing on Zoom recently has been with young people across the UK who have the same rare syndrome as me, which is Kabuki Syndrome. They have a varied variety of challenges which are both physical and also learning abilities. I approached Kabuki UK in April 2021 to ask them if I could use my skills as a drama facilitator on Zoom specifically for young people with Kabuki and their siblings.

A particular highlight that I've had from the Zoom sessions is when we managed to do *Peter Pan* on Zoom during the summer of 2020. It was just a fantastic experience to do with them, and then we brought it back to life in real life at our Family Day in June last year, which was just great. It was a mix of different people I had to work with, and I had to think on my feet because kids were asking me questions and I had to think on my feet when I was trying to deal with various questions from them.

This convinced me that engaging youngsters in drama whatever their difficulties or disabilities, is of huge benefit and it can provide an opportunity for them to enjoy a shared activity with siblings, which can be a challenge for parents. The Zoom sessions also helped with their social isolation during the pandemic. The young people gained new skills and friends through these experiences, and some had never done drama before they came to these sessions. I'm thrilled that the workshops were so well received and I'm trying to still fit them in whenever I've got time in my busy schedule and that of the children, now that they're back to school, so, yeah. [applause]

**Emma:** Thank you, Jenny, and well done for beating the clock. [laughter] Izzie Kerr, on behalf of Wester Hailes High School.

[applause]

**Izzie:** Hello. I'm Izzie Kerr. I'm here from Wester Hailes High School, but also to represent the voice of drama teachers across Scotland, hopefully. First of all, the school that I'm in if you don't know it, it's very, very impacted by the social and economic situation that the young people find themselves in, we are in a very, very deprived area. As a result of that, young people that I work with, most of them don't know theatre. They've never been to a theatre.

They don't really know how to engage with that whole ether that we all work in. Thankfully for us, we get to bring that to young people and see how it impacts them on a daily basis. I'm currently involved in the *Positive Stories for Negative Times* project with Wonder Fools, and it's been fantastic. The young people are really engaging with scripts and I would encourage every single person to come along, if you can, to the performing weekend of that to see how young people from skills and from youth groups are getting to take to the stage, but on a matter that will hopefully interest all of you, I know the number one feedback that we usually get from facilitators is how do you get into schools? Hello, come talk to me! [laughter] It is really, really hard to get email addresses, but once you get in there, it's a spider web. Everyone spreads information to everyone else. If anyone has got anything that they're wanting to tour in schools, or if you're wanting to come in and facilitate anything, please come and talk to me. I've got contacts in Edinburgh, East Lothian, Midlothian and Fife, so everywhere in the central belt, and I'm more than happy to

spread it around all the teachers that I have got contacts with because we're all in the same thing together. We're all trying to inspire young people to be involved in theatre as a common mission. Let's work together to do that.

Thank you very much.

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you, Izzie. Up next, we have Jordan Blackwood for Aberdeen Performing Arts.

[applause]

**Jordan:** Hello. I've got some notes because I tend to waffle, so wish me luck. I'm Jordan. I'm a freelance director, facilitator, producer, and also very tall, so I'm just going to hang down here. [laughter] I'm here with my Aberdeen Performing Arts hat on and I'm the creative producer for *Light the Blue*, which is our multi-art form festival that celebrates the creativity of young people aged 5 to 25, mainly across Aberdeen, but also across Scotland. This year our festival is running from the 10th to the 18th of June. Just in case I run out of time, I guess the very quick points are: 1) we want to see as many youth groups come and join us, even if it's just as participants and workshops and audience members. Look out in April for the programme going live. We would really love to see you there.

Also, I'm looking ahead to next year and I'd love to just start to have conversations with different organizations across the country to see how we can connect the dots a little bit more and hopefully bring some more groups up to join in at a festival in June next year and for hopefully the next few years if my contract gets renewed. [laughter] We're in the final stages of programming this year's festival, just to give a little bit of an insight into some of the work that we're doing, it's definitely multi-artform, so the core of it is youth groups across youth theatres, dance, music, film and different artforms that make up the landscape of the arts industry, especially with a focus on young people.

We're connecting the dots already a little bit and we're starting to invite groups from Perth, from Inverness, from Edinburgh, to come and join us this year. That's the starting point. As I say, let's keep that going. Please just come and grab me. Some of the work we do involves schools engagement projects as well. We're doing our *Snappy Operas* project in primary schools. We're doing an installation and performance project in an additional support needs school. We're also working with the Traverse on their *Class Act* programme. They're bringing that up to Aberdeen this year as well. We're also looking at how we can start to encourage a bit of an interchange between groups. We've got Visible Fictions supporting a devising project between two of our youth theatre groups and one of local dance company group. They're sharing their experience and supporting each other along the way. Again, that's something that I'd love to cast the net a bit wider on as we look to the future of *Light the Blue*.

Obviously, young people are totally at the heart of every decision that we make. We've got a young advisors' group who are informing where the festival goes next. We are making sure that every single event and every single part of this programme is to do with the experience of young people. That's where, hopefully, if we can bring some more groups up, we can just have a good old time on super Saturday, Saturday 17 June. Get it in your diaries. [laughter] Yes, I guess just on a broader perspective the creative engagement team at Aberdeen Performing Arts and joined by Lindsay, the participation producer. We are starting to develop lots of new and interesting projects. We're always on the lookout for facilitators up in Aberdeen and the northeast. **[KLAXON]** Thanks. Bye.

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you. Now we have Rachel-Jane Morrison on behalf of Stellar Quines and Young Quines.

[applause]

**Rachel-Jane:** Hello, I'm Rachel-Jane Morrison. I'm from Fife, I'm a Fife-based practitioner theatremaker and artist. Today I am joined by the Young Quines delivery team in the front row here. We are feminist theatre for young people. We run across three different hubs across Fife. We've got two in Levenmouth and one in Kirkcaldy. If you don't know where those places are, we can show you. [laughter]

Alright, we have three groups. We meet on Tuesdays for young people. We've got a group for nine to 13-year-olds and a group for 14 to 21. They are for young women and those who are marginalised genders and would benefit from a predominantly female-led space. We are in our second year of delivery, so we're quite new, quite fresh. We are supported by the Culture Collective and we are working in partnership with the wonderful Stellar Quines.

Young Quines was an idea that I took to Stellar Quines a couple of years ago, right before the pandemic happened in Morrison's Car Park with a mask on. Then we found out we've got funding when nothing was open. [laughter] We've been working since then and currently we're working on a sharing. It's going to be happening in June. It seems like there's lots happening in June, but please come and see us. We've got three hubs who are all going to creatively contribute to that. My Hub, we are working on a piece of devised theatre that includes a bit of blueprint and a bit of script and it's about the young people's experiences of relationships and friendships and the interconnectivity of that and the fallout of that and the drama that happens with that.

Then our younger Quines, they are devising a piece of theatre based on a poem that is by Elisabeth Hower, *Here Are Girls Like Lions*. We're looking at the exploitation between movement and text and how young women can often be described as animalistic. Then we've got our Kirkcaldy hub who are creating a multimedia exploration into female-identifying artists and the young people's politics within them.

We would love for you to come visit us in our little corner of Fife, the Kingdom. We are Scotland's only feminist-led youth theatre. We would love to come and visit your groups more importantly. We've been trying to take them out of Fife and show them the world a little bit. We've recently been to see *Brainstorm* at Perth Youth Theatre and we would love to continue that journey of exchange, and coming up to Aberdeen, and you coming to see us. It would be lovely for our groups to meet your groups. For us, the callout today is come along and see us and we'll come and see you. I'm Rachel-Jane. This is my team. Thank you so much.

[applause]

**Emma:** Excellent work. Next up we have Natalia from LYRA.

[applause]

**Anna:** Hi everyone. I'm actually not Natalia. I'm Anna. She's unfortunately not well so she wasn't able to be here today, but I'm just stepping in for her. I'm the Engagement Producer for Lyra and I'm here with my colleague, Jo Timmons, Jo Sharp, and James Preston. Lyra is a performing arts company, making work with children and teens in Greater Craigmillar in Edinburgh. Last year we celebrated 10 years in our wonderful venue artspace where children could come and watch professional performance as well as learn new skills and create their own work through our year-round young artist programme. Children and teens are at the heart of everything that we do. They decide the projects that they want to

work on with us, the artists that they want to collaborate with, as well as the shows that we programme in our venue.

Currently, four of our young artists are busy working towards our annual festival, *Bright and Wild*. They're going to be performing new works that they commissioned in Autumn last year. There will also be a special curtain-raiser from our amazing young company that will kick off the festival which takes place over the last two weekends in May. It's free to attend and we'd love to invite you and your participants to come along and see what we've been working on. Also, if you're a maker or director, we're calling out for the next round of commissions in the summertime, so please look out for that opportunity. If you're interested in chatting to us about that and finding out a bit more, come and say hello for the rest of the day. That's it. Thank you.

[applause]

**Emma:** Excellent. Next we have Louise Brown on behalf of RCS.

[applause]

**Louise:** Hello everyone. I guess it greatly says RCS, but it could also say Fair Access. My name is Louise Brown and I work in Fair Access at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. Fair Access really is what it says on the team. My job is Outreach and Engagement, so I reach out and hopefully sometimes engage. I do a lot of work in communities and schools and colleges, working in collaboration with different organisations and theatre companies to let people know that actually, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland is really a fancy name for an amazing place that you can go to and that is accessible. You can go there and you can study all of the performing and production arts under one roof. Not to be alarmed by the building and not to be alarmed by the name.

Fair Access is really about supporting those young people who face the biggest barriers. A lot of what we do is working with people who are living at the poorest postcodes in Scotland. Young people who have care experience, young carers, people facing multiple barriers, many of whom you are working with on a fantastic and regular basis.

What we do in Fair Access is we provide pathways really to those who are interested in studying a higher education. They may not be. Who knows? Life can take you in so many directions. Who knew that COVID was going to happen? We reach out to those young people and say, "*If you're interested, if you want to do it, we've got these two amazing pathways.*" One is called Transitions, one is called Widening Access to the Creative Industries.

Transitions is regular, weekly, free, high-quality, classes, coaching, free theatre tickets so that you really build your critical faculties with an idea to support you into hopefully the RCS, but maybe somewhere else. Widening Access is a series of like, put your toe in the water and try it. Different activities that you might do, not so committed but you experience things that make you go, "*Oh, maybe that is me after all.*"

I'm here to talk to you really briefly about Contemporary Performance Practice Free Tasters which is part of that widening outreach. We're running two, three tasters as part of big series of them in Contemporary Performance Practice. Again, don't be alarmed by the title. A lot of people are. We're looking for people who are interested in creating work, devising work, people who are into movement, into dance, into using light and sound in a creative way. People who are makers in the widest sense of the word.

We're working in partnership with Traverse which we're really delighted by and we're running free sessions led by the new course leader, her name is Dr. Vânia Gala, in Contemporary Performance Practice. We're running a free session on the 11th of April at the Traverse. It's open to anybody. We will hopefully prioritise those people who meet our

eligibility criteria, but we want those people who are interested to come along. We're running another one at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland that's in partnership with Scottish Youth Theatre, Firefly, and Beacon Arts. It's free. It's on April the 29th. It runs from 12pm to 2pm.

**[KLAXON]**

**Louise:** Oh!

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you. Two changes here for our slides. If we go through the break, we have exactly enough time for the people on the list because we started a bit late. We're going to skip the break. [laughter] Well done. Skip the break. I love the enthusiasm. Also, Zoe has decided not to share today, and that's fair because she's one of the directors sharing at *Emergence* tonight. It's a big day for her. So that means that we are going to skip straight to Hollie from YTAS.

[applause]

**Hollie:** Hi. I wasn't expecting to be up so soon. [laughter] My name is Hollie Wegner-Jaszkin, I'm the Marketing and Comms Manager at YTAS and I'm here to chat to you about the sector review. As Kenny said earlier, every few years, YTAS undertakes a review of Scotland's youth theatre sector to help us identify how we're all developing as a sector and how we can develop further [to sign language interpreter]. I'm so sorry, I'll slow down. [laughter] The sector review survey is open to all groups, YTAS members and non-members alike, who use drama and performance in their work with young people outside of formal education. Any extracurricular drama group is eligible to complete it, whether that be run by a theatre company through a school, volunteers, or paid staff as a charity or a for-profit. Doesn't matter if it takes place in a village hall or on the biggest stage in the land. If it's weekly, in a summer school, we dinnae care. We want to hear about it. We want to understand the richness of the activity that's taking place across the whole nation.

So, we'll be asking you questions about how many young people attend your sessions, what they pay, if anything, to take part, how many practitioners you have, what they're paid, where you are in Scotland, all that kind of thing. We'll also be asking you some bigger questions like the EDI characteristics of the young people in your session. That's so that we can provide an overview up the way to Creative Scotland and the likes. Any data that you share with YTAS will help give us a bigger picture of who the sector is working with and if there's any gaps that we need to address on a national level.

While the analysis helps us to identify trends, don't worry, individual data isn't published. The reports later in the year will let organisations see where they sit in comparison to others if they want to make any changes. There's no right or wrong answers. We're not just being nosy. All of this helps YTAS to capture the bigger picture of what you're up to. That helps us to sharpen the focus of our work.

In 2020 specifically, we added on a COVID-19 impact survey. That helped us to secure funding to provide emergency grants and that helped us to grow our own grant-making work. Following past sector reviews groups across the country have used the insights to help them identify their own priorities, invigorate their funding applications, support communities, and develop opportunities for their participants and leaders.

If you're new to the sector or if you just haven't seen the sector review for a wee while, it's available to read online. I did put the thing in here, but I'm not going to read out. It's the main menu of the YTAS website. Then you go to "what we do" and drop down to "projects" and you'll see it there.

2023's survey will open the week beginning Monday 17 April and it'll be open until midnight on 30 May. So that's loads of time to complete it. It should just take you around 15 minutes and we'll publish the results in by September. Please make some time to join in with our research when it goes live. Share it. Cajole your **[KLAXON]** colleagues, I'm breaking the rules and talking over the thing! [laughter]

**Emma:** Thank you, Hollie. Next, we have Hannah Edie, talking to us about *Emergence*, where the tickets are now live if you haven't bought a ticket... but listen first and then get a ticket. [laughter]

[applause]

**Hannah:** Hello. I feel like I don't actually have much to say because Emma's covered a lot of it today. I just wanted to say please do come along if you've not got tickets already for this evening. [to sign language interpreter] Sorry, I'm speaking really fast. For our Directors' Development Programme, we've been working together since August. There's eight directors who have been working with Emma and it's been a fantastic experience. If this programme is to run next year again, I would definitely recommend it to anybody who wants to develop their skills as a director, meet a network of other like-minded youth theatre directors, and to create work in quite a low-pressure environment. It's all been funded. It's all been supported fantastically by YTAS and we've had a fantastic experience. Please do pop along to see our results of that this evening.

Also, I thought while I'm up here I might as well shout out about this as well. I am also a drama artist at the Lyceum and my colleagues have been working towards *The Multiverse is Gay*, which is with our young company. That is being put on at the beginning of April. The week of the 11th of April, if you check on the Lyceum website, you'll be able to see all the details about that, but please come and see it because it looks fantastic, sparkly and wonderful and there's a beaver in it, which is excellent. [laughter] Always good fun. It should be a lot of good fun as well for that. Thank you.

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you, Hannah. Next, we have Craig and Anna talking to us about Solar Bear.

[applause]

**Craig:** I'm the Workshop Facilitator for Solar Bear. My name's Craig and this is Alice. She is our Community Engagement Manager and she also works in Solar Bear. Hello, everyone. Solar Bear is based in Glasgow and we are focused on working with professionals and different artists and theatre makers and creators and directors and producers and everyone. Also working on filmmaking as well. We cover a lot of things across the board. Our focus in Solar Bear is for deaf young people. That's why I'm here today. I am a workshop facilitator myself and really what we're trying to do is encourage young people from 11 to 21 to get involved in our group. We've got multiple different people who have also deaf, people who use BSL. Some people who speak, some people who speak and sign, and people across the board.

We also have people with additional support needs, so we adapt to fit their needs at Solar Bear. In the community engagement work that Alice is doing, in the future, what we want to do is see this work spread out across the rest of Scotland so that people have access and opportunities for deaf young people. At the moment it is quite difficult. We are just based in Glasgow, so that work happens a lot in Glasgow. It's about how we can reach out further to different theatre organizations and provide access and opportunities. Maybe some of you are here from Inverness or the Highlands or Aberdeen or someone else outside of the... hello! [laughter]. Maybe what we can do is drop a question for you all now. How would you envisage involving deaf people in the work that you do? How can you make



sure that it's accessible and how can you have access provision for deaf people? I also wanted to add something else... something else... Don't do it yet. [laughter]

Oh yes. Any questions that you have, you can look on our website on Solar Bear, but also any questions that you have today, please feel free to grab us at any point. Remember that we don't bite. We are happy to have discussions with you. We've got interpreters here, so everything's covered. I think that's it. Bye.

[applause]

**Emma:** No worries. Thank you. There we go. Next, we have our host, Claire Swanson from Capital Theatres.

[applause]

**Claire:** Hello, and I am going to tell you really quickly about our youth advisory board, which is my number one favorite project, even though I'm not meant to have favorites.

We at Capital Theatres have an aging audience base, the majority of our audience are 55 plus. We know that needs to change. Therefore, we decided we were going to start that by embedding a youth advisory board into our building and the way that we do things. We did some consultation with young people in universities and in our staff and that we had relationships already with, to talk to them about what that might look like if we were going to do that.

Then we did some external interviewing and we had an application process and we eventually ended up with this group of 10 young people and we have a chair as well. It takes group to 11. They're 16 to 25 and they are genuinely the most awesome young people I have ever worked with. They're incredibly different. They bring a lot of different perspectives and needs and experiences into the room. Each month we meet, we do a check-in, we have pizza, that turned out to be very important [laughter]. Then we do an accountability session where I feedback on what has materially changed since the last session, as a result of the feedback they give us.

Then we invite a member of one of our teams in to talk about an issue that is relevant to us at the moment and to get their advice on. We've talked to them about how should we change our marketing. We've talked to them about particular marketing campaigns for shows, but we've also talked to them about really important commercial decisions. *"We've been offered this opportunity. There's a lot of money. Do you think we should take it? What would it say to you if we did this?"* That thing. I've been doing lots of work with them to develop our ideas for the studio because we're changing the way that this space exists as a place in the city.

We brought them in on heritage engagement, all kinds of things. Big takeaways, if you're going to do it, the accountability session is super important because we need to show that we are taking their time seriously, and that has meant that the trust between us as a group has become really strong. I could go on all day, I probably have 20 seconds left, so I'm going to stop. Anyone talk to me about this at any point, I will go off on one, it's amazing. Also just to say we're going to be recruiting for a heritage engagement person who's going to work with us on a four-and-a-half-year project around the King's Theatre now that we know that that's going ahead.

Keep an eye out for that. We also have a holiday club coming up for young people who want to learn about the theatre industry. If you know any young people who want to find out what programming and marketing and that kind of thing involves, send them my way. All right, thank you. Have a lovely day.

[applause]

**Emma (YTAS):** Quick tech break, this isn't working [microphone]. Oh, grab the other one. Back in, we've got Emma Forsyth from the Theatre Royal Dumfries.

[applause]

**Emma (TRD):** Oh, this is big and scary. Okay. I'm Emma. I'm the Education and Youth Engagement Officer for the Theatre Royal Dumfries, which is the oldest working theatre in Scotland. That sounds like a great tagline for your tours that you're all going to go on now. I'm here with Andre, who's one of our youth leaders. We've got the Guild of Players, who are an amateur theatre company that reside in the Theatre Royal, and we also have touring companies that come into the theatre.

I predominantly engage the youth. I organise the Guild of Players Youth Theatre and then all the education that comes around with that. We only have about six members, six to ten members of staff in the Theatre Royal. The rest is run by volunteers because the Guild of Players is a volunteer organisation. I joined about seven months ago into this sector as well. I've never done anything like this before. I've only done student theatre. From that time I've seen the youth theatre grow from about 12 average per group. We've got four groups to now. We are fully at capacity with waiting lists as well, which is incredible, amazing.

We are also doing three shows in June. Join the club! And with that, I will never do three shows in four days again. We're doing that and we're also doing our first musical in about five years which is amazing. I want to shout about today is Dumfries and Galloway as a whole. We are a huge, huge region and we are the last stop in Scotland, the first stop from England, and first stop from Ireland as well, however, no one really comes to us. [laughter] We have this budding, thriving culture and art sector coming to life in the past two years I'd say, and we've got organisations like the Stove Network, Performance Collective Stranraer, that are helping young artists find their way in the art sector. Basically I'm here to say, "Come see us."

I also would love some - sorry, I absolutely blanked - I'd love some help and advice [laughter] about how to engage these 16 to 25 years olds in Dumfries and Galloway, who have got this awful attitude towards the region, when you're that age that you're not going to make it if you stay, and you have to leave to the city which is what I did, I went to Glasgow, but now I've come back and joined organisations like the Stove and being a part of the Theatre Royal, I've seen the people that do stay and involve themselves in the creative industry down there, go so far because there's none of us. If you're up for chatting about how to promote this more, and how to encourage this age group to stay at least for another year, take a gap year [laughter] and come and make theatre, and make art with us, that'd be great.

[applause]

**Emma (YTAS):** Excellent, thank you Emma. We've now gone to the high-tech part of the day where we no longer have your logos projected. Next, we have, Robbie Gordon from the Traverse/Wonder Fools.

[applause]

**Robbie:** Hi everyone, how's it going? Good to see you all. I'm going to talk a little bit about two projects. Izzie put the first one even better, as reminder about why we do it in terms of *Positive Stories for Negative Times*. [To Izzie] Thank you so much for getting a lot of that out of the way of what I was going to say. *Positive Stories for Negative Times* is on its season three now which is...

[applause]

**Robbie:** Where did the last three years go, who knows? We've commissioned 18 different playwrights/artists across the last three years. We've had about 8,500 young people involved in the project. From Australia to Auchinleck, it's been wild. Really what I'm here to say is just two things. We're running four festivals in the summer along with Perth, Ayr Gaiety, Eden Court. What? Where's the other one gone?

**Emma:** Traverse.

**Robbie:** In the Traverse, obviously.

[laughter]

**Kenny:** Where you work, Robbie [laughter].

**Robbie:** Wow, crazy. You know what kind of a morning it's been for me, eh. Really, what I'd love people to do is come and support. The other wee thing I'd like to flag is we've just had one group drop out as well. There's 24 companies and we've got a 25th slot! If anyone's looking for something to do in the summer, you want to stage one of the plays, come and speak to us. Also, beyond all that, we've got an open-access approach to the plays.

Anyone that wants to use them, whether that be to make a show, whether that be to do a workshop, or even just to have the plays to read with the young people, you can do that. You can sign up and you can access these plays.

This year they're by Tim Crouch, Robert Softley Gale, Sara Shaarawi, Leyla Josphine (who by the way I met at the National Festival of Youth Theatre), Bryony Kimmings, and also The Pappy Show. These plays are yours and it really came from a whole concept that the arts should be for everyone. No matter where you're from, no matter how old you are, these plays are yours. You can sign up; you can take them and you can get involved. We also run a CPD programme so you can meet the artists involved. We've got workshops, Tim Crouch, Bryony Kimmings, Sara Shaarawi over the next few weeks which you could also come to you, you don't need to be part of the project. Please, drop me a line at [robbie@wonderfools.org](mailto:robbie@wonderfools.org).

Also, the other thing is *Class Act* is on tour. *Class Act* is the Traverse's flagship engagement programme. We've been going for 31 years which is pretty incredible. I've had the privilege to look after it for the last few years and it's coming up to Aberdeen to *Light the Blue*, to work with four schools up there. It's also going to Ayr to work with another four schools with a show premiere at the Gaiety. We've got another few locations to find and work with over the next few years and we would really, really love to hear from organisations AKA Dumfries and Galloway who go, "look, we want things happening". We are here to make things happen and I just want to say thank you so much to for listening to me waffle. Thank you so much. Have a good one.

[applause]

**Emma:** Lovely, thanks Robbie. Next, we have Andrew Simpkins from Eden Court.

[applause]

**Andrew:** We're going to tag team it because I think my boss would actually have a heart attack if she thought that I would speak on our behalf. I will be very quick because Vicky is much better at this than I am. We're going to speak about two different projects each.

I'm Andrew Simpkins, I'm Arts Practitioner at Eden Court. Relatively new. The project that I'm talking about is our *Hear My Roar* project that we're doing, which has been superb. I've loved it. It's basically going to isolated areas in the Highlands as an online session to get a group of people to write a script that then our 14-16 youth theatre are going to perform next in June at our showcase but also at *Light the Blue* Festival as well.

It has been incredible. Beautiful people, I'm very excited to be part of it. Another thing I'm going to say as well is that we always have a huge Highland welcome at Eden Court. It's the best place I've ever worked with such beautiful people and we're always really welcoming to anybody who would like to come. Then Vicky, you go for it.

**Vicky:** Cool. So, my first point... I'm on the scrounge. I would love as part of our summer showcase in June at the One Touch Theatre, I would love a play for 8- to 10-year-olds. If anyone has anything that they know of that someone has written, let me know. I would love to have a look for something that we can perform at Eden Court along with my 11-13s. That's my first point. My second point is off the back of Robbie as well. We are, as he mentioned, one of the cultural hubs for the *Positive Stories for Negative Times* Festival. We have two... is that correct?

**Andrew:** Yes.

**Vicky:** Two of our youth theatres taking part, along with a couple of schools as well. Yes, feel free to come up. If you want a wee cheeky trip to the Highlands, come up. That's your excuse, is that us?

**Vicky:** Yes.

[applause]

**Emma:** Thank you, Eden Court. Next, we have Katrine Turner from Firefly Arts.

**Katrine:** Hiya, I'm Katrine, and I'm the Engagement Coordinator of Firefly, and I've been sent unsupervised to represent Firefly today, which is exciting. I think a lot of people might know already, Firefly, because it's very old, actually, it's turning 33, which is why I've come to do a shout out. It used to be West Lothian Youth Theatre. It's an organisation that works across West Lothian. We have a lot of different companies there. We work in all the schools. That's my job. If you want to talk about schools engagement, please come and talk to me.

Next week, we're having a birthday party, which you're all invited to. It's next Thursday at the Howden Park Centre. Firefly works at the Howden Park Center in Livingston. We have our own theatre just for youth theatre, which is amazing. A really great black box space. We're going to have performances by, I think, six different groups. We're going to have workshops running, arts and crafts activities. It's open for all the family. If you know anyone with family around West Lothian or you just want to come and see what we do, it's next Thursday and we're turning 33. I think that's just what I want to plug.

Oh, we have a lot of shows as well in June. They are mostly devising, so yes, they happen all across June and are happening all over West Lothian. Some of them are site-specific, some of them are different locations. If we've worked with the locations, and then two of them are in our hub. If you are interested in coming to see some devised work, they're going to be really good quality. One of them is going up to *Positive Stories for Negative Times* as well, you'll see that and we're right in the middle. We're easy for any group to come and get to. Yes, do get in touch if anyone wants to come visit us.

[applause]

**Emma:** Nearly there. We've only got two left. Marion Geoffray from Children's Parliament.

[applause]

**Marion:** I'll be quick. I promise this was a last-minute impulse, so apologies for the messy notes and the translation. My name is Marion Geoffray. I'm an independent theatre maker, but I also work for Children's Parliament as a lead project worker on their Dignity in School

programme. For those of you who don't know what Children's Parliament is, it's not an actual Parliament, by the way. A lot of people are confused by this. Anyway, we are a charity based in Edinburgh that works closely with the government on leading consultations with young people and children at the heart of it through steering groups about their health and wellbeing, but also about their rights. We work on dignity in schools, mainly in SIMD schools, so in deprived areas and in different local authorities across Scotland to support teachers and pupils in the implementation of the UNCRC, which is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children, which is currently being operated into Scottish law.

It's something that is of concern to all of us. What else? I can't really read my notes. What do we do in schools? We work primarily with primary schools currently Clackmannanshire and Dundee, and we create custom programmes for each of the schools using arts and drama to announce the pupils' learning environment, but also to let them know about their rights and make sure that they're implemented correctly within the schools.

We are very keen to connect with local organisations and communities and artists that are local to those areas in order to provide unique and special opportunities for those pupils. If you're interested in children's rights-based practice, please come and talk to me. I will also be leading a workshop about education in the afternoon where we can talk furthermore about it. The other thing that I wanted to say is that we have a very useful online hub with loads of resources and training. If you're not familiar with the UNCRC or what does it mean for your artistic practice to incorporate children's rights at the heart of it, go and have a look. It's free and it's very interactive. You can also join the Unfearties movement. If you want to become an ally and a children's right defender as part of your artistic practice, go online and join now. I think that's me. Come and talk to me. Anything else? No, that's it. Thank you very much.

[applause]

**Emma:** Excellent. It's almost like we planned it. We have three minutes left actually. I don't know how you've self-edited to fit our timeline, but well done. Finally, we have Andre Anderson, also from Theatre Royal Dumfries.

**Andre:** Hello. I made that quite awkward for everybody. We all know this was a last-minute impulse for me too. I wear many different hats, but today I am here with Dumfries Theatre Royal and my colleague, Emma, who is right here. There are five of us in the core group and I'd love to give a big shout-out to them because without every single one of us, we would not be able to put on the programme that we put on.

As you'll know, sometimes I'm the only one who's me, but I'm not the only, only one. So it's lovely to see that there's more diverse and different voices coming into this space from learning disability communities, from physical disability communities, and from other communities that barely get represented in Scotland as well. I would love to say that Dumfries Theatre Royal is helping to help with that because we have refugees that come and work with us. We have people from different backgrounds and different places that all come together for a common goal, theatre. I think that theatre is critically important.

I believe also that Dumfries and Galloway is an area that I'm deeply proud of, but I want to see more Dumfries and Galloway-produced work touring around other areas like Aberdeen, Inverness, Glasgow, Edinburgh. What I see in the theatre world today is that we are very centralised and I would love for conferences and meetings and things like that to happen in places like Dumfries Theatre Royal. Please come and speak to us if you can. We'd absolutely love it. Thank you so much.

[applause]