

# Welcome to the Tour the Writer Festival Saturday 7 March 2026

Today is the culmination of a 3-year writer development programme called Tour the Writer, led by theatre company Paines Plough with organisations in 7 locations across the country. Now in its third year, we've helped to develop the scripts of 14 writers (2 per location), and their writing will form part of today's events; all to celebrate writers, platform their work, and explore the future of new writing and touring in the theatre sector. We hope you enjoy the day!

Scan here  
for the visual  
events  
schedule for  
the day.



## HOSTS AND WRITERS

**The morning keynote and 'in conversation':**  
Simon Stephens and Charlotte Bennett

### **The workshops:**

*How A Play Becomes a Play: Text Into Performance*, led by Gurnesha Bola and Katie Posner

*Dramaturgy of Design*, led by Milla Clarke and Rosie Elnile

### **The morning roundtable chats:**

Sam Ward, Manwah Siu, Corey Weekes, Ellie Fitz-Gerald & Claire Simpson, Magdalen Gorringe (ACE).

### **Play extracts from the Y3 Mentored Writers:**

The Isolation Room by Selina Keedwell  
NATTY TAKES A BREATH by Sara Amanda  
Seachange by Jessy Roberts  
Public Interest by Jan Ruppe  
My Father's Cell by Dan Loops  
ENOUGH by Emma Bernard  
The Moderators by Emily Swettenham  
Queen of the Hedge by Jane Spurr  
Thunderstone by Jon Nash  
Demons by Ben SantaMaria  
Human After All by Matthew Gabrielli  
Long Johns and Lungis by Sophia Atcha  
The Fellraisers by Rachel Price  
First Gravedigger by Kayleigh Mai Hinsley

Performers: Tariq McClarty, Errol McGlashan, Miriam O'Brien, Anshula Bain, Debra Baker, Diane Ellis, Aimee Berwick, Dominic Thompson, Kimisha Lewis, and members of the Belgrade Ensemble: Bradey Fallon, Charlotte Webb, Chantel Esiri, Deanna Carr, Gabrielle Rothwell and George Jasper.

Extracts directed by Katie Posner, Jay Zorenti-Nakhid, Beth Kapila and Anna Himali Howard.

### **The afternoon networking chats:**

Paines Plough, China Plate, Rifco, Imagineer, Birmingham Hippodrome, Birmingham Rep, Belgrade

### **The closing panel discussion:**

Somebody Jones, Corey Campbell, Madeleine Kludje, Gill Greer, Ben Lyon-Ross, Pooja Ghai. Chaired by Katie Posner and Debo Adebayo.

Please be aware that you may be photographed during the day.

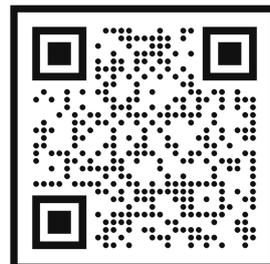
The Tour the Writer partner organisations are:

- Paines Plough
- Belgrade Theatre, Coventry
- Bradford 2025 & The Upsetters, Bradford
- Landmark Theatres: North Devon
- Landmark Theatres: Peterborough
- Mercury Theatre, Colchester
- Theatre by the Lake, Cumbria
- Theatre Royal Plymouth

Tour the Writer has been generously supported by [The Garrick Charitable Trust](#) in Y3, and [The Noel Coward Foundation](#), who supported Y2 of the programme as well the Tour the Writer Festival.

**As a cohort of organisations committed to continuing to develop writers nationwide, it is vital for our future projects that we receive feedback from all corners of the industry.**

**Whether you're an audience member or a writer-creative, we'd really appreciate if you could scan this QR code to complete a short survey about the Festival.**



## ABOUT THE PLAYS

### The Isolation Room

by Selina Keedwell

dir. by Jay Zorenti-Nakhid. Performed by Kimisha Lewis, Debra Baker, Errol McGlashan, Raj Bajaj, Tariq McClarty, Miriam O'Brien and the Belgrade Ensemble

A play about institutionalised control, our kids silenced voices and the state of the UK Education system. Through a process of verbatim and co-creation, rooted in PACE, Keedwell worked with 12 young people over a year to put a spotlight on what's going on behind closed doors of our kids' schools. This scene happens relatively early in the play when the students have been in the Isolation Room for a couple of hours, for various reasons. Charlie, who is preoccupied with keeping her mum out of being sectioned again, has to write a poem for English. The scene establishes the relationships between the students, the students and the school environment & the enforced control of the education system (and rebellion against it).

### NATTY TAKES A BREATH

by Sara Amanda

dir. Beth Kapila. Performed by Kimisha Lewis. Natty Takes a Breath is about an audition that becomes a confrontation with perception, projection, and self-recognition. It is not only about the industry. It is about what the room reveals in her and what she recognises in herself.

### Seachange by Jessy Roberts

dir. Anna Himali Howard. Performed by Dominic Thompson, Diane Ellis, Anshula Bain  
When Kit begins work as the first humanist chaplain at Peterborough hospital, his radical approach concerns his overburdened colleagues. It's the last thing Anglican Chaplain Dawn, who is trying to hold her collapsing personal and professional life together, and Muslim Chaplain Mina, who finds herself at a crossroads, need.

What lengths will Kit go to prove himself, and is it for the right reasons? At a time of great change and division, will this riptide make them reconsider everything? Exploring faith, love & palliative care, *Seachange* asks what really matters in the end.

### Public Interest by Jan Ruppe

dir. by Anna Himali Howard. Performed by Kimisha Lewis, Miriam O'Brien, Aimee Berwick

Josie has survived a car crash which killed her husband. Her daughter, Anna, and stepdaughter, Rebecca, have very different memories of their father and different attitudes to Josie. Is she a victim or a perpetrator? When we cast each other in roles: 'Sheila is the funny one' or 'Dave is the

smart one', we deny the possibility that people can be anything other than the traits we have decided they represent. It would therefore be unwise to act on the assumptions that denial creates but if we want to control them, it is absolutely essential.

### My Father's Cell by Dan Loops

dir. by Jay Zorenti Nakhid. Performed by Tariq McClarty, Errol McGlashan

A play that centres around the dual perspectives of Jamal and new father. Dealing with a newborn and system that keeps failing him and Grover an inmate that has given up all hope. The piece is delivered in rap and spoken word, the two characters are connected through music and history.

### Enough by Emma Bernard

dir. by Katie Posner. Performed by Debra Baker, Diane Ellis, Aimee Berwick

A dive into the shrinking world of a carer isolated in a rural Norfolk village. Debs is menopausal, but that's not her biggest problem. She has promised to help her elderly mum, Pauline, fulfill her wish to die at home. In the aftermath of Covid and Brexit, systems are absurdly broken, support is scarce, and even Julie, Debs' equally menopausal sister, isn't helping. While Pauline dreams of dancing back to her youth, the exhausted Debs is spiralling down, losing her shit and becoming her own worst enemy.

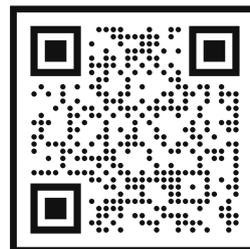
### The Moderators

by Emily Swettenham

dir. by Beth Kapila. Performed by Kimisha Lewis, Miriam O'Brien

In the office of a major tech contractor in Dublin, a team of four social media moderators trawl through the depths of the internet. So far, Georgia has been coping. But when their colleague, Josh, fails to return to work in mysterious circumstances, Georgia is set on a path of discovery that forces her to confront everything about her work that haunts her. Tech-thriller meets love story, *The Moderators* explores the experience of overwhelm and powerlessness in the age of hyper-capitalism and rising technofascism, whilst also creating space for hope.

Please scan this QR code to give feedback on these plays.



## ABOUT THE PLAYS

### **Queen of the Hedge by Jane Spurr**

**dir. by Anna Himali Howard. Performed by Debra Baker, Diane Ellis, Aimee Berwick**

A contemporary magical realism play about a Cornish zero hours cleaner, Hen, a Client, and an ancient piece of Cornish Hedge. Hen is a working class woman of our modern day rural countryside. We meet her at one of the places she's cleaning. Hen retells her story about the demise of the Hedge. She's known this piece of hedge all her life, so when she witnesses it being threatened, she does all she can to protect it. Around her, the Hedge speaks, creatures speak, and other whispers from long ago are heard.

### **Thunderstone by Jon Nash**

**Dir. by Katie Posner. Performed by Darryl Hughes, Dominic Thompson, Miriam O'Brien**

Inspired by research into the National Union of Fascists in Devon in the 1930s, and the resonances to today about how to confront far-right ideology and violence. After confronting violence at an asylum seeker 'hotel', Nick flees to the old family farm in North Devon where his siblings are confronting their own fears and desires for safety. It explores our connection to land and place, with touches of folklore; a thunderstone being a fossilised sea urchin said to bring protection in farming customs. Before the start of the extract Nick has shown up unannounced and injured at the farm, and a little reluctantly his sister Maddie has taken him in.

### **Demons by Ben SantaMaria**

**dir. by Beth Kapila. Performed by Tariq McClarty, Steve Connolly**

Southend Pride night. Clay – 24, non-binary, queer – is out celebrating in demon drag. Dent, a cis queer man in his 60s, saves Clay from being attacked by a drunk thug. Their friendship begins. By Halloween, all their demons will be unleashed.

### **Human After All**

**by Matthew Gabrielli**

**dir. by Jay Zorenti-Nakhid. Performed by Kimsha Lewis, Darryl Hughes, Dominic Thompson.**

In the near future there has been an anti-tech revolution led by The People Not Machine Party (The PNM). AI and computers are banned, anyone still supporting the old capitalist regime is sent to the PNM's Wellbeing and Inclusion Department. Karl and his younger brother Fred loyal party members are tasked with finding old bits of tech and destroying it. Whilst searching an abandoned office of a tech firm they discover a woman called Ada, except she's not a woman, she's an advanced form of AI, a robot.

### **Long Johns and Lungis**

**by Sophia Atcha**

**dir. by Beth Kapila. Performed by Raj Bajaj & Anshula Bains**

A poignant three-hander that delves into the intricate themes of home, identity, and belonging through the lens of Haroon Bhai, a Gujarati Muslim immigrant from Myanmar/ Burma as he grapples with Alzheimer's. His daughter Sara navigates the delicate balance of preserving her father's memories while forging her own identity. The narrative intertwines personal history with broader cultural struggles, spotlighting the pressures of assimilation and the quest for a sense of belonging in a constantly shifting world. With the character Janet providing an outsider's perspective, the play invites audiences to reflect on the meaning of home and the legacies we inherit.

### **The Fellaishers by Rachel Price**

**dir. by Anna Himali Howard. Performed by Miriam O'Brien, Debra Baker, Diane Ellis, Aimee Berwick**

In the grip of the devastating second-home phenomenon scarring the Lake District, a group of local women, sick of getting nowhere through conventional ways of protest, turn to arson. But when one fire burns out of control, they're forced to confront the true cost of rebellion and who really has the right to own property. The women are wild swimmers and the play is set on the shores of Derwentwater, by the tourist town of Keswick. In this scene, Siobhan and Jools are just back from their very first arson attack.

### **First Gravedigger**

**by Kayleigh Mai Hinsley**

**dir. by Jay Zorenti-Nakhid. Performed by Miriam O'Brien, Anshula Bains, Tariq McClarty, Errol McGlashan.**

This extract is the opening of the play; a political pressure cooker set in the Pindar bunker. Shona, a young greengrocer from Wandsworth, has been appointed as nuclear deputy by the Prime Minister — but nobody knows why. A nuclear deputy, as Shona finds out, is the person who can authorise nuclear retaliation if the Prime Minister is indisposed. They are usually always Cabinet Ministers, and it's unheard of for the Prime Minister to pick someone like Shona. But on the brink of nuclear war, a decision does need to be made.

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