

EMBARGOED until 5pm, Wed 28 October 2009

PUBLIC TO PLAY A MAJOR ROLE IN ONLINE SEARCH FOR NEW SCOTTISH PLAY

PRESS LAUNCH: Wed 28 October, 4.30pm, Tron Theatre, Glasgow

The **Tron Theatre** has launched a new playwriting competition which is using the internet to put the public at the heart of the selection process. The **Open.Stage Playwriting Competition** is an opportunity for Scots or those living in Scotland to submit a proposal and sample scene for a new play. After a judging panel has selected three finalists, the winner will be voted for by the public online and staged by the Tron, with the intention of broadcasting the production via the internet to a global audience.

The judging panel features some of the biggest names in the Scottish arts scene including actor and filmmaker **Peter Mullan**, Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland **Vicky Featherstone**, the playwrights **David Greig** and **David Harrower**, broadcaster **Janice Forsyth**, and the Tron's Artistic Director **Andy Arnold**. Guidance on writing the plays will also be provided by leading playwrights and theatre practitioners **Zinnie Harris**, **Alison Peebles** and **Nicola McCartney**.

Open.Stage is open to aspiring writers as well as established playwrights. Its use of online technology and innovative approach to commissioning, developing and staging is inspired by the possibilities and the openness of the internet and is intended to put the public at the heart of finding and staging new work for the theatre. Full details are available from 5pm on Wed 28 October at www.tron.co.uk/openstage.

Andy Arnold, Artistic Director of the Tron Theatre said:

"I'm very excited about this unique approach to finding a brilliant new play for the Tron. The internet provides new possibilities for us and this is a great way to get people in Scotland talking about theatre and new writing. What's also very special about this competition is that there's not just a financial reward for the script - three scripts altogether - but there is also the promise of a full production on the Tron stage at the end of it. We're sure the public will turn up to see the play they've voted for and I'm excited that we're planning to share the Tron's production of the winning play with audiences around the world."

Applicants can apply online by providing a synopsis of their play and a sample scene. A reading panel will then narrow down a shortlist from which the judging panel will choose three plays. Each one will receive £2000 of seed commission funding and will be developed with the support of an experienced mentor into first drafts.

The three finalists will have the opportunity to film a trailer for their play and the public will vote for the play with the most theatrical potential. The winner will then receive a full commission and dramaturgical support to develop a rehearsal script, culminating in a full production to be staged by the Tron Theatre Company as its flagship production in Autumn 2010. The runners up will both receive rehearsed readings at the Tron.

Following the Tron Theatre performances of the winning play, it is the Tron's intention that the production be made available to an audience of millions via the theatre's website.

Open.Stage has been made possible through a partnership between the Tron Theatre and Enterprise Screen Productions which has produced theatrical trailers for Tron Theatre productions since 2008.

Jay Smith of Enterprise Screen said:

"We have been creating these products for over 2 years and will continue to pioneer the professional application of film and television techniques with the creation of bespoke products for theatre. Our company aims to develop and work with these new ideas and make theatre more accessible, more exciting and more dynamic. Ultimately we want to be part of this convergence. Supporting the Tron in this ambitious and innovative project highlights our constant focus on making Theatre and the Arts in Scotland the best it can be."

Open.Stage has been supported by a **New Arts Sponsorship Grant** from **Arts and Business Scotland**. Arts & Business (A&B) is the national charity dedicated to encouraging new and sustainable arts and business relationships. Its New Arts Sponsorship Grants – funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Arts & Business – aim to build private sector sponsorship of the arts. The Grants provide match funding for new arts sponsors, doubling their sponsorship benefits.

Barclay Price Director of Arts and Business Scotland said:

"We are delighted to be supporting this innovative sponsorship with a matching investment of £33,000 to enable this open competition, supporting and nurturing new Scottish playwriting talent, to take place. This is a superb example of a mutually beneficial partnership, bringing together the skills and expertise of both the Tron and Enterprise Screen Productions to create something truly innovative with a cultural legacy."

Open.Stage's media partner is **The Herald**. The arts have always been an essential element of **The Herald's** content, with prominent coverage of Scotland's rich cultural landscape. Its daily arts coverage includes first night reviews of all the major events across Scotland as well as features on issues and personalities. The Herald will keep the public up to date with the competition's latest developments as well as offering exclusive behind the scenes interviews and footage of the competition on its website **www.heraldscotland.com**

Keith Bruce, Arts Editor of **The Herald** said:

“The Herald is delighted to be associated with The Tron's new Open.Stage playwriting competition, with its radical interactive approach to finding new writing talent for the theatre in Scotland. Herald readers are passionately interested in the arts and are sure to seize the opportunity to participate in the public vote to select the winner of this exciting new contest.”

Full details of rules and entry can be found on the Tron's website from 5pm on 28 October at www.tron.co.uk/openstage.

For further information, interviews and images please contact:

Douglas Martin
Press and Marketing Manager
0141 559 5314
douglas.martin@tron.co.uk

Dearbhla Murphy
Business Development Manager
0141 559 5304
dearbhla.murphy@tron.co.uk

ENDS

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Judging Panel

Andy Arnold (Tron), Jay Smith (ESP), Peter Mullan, Vicky Featherstone (NTS), Keith Bruce (The Herald), Janice Forsyth (Chair, BBC Scotland), David Greig, David Harrower, Julie Ellen (Playwrights' Studio)

Mentors

Zinnie Harris, Alison Peebles, Nicola McCartney

Partners

Enterprise Screen Productions, Arts & Business, The Herald

About Enterprise Screen Productions

ESP is a media production company delivering film, interactive and promotional content to a wide range of clients across all sectors. The Open.Stage competition is an exciting project that truly brings together the innovative work Enterprise Screen (ESP) has been doing for over 2 years with theatre and live events. There is a clear and demonstrated need for using new media to bring the work of live theatre to an existing audience in a new way, but also expanding this audience into the widest possible groups in our communities. ESP has developed the ability to work with Theatre producers, writers and directors to help bring a distinct and relevant visualisation to the screen and on line.

This process is integral to bringing Arts and Business together and ESP is delighted to put its expertise and experience into this partnership with the Tron Theatre. Working together on this project ESP will further develop its role in bridging the gap between audiences and theatre producers.

Writing for theatre, film, television, games and online is converging and Open.Stage is the perfect harmonising of these genres to bring theatre into the modern era. ESP knows that a simple idea can be the spark for something brilliant and the developmental support that Open.Stage offers is unique. Encouraging writers and directors to think of how pieces are visualised on-screen from the outset can only be beneficial for audiences. ESP wants to be part of this exciting development and help lead this work.

About Arts & Business

Arts & Business (A&B) is the national charity dedicated to encouraging new and sustainable arts and business relationships. Its New Arts Sponsorship Grants – funded by the Scottish Government and delivered by Arts & Business – aim to build private sector sponsorship of the arts. The Grants provide match funding for new arts sponsors, doubling their sponsorship benefits.

About The Herald

Founded in 1783, The Herald is Scotland's leading quality daily newspaper. It is widely respected for its coverage of the main Scottish, national and international news agenda and its comment and analysis on the major issue of the day.

The arts have always been an essential element of The Herald's content, with prominent coverage of Scotland's rich cultural landscape. Its daily arts coverage includes first night reviews of all the major events across Scotland as well as features on issues and personalities.

.....

COMPETITION TIMELINE

Closing Date for Entries: **5pm, 18 December 2009**

Panel judges shortlist and finalists announced: **Feb 2010**

Public voting begins: **May 2010**

Winning play announced: **June 2010**

Winning Play staged at the Tron Theatre: **October 2010**

FAQs

Who is the Open.Stage competition open to?

Anyone over 18 currently residing in Scotland or of Scottish origin and based in the UK.

What are its aims?

- To champion new writing
- To raise the profile of new writing in Scotland
- To develop and broaden the audiences for new writing

- To seize the possibilities offered by new technology to promote work for the stage
- To give audiences an insight and ownership of the playwriting process
- To produce a high quality production of the winning script
- To promote Scottish theatre on a global platform using the internet

What’s unique about it?

- There are few other competitions out there that promise a full production at the end of the process with a full commissioning fee attached.
- Whether new or experienced the winning writer will receive the benefit of a structured and detailed development process overseen by an experienced team.
- All three of the short-listed writers will receive a seed commission of £2000 and one-on-one time with an experienced mentor.
- It embraces new technology. You can apply online, there will be short trailers for each finalist’s film that can be voted for online and it’s our intention to broadcast the play online once the run’s finished.
- It involves the audience in the programming process
- We want the Tron to be more transparent and open to the public. The internet is allowing us to do this and to share our work on a global scale.

Aren’t there enough playwriting competitions out there?

Not like this one. We feel that this is an exciting initiative that opens part of the selection process to the public and embraces new technology.

Isn’t this ‘dumbing down’ the process?

No. It’s not a popularity contest. We want the public to be involved and judge which play looks like it has the most potential and we trust them. We believe it is essential to engage with our audiences and to involve them in the programming process so that they can take ownership of what they are going to see on stage.

It is notoriously difficult to generate audiences for new writing and we feel that this competition is a great way of increasing the audiences for new work whilst also increasing opportunities for and raising the profile of new writing in Scotland.

.....

BIOGRAPHIES

Andy Arnold was appointed to the post of Artistic Director of the Tron Theatre in 2008 following a long stint at the Arches Theatre in Glasgow – a theatre company and arts centre he personally established in 1991. During that time he staged a prolific number of Arches Theatre productions combining little known classics from Beckett, Pinter, Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill alongside such site specific and devised work as Dante's *Inferno*, *Beowulf* and a one-to-one show set in toilet cubicles, *Spend a Penny*.

His first production for the Tron Theatre Company, *The Drawer Boy*, was highly acclaimed and since then he has also directed *That Face*, *Cooking with Elvis*, *Bliss*, *Mud*, *Defender of the Faith* (UK Premiere), *Six Acts of Love* (World Premiere), *Suddenly Last Summer & Like the Rain* for the Tron Theatre Company and devised and directed *Monaciello* for the Napoli Teatro Festival Italia in June this year.

Keith Bruce is arts editor of *The Herald*, but has been going to the theatre since Leslie Crowther was in the Fol de Rols. He studied Drama alongside English Language and Literature and Scots Literature at Glasgow University and wrote his first Fringe theatre reviews for D C Thomson's stable of newspapers shortly thereafter. His first Herald reviews appeared during Mayfest while he was employed as a sub-editor on the paper, before the city and his career were transformed by Glasgow's designation as European City of Culture in 1990. After writing about that annus mirabilis on a daily basis as a Herald reporter, he became arts editor in 1994.

In 1995 he succeeded Janice Forsyth as presenter of Scottish Television's arts magazine *Don't Look Down* and he has also written scripts for BBC Scotland's screen biography series *Hollywood Greats*. A founder director of Glasgow Jazz Festival, he owns his own saxophone.

Julie Ellen trained as an actor at Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University College before working extensively as an actor and director in Scotland and London. Creative Director of the Playwrights' Studio Scotland in March 2004. The past four years have been an extraordinary time for her, moving from being an actor and producer into helping others to realise their own artistic ambitions. Julie's recent achievements include directing a reading of Kathy McKean's *Lie to Me* and, also, Kieran Lynne's *Stranger from the Sea* which was part of the New Writing New Worlds Festival 2007.

Vicky Featherstone is Artistic Director and Chief Executive of the National Theatre of Scotland for whom she has directed *Cockroach* by Sam Holcoft (a co-production with the Traverse Theatre), *365* (a co-production with the Edinburgh International Festival), *Mary Stuart* (Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow and Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh) and co-directed *The Wolves In The Walls* (Tramway, Lyric Hammersmith, UK tour and New Victory Theater, New York).

In Autumn 2009 she directed *Long Gone Lonesome*, created by Duncan McLean and the Lone Star Swing Band which is touring village halls in the Scottish Highlands and Islands. Recent awards include: *Tastemaker of the Year* at the Scottish Style Awards 2007 and *The Wolves In The Walls* won the TMA Award for Best Children's Show in 2006.

Janice Forsyth has been a key figure in Glasgow's arts and media scene for many years. After graduating from Glasgow University with a degree in English Literature and Drama she went on to form part of the original team behind Glasgow's Mayfest before moving into newspapers, television and radio. She currently presents the Janice Forsyth Show and The Radio Café on BBC Radio Scotland.

David Greig was born in Edinburgh in 1969 and co-founded the Suspect Culture Theatre group with Graham Eatough in 1990 in Glasgow. His first play was produced in 1992 in Glasgow following which he secured commissions from Royal Court, the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. His plays have also been translated and produced throughout Europe, The USA and Canada, Brazil, Australia and Japan. From 2005 to 2007 he was the first dramaturg of the National Theatre of Scotland.

Zinnie Harris is a playwright, screenwriter and director. Her plays include *Fall* (Traverse Theatre), *Solstice* (RSC), *Midwinter* (RSC and tour), *Nightingale and Chase* (Royal Court), *Further From the Furthest Thing* (Traverse Theatre, Tron Theatre, National Theatre and Tricycle Theatre – Peggy Ramsay Foundation Award, Fringe First Award and John Whiting Award) and *By Many Wounds* (Hampstead Theatre). Harris adapted *Miss Julie* for the National Theatre of Scotland in 2006 and *A Doll's House* for the Donmar Warehouse (2009)

David Harrower lives and writes in Glasgow. He has written several plays including *Knives in Hens*, *Kill the Old*, *Torture Their Young* and *Blackbird* which won the Critics Award for Theatre in Scotland and the Olivier Award for Best Play in 2007. He has adapted many plays including Buchner's *Woyzeck*, Chekhov's *Ivanov*, Brecht's *The Good Soul of Szechuan* and Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* and Schiller's *Mary Stuart* for, among others, the National Theatre, the Young Vic, the Royal Lyceum and the National Theatre of Scotland.

Nicola McCartney was Playwright in residence at the University of Ulster and Artistic Director of Glasgow-based new writing theatre company, lookOUT from 1992 to 2002. Originally from Belfast, she trained as a director with the Northern Irish Women's theatre company, Charabanc and now lives and works in Glasgow. She has written and directed the acclaimed plays, *Laundry*, *Easy*, *Entertaining Angels*, *The Hanging Tree*, *Transatlantic*, and *Home*.

Peter Mullan works internationally and is currently filming the last Harry Potter film. He was interested in directing films at the age of 19 and he made several shorts. As he wasn't admitted to the National Film School, he decided to dedicate himself to acting, and made his debut in the theatre in 1988 including parts at the Tron Theatre before moving to cinema and television. His films as an actor include *Trainspotting*, *Braveheart*, *Riff Raff*, *Young Adam* and most notably *My Name Is Joe* for which he won the Best Leading Actor prize at Cannes in 1998.

Peter is also an award winning writer and director. His films include: *Orphans* and *The Magdalene Sisters* (for which won the European Union Media Prize, the ALFS award for Best British Director and the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival and was nominated for, amongst others, a Cesar award, the Alexander Korda Award for Best British Film at the BAFTAs, and Best Screenplay BAFTA.

Alison Peebles is a Director and Actor. Her production of *The Steamie* by Tony Roper is currently on a sellout tour of Scotland. Other directing work includes National Theatre of Scotland; several productions at Oran Mor's A Play, A Pie and A Pint seasons; Dundee Rep; Theatre Hebrides; Tramway; Royal Lyceum; Communicado Theatre Company and Tron Theatre in a co-production with her own company V.amp Productions. She has directed an award-winning Feature Film; short films; TV and several Plays for BBC Radio. As an actor she works in Film and TV as well as Theatre, throughout UK and has performed many times at The Tron Theatre. Alison co-produced and featured in her own documentary-*Multiple* (Merit Award - Chicago International Film Festival; Silver Remi Award - Worldfest Houston, Texas; Superfest International Disability Film Festival - Berkeley, California.)

She has taught at RSAMD, Screen Academy, Edinburgh Art College, Actors Centre, London, Glasgow Media Access Centre and Reid Kerr College.

Jay Smith trained at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. Jay has worked extensively in Theatre, Television and Film in a variety of positions: Actor, Director, Producer. This included central roles in classic Scottish Dramas such as *Sutherland's Law* and *High Road* with more recent parts in *Taggart* and *Midsomer Murders*. His theatre work included terms with the Royal Lyceum, Dundee Rep, the Citizens' Theatre and many touring productions.

With a varied skills base in the Arts, Jay diversified to work extensively in further education, business development and then as consultant. In 2000 he formed Employment Enterprise to deliver key government regeneration and employability programmes throughout Scotland. 2005 saw the creation of a second company and a return to the arts with Enterprise Screen Productions (ESP). ESP is a media production company delivering film, interactive and promotional content to a wide range of clients across all sectors.