



22 May 2019

2019 National Theatre Connections Festival premieres ten brand new plays staged by young people

Ten UK school and youth theatre companies have been chosen to bring their productions of ten brand new plays to the 2019 National Theatre Connections Festival, which takes place in the Dorfman Theatre from 25-29 June.

Connections is the largest youth theatre festival in the UK which celebrates new writing for young people aged 13-19. Ten new plays by both established and emerging contemporary playwrights including **Ben Bailey Smith**, **Lajaune Lincoln**, **Katherine Soper** and **Dawn King** have been exclusively commissioned for young people to stage and perform at this year's Festival.

Over 6,500 young people have taken part in Connections this year, with the ten plays being premiered by 273 youth theatre companies and schools across the UK. All the companies had the opportunity to transfer their production to one of 30 leading Partner Theatres across the UK, from Eden Court in Inverness, to the Lyric Belfast, and the Theatre Royal Plymouth. Ten companies are selected to perform at the National Theatre between 25-29 June to represent the range of exciting work being produced across the UK. Young people are involved with all aspects of creating and staging the play and take on a variety of backstage and off-stage roles, from operating lights and sound to set and costume design and stage management.

Rufus Norris, Director of the National Theatre said, "National Theatre Connections brings together young theatre-makers from across the UK with today's most exciting playwrights. I look forward to watching the ten companies perform at this year's Festival, as a reflection of the fantastic variety of productions which have been taking place in every corner of the UK throughout the year. We hope to inspire more young people in the art of theatre-making and the huge variety of backstage and offstage roles involved in creating a production".

The productions invited to appear at the NT in the final week of this year's Festival are:

Tuesday 25 June in the Dorfman Theatre

7pm – *Variations* by Katie Hims performed by Outwood Academy Hemsworth (West Yorkshire)

8.30pm – *Flesh* by Rob Drummond performed by Rare Studio Liverpool

Wednesday 26 June in the Dorfman Theatre

7pm - *Class* by Ben Bailey Smith & Lajaune Lincoln performed by Easy Street Theatre Company (Sheffield)

8.30pm - *Stuff* by Tom Wells performed by Bolingbroke Academy Theatre Company (Wandsworth, London)

Thursday 27 June in the Dorfman Theatre

7pm - *The Small Hours* by Katherine Soper performed by Kildare Youth Theatre (County Kildare, Republic of Ireland)

8.30pm - *terra / earth* by Nell Leyshon & choreography by Anthony Missen performed by ACTS (Wolverhampton)

Friday 28 June in the Dorfman Theatre

7pm - *Salt* by Dawn King performed by Dimensions Performance Academy (South Wales)

8.30pm - *Chaos* by Laura Lomas performed by Glasgow Acting Academy SCIO

Saturday 29 June in the Dorfman Theatre

7pm - *Ageless* by Benjamin Kuffuor performed by Gulbenkian Youth Theatre (Canterbury)

8.30pm - *The Sad Club* by Luke Barnes & music by Adam Pleeth performed by Hall for Cornwall Youth Theatre (Truro, Cornwall)

All performances will be captioned.

Tickets are £5 each and are on sale from Friday 24th May. To book tickets, visit www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/connections

Connections 2020

Applications are now open to take part in next year's Connections Festival. The National Theatre is looking for 300 school and youth theatre companies across the UK to take part. For more information and to sign up, please visit nationaltheatre.org.uk/connections

The ten new plays for this year's Festival are:

STUFF by Tom Wells

Vinny's organising a surprise birthday party for his mate, Anita. It's not going well: his choice of venue is a bit misguided, Anita's not keen on leaving the house, and everyone else has their own stuff going on. Maybe a surprise party wasn't the best idea?

A play about trying (but not really managing) to help.

VARIATIONS by Katie Hims

Thirteen-year-old Alice wishes her life was completely different. She wakes up one morning to find that her life *is* different. In fact, it's so different that all she wants to do is get back to normality. But how does she do that?

A play about family, string theory and breakfast.

CLASS by Ben Bailey Smith & Lajaune Lincoln

It's school election time and while most of the school is busy enjoying their lunchbreak, a deadlock is taking place amongst the members of the school council. Bitter rivalries, secret alliances and false promises are laid bare. As a ruthless battle ensues, who will win and does anyone really care?

A play about politics, populism and the 'ping' of a text message.

SALT by Dawn King

Life is never plain sailing, but when a new government initiative comes into place offering young people the chance to train and learn skills overseas, droves of teens jump at the chance to secure their future. Once on board the transport ship, the promises of the glossy advert seem a far cry from what lies ahead.

A play about generations, choices and hope.

CHAOS

by Laura Lomas

A girl is locked in a room. A boy brings another boy flowers. A girl has tied herself to a railing. A boy doesn't know who he is. A girl worries about impending catastrophe. A woman jumps in front of a train. A boy's heart falls out his chest. A butterfly has a broken wing.

Chaos is a symphony of dislocated and interconnected scenes. A series of characters search for meaning in a complicated and unstable world. Bouncing through physics, the cosmos, love and violence, they find order in the disorder of each other.

FLESH

by Rob Drummond

A group of teenagers wake up in a forest with no clue how they got there. They find themselves separated into two different teams but have no idea what game they are expected to play. With no food, no water and seemingly no chance of escape, it's only a matter of time before things start to get drastic. But whose side are people on and how far will they go to survive?

This is a play about human nature, the tribes we create and cannibalism.

THE SMALL HOURS

by Katherine Soper

It's the middle of the night and Peebs and Epi are the only students left at school over half-term. At the end of their night out, former step-siblings Red and Jazz try to navigate their reunion. With only a couple of hours until morning, Jaffa tries to help Keesh finish an essay. As day breaks, Wolfie is getting up the courage to confess a secret to VJ at a party.

Their choices are small yet momentous. The hours are small but feel very, very long. And when the night finally ends, the future is waiting – all of it.

terra / earth

by Nell Leyshon

choreography by Anthony Missen

A group of classmates is torn apart by the opportunity to perform their own dance. As they disagree and bicker, two distinct physical groups emerge and separate into opposing teams.

When a strange outsider appears – out of step with everyone else – the divide is disrupted. A contemporary narrative dance piece about individuality, community and heritage.

AGELESS

by Benjamin Kuffuor

'Generations to come will view this as the moment that the curse of ageing was removed and the world was able to look to tomorrow without the fear of a failing mind or body.'

In a not too distant future, Temples pharmaceutical corporation has quite literally changed the face of ageing. Their miracle drug keeps its users looking perpetually teenage. With an ever youthful population, how can society support those who are genuinely young?

A play which questions what it means to be young and the ways in which generations collide.

THE SAD CLUB

by Luke Barnes

With Music By Adam Pleeth

This is a musical about depression and anxiety. It's a collection of monologues, songs and duologues from all over time and space exploring what about living in this world stops us from being happy and how we might go about tackling those problems.

The National Theatre's Partner for Learning is Bank of America Merrill Lynch.

Connections is supported by:

Connections is supported by The Mohn Westlake Foundation, The Buffini Chao Foundation, Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, Delta Air Lines, The Peter Cundill Foundation, Mactaggart Third Fund, The EBM Charitable Trust, Samantha and Richard Campbell-Breeden, Susan Miller and Byron Grote, and The Broughton Family Charitable Trust.

ENDS

To download images from previous National Theatre Connections Festivals, click [here](#)

For press enquiries and press tickets, please contact Rhian Bennett at rbennett@nationaltheatre.org.uk / 020 7452 3235

Notes to Editors

About National Theatre

The National Theatre's mission is to make world class theatre that's entertaining, challenging and inspiring – and to make it for everyone. It aims to reach the widest possible audience and to be as inclusive, diverse and national as possible with a broad range of productions that play in London, on tour around the UK, on Broadway and across the globe. The National Theatre's extensive UK-wide learning and participation programme supports young people's creative education through performance and writing programmes like Connections, New Views and Let's Play. Its major new initiative Public Acts creates extraordinary acts of theatre and community; the first Public Acts production was 2018's Pericles. The National Theatre extends its reach through digital programmes including NT Live, which broadcasts some of the best of British theatre to over 2,500 venues in 65 countries, and the free streaming service On Demand In Schools, used by nearly 60% of UK state secondary schools. The National Theatre invests in the future of theatre by developing talent, creating bold new work and building audiences, partnering with a range of UK theatres and theatre companies.

For more information, please visit <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/>.

@NationalTheatre

@NT_PressOffice