

# **Robin/Red/Breast**

15–26 May 2024

North Warehouse, Aviva Studios

**World Premiere, 17 May**

Adapted from *Robin Redbreast*, written by **John Griffith Bowen**

**Sarah Frankcom** Director and Co-Creator

**Maxine Peake** Performer and Co-Creator

**Imogen Knight** Movement Director and Co-Creator

**Tyler Cameron** Performer

**Gazelle Twin** Composer

**Daisy Johnson** Writer

**Lizzie Clachan** Set, Props and Costume Designer

**Lizzie Powell** Lighting Designer

**Pete Malkin** Sound Designer

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**Sarah Frankcom, Imogen Knight and Maxine Peake – co-Founders of Music, Art, Activism and Theatre (MAAT) and long-term collaborators with Manchester International Festival and Factory International – have a habit of going back to classic sources and pulling them into the present day.**

They begin with materials seemingly fixed in history, and transform them into performances that are urgent and, at times, excitingly provisional.

Under their interpretation we saw *The Masque of Anarchy*, written in 1819, become a call for political action that resonated with the present moment – a crowd massing at the Albert Hall to stand and listen during MIF13 just as they might have in Percy Bysshe Shelley’s day. *The Skriker* by Caryl Churchill at MIF15 echoed these politically charged themes, seating audiences in amongst the action. In 2019, we went back to Nico’s overlooked 1968 album *The Marble Index* for The Nico Project, with Peake performing to music adapted by Anna Klein, played by an orchestra of young women from the RNCM.

And at MIF23 we became witnesses to the suppression of artists in Kay Dick’s 1977 *novel They*. Were we complicit, by sitting back and watching, or a group of creatives equally at risk? The staging at John Rylands Library left these questions uncertain.

Now we’re being invited to join another gathering for Robin/Red/Breast, where the boundaries between performer and audience will again be richly flexed. The inspiration this time is John Bowen’s classic folk horror *Robin Redbreast*, a BBC Play for Today from 1970 that

had its TV broadcast interrupted by a power cut. With a change in title comes a change in interpretation: in this truly collaborative project, MAAT are joined by the writer Daisy Johnson and musician and composer Gazelle Twin to unpack the story's chilling themes of fertility, bodily autonomy and personal agency afresh.

It is wonderful to have this multi-disciplinary collaboration at the heart of our opening season at Aviva Studios, experimenting with the possibilities of our new home in innovative and complex ways. And although our latest collaboration with this brilliant creative team has been unfolding since 2020, as they watched Aviva Studios being built, the final show has turned out to be eerily prescient about the world we live in today.

**John McGrath**

Artistic Director & Chief Executive, Factory  
International

## **Behind the Scenes: Robin Redbreast**

Exploring the myth around the original television play – and the blackout that blighted its broadcast in 1970.

On 10 December 1970, amidst economic turmoil not unlike our current cost of living crisis, families from across the UK gathered to watch the TV event of the week: John Bowen's Robin Redbreast. On screen, TV script editor Norah Palmer moves to a rural village after a breakup. A series of strange interactions with locals, the tension builds, Norah grabs a knife... and cut to darkness. The broadcast cuts out. An electricians' strike left millions of viewers across London and the Midlands in the dark (literally) about Norah's fate until the play was repeated in February 1971. Sometimes it pays to be Northern.

**In an interview with the BFI, Bowen cites the murder of a labourer outside Stratford-upon-Avon as an inspiration**

The 1970s wasn't all strikes and politics – cue the golden age of the British television drama, of which the TV play was the crown jewel. Robin Redbreast was broadcast as part of the BBC's prime time series Play for Today, which boasts a catalogue of familiar names including writers Ian McEwan and Dennis Potter as well as directors Roland Joffé, Ken Loach, Mike Newell and many more. Bowen joined these ranks after he abandoned his career as a novelist and turned his attention to the screen. It's not hard to see the allure:

the TV play is the perfect medium for the horror and ghost stories that would make his name. Bowen did not write another novel for 19 years.

With themes of folklore, fertility, rural isolation and human sacrifice, *Robin Redbreast* has all the hallmarks of what we now call 'folk horror' – a genre that blossomed during the counterculture movement of the late '60s. But the story is not all fantastical. In an interview with the BFI, Bowen cites the murder of a labourer outside Stratford-upon-Avon as an inspiration, recalling that the killers had used his blood to fertilise their crops. The play was also written and filmed in Bowen's own cottage. It opens with a photograph of his home where some of the film's furniture still lives today.

### **Robin Redbreast was certainly radical, and it was initially rejected by the BBC because of its portrayal of contraception**

First appearing in Bowen's 1962 novel *The Birdcage*, Norah Palmer is the central character and driving force of *Robin Redbreast*. Bowen rewrote the part for TV with Amanda Walker in mind – a prolific actress with subsequent roles in *A Room with a View* (1985), *Cloud Atlas* (2012) and *Triangle of Sadness* (2022). She brings a blunt, witty and unlikeable quality to the character, which complicates the role of hapless, female victim. Instead, it is the village outsider and love interest Rob – played by actor-turned-stuntman Andrew Bradford – who lacks agency as the play progresses.

This reflects the sexual politics of the time. Norah is a sexually independent woman, who uses contraception and discusses abortion freely with her friends – both of which were only made readily available in 1967. She arrives from her modern life in the city to find a village steeped in traditions (albeit very weird ones). Her name recalls Ibsen's famed 'modern woman' Nora, who shocked theatre audiences when *A Doll's House* premiered nearly 100 years earlier. Like many writers before and after him, Bowen is fascinated by the age-old clash between modernity and tradition. *Robin Redbreast* was certainly radical, and it was initially rejected by the BBC because of its portrayal of contraception. It eventually found a home on *Play for Today* after it was picked up by James MacTaggart – a leading director, producer and writer, for whom the keynote speech at the annual Edinburgh International Television Festival is named.

### **Robin Redbreast withstands the test of time because of the enduring nature of these themes**

*Robin Redbreast* withstands the test of time because of the enduring nature of these themes. True crime, sexual politics and human sacrifice – a Netflix writer's dream! The play also speaks to a renewed interest in folk horror. Many regard the film as a precursor to the quintessential folk horror film *The Wicker Man* (1973). Fans of *The Wicker Man* will find many similarities with the lesser-known *Robin Redbreast*, although the ending may come as a surprise.

Unlike *The Wicker Man* and much colour-soaked folk

horror of today, Robin Redbreast exists only in grainy black and white. This was just another accident of the broadcast. The original colour version was recorded over – its pagan colours lost to the memories of those first viewers. Robin Redbreast is the ghost of an original, made even more strange by the circumstances of its broadcast, but its influence lives on.

Words by **Maya Jones**

## **Listening beyond Robin/Red/Breast**

Gazelle Twin's musical recommendations

Beginning with sounds and songs from an English village, the tracks Gazelle Twin has chosen for this playlist move through traditional folk song and brass arrangements to abstracted, strange worlds of inner dissonance. A familiar landscape takes a turn into dark, uncertain, otherworldly places haunted by birdsong.

- 1 The Church Bells of Empingham** – Church-Ringers of Empingham
- 2 Bushes and Briars** – Isla Cameron
- 3 Abide With Me** – Grimethorpe Colliery Band
- 4 The Rite of Spring, Part 1: I. Adoration of the Earth** – Igor Stravinsky
- 5 Rage, Rage Against the Dying of the Light** – Louis Andriessen, James Fulkerson
- 6 For the Sacred Birds** – Laura Cannell
- 7 Safe With Me** – Colin Stetson
- 8 Cambridgeshire May Carol** – Shirley Collins
- 9 Britten: Serenade, Op.31: No.4, Elegy** – Benjamin Britten
- 10 Who Killed Cock Robin** – Robin Roberts



## **Folk Horror: Modern Thoughts**

**Artists and filmmakers Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard reflect on Robin/Red/Breast's origins in folk horror — and how it sits within the unsettling contemporary preoccupations currently fuelling a resurgence of the genre.**

**Where to start?** We could talk about the use and abuse of fertility and pregnancy in a trajectory of body horror films from *Rosemary's Baby* to *Prevenge*. Or we could talk about the second-wave feminism that was beginning to gather momentum when *Robin Redbreast* was originally broadcast on BBC Television's *Play for Today* strand. We could even talk about contemporary meditations on the countryside as a place of liberation and healing, such as Luke Turner's nature memoir *Out of the Woods* or PJ Harvey's longform narrative poem *Orlam*.

But we're artists and filmmakers, and there's plenty of folk horror scholars who know more about that stuff than we do. What excites us most is art's potential to incite change. We recently examined this in *The Horror Show! A twisted tale of Modern Britain*, an exhibition we co-curated at Somerset House, London. We explored how British artists over the past 50 years have used horror as a tool for creative resistance.

Now we're zoning in on what promises to be a singular piece of creative resistance – *Robin/ Red/Breast*. This remarkable new production is based on *Robin Redbreast*, written by John Bowen. It is the unsettling tale of Norah Palmer, a

television script editor who temporarily moves from her home in London's modern society to a remote country village to rebuild her life. Norah finds she has an unwitting part to play in the villagers' pagan plot to impregnate her by Rob, a man they have raised from birth to become a sacrificial lamb.

## **We're zoning in on what promises to be a singular piece of creative resistance**

**Blackout. 10 December 1970.** An electrician's strike caused the original broadcast to be terminated just as Norah confronts Rob with a kitchen knife. Viewers were left, literally, in the dark. In the days of three channels, long before on-demand streaming, this meant millions of households were simultaneously deserted, left to envision Norah's fate in their own imaginations. By public demand, the broadcast was repeated in full the following year, but this time in black and white, a ghost of its former self, as the original colour master tapes had been erased. In that powerful void, a multiverse of possible futures opens up. It's this element of mystery, mutability and instability surrounding the original material that makes Robin Redbreast perfect for reinterpretation. It presents a particularly potent space to be explored by this compelling creative team: Maxine Peake, Sarah Frankcom, Imogen Knight and their collaborators Daisy Johnson and Elizabeth Bernholz (Gazelle Twin). Let's use the power blackout as a blackhole, a portal to slip through time and space between then and now.

**Then:** The new-age optimism of the '60s gives way to a period of economic decline and political upheaval that

results in Ted Heath's government declaring a national state of emergency. But even in the darkness, there are flickers of light, such as the Act to legalise abortion in Great Britain and Roe v. Wade in the US. It's far from perfect, not least in areas like health inequality (Black women are still 3.7 times more likely to die during or in the first year after pregnancy than white women) – but there was progress.

## **Let's use the power blackout as a blackhole, a portal to slip through time and space between then and now**

**Now:** The forward trajectory we dared to imagine in the '70s has been rudely interrupted. We live in a ruptured time, what Mark Fisher describes as 'lost futures', where the failures of the past endlessly resound in our present. In the sunlit uplands of post-Brexit Britain, Norah would be a fully signed-up member of the 'Guardian-reading, tofu-eating wokerati'. Her 'modern thinking' would surely struggle to comprehend the roll-back of reproductive rights and the mudslide back into restrictive, divisive, polarised politics.

The recent coronavirus pandemic drove hordes of urbanites to follow Norah's quest to the countryside, seduced by the promise of space to breathe, better mental health and everything else that a closer relationship with nature has to offer. And lo and behold, city vs country becomes just one more polarising distinction we're encouraged to focus on by TV pundits, algorithms and keyboard warriors. The promise of escape offered by the countryside in the '70s is now

rendered moot by the omnipresence of communications technology.

Meanwhile, cosplay-country-gents like Nigel Farage stalk the land recruiting cannon fodder for their particularly pernicious brand of politics.

What about Robin Redbreast's Rob? A working class man, controlled by external influences. He's simply the bull that will be led to the cow. Obsessed with physical fitness and SS uniforms, it's painfully easy to imagine him consumed by the contemporary personality cults of the likes of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) and Churchill-tribute act Boris Johnson.

And if this chain of contemporary vibrations is not eye-opening enough, then what about the half-marble that Norah brings into the house? It's as if it's watching, listening and monitoring her – a prophetic foreshadowing of the pervasive technologies we all bring into our homes, the smartphones, Alexa devices and Ring doorbells. Our hyper-networked lives tracked by these innocuous objects that keep a constant eye out and ear in.

**This performance, this extraordinary alchemical act of generosity incites us to think differently**

**The lights feel like they're about to go out again.** Folk horror is built on the inherent tensions that result from polarities. It needs these dichotomies of rural vs city, fate vs free will, tradition vs modernity and reason vs emotion. But these clear divisions are a construct – a story – told

to scare us. And perhaps this is why there's a contemporary resurgence in folk horror. In the right hands, these stories don't just reflect our current societal fears, they incite us to think differently about the stories we're being told in real life by our politicians and the media. Invariably, these stories pitch us against each other. Immigration. International conflicts. The climate emergency. Sex and gender.

Polarisation is tearing us apart.

We should, of course, always be wary of a handful of people claiming to know what's best for everyone else. Unexpectedly, Edgar Wright's *Hot Fuzz* proves beyond doubt that the greater good is only ever a reflection of what's best for those in power, whether it's Simon Pegg's new-cop-in-town Sgt. Nicholas Angel, or the Neighbourhood Watch Alliance, headed up by Edward Woodward in a role that echoes his performance as Sgt. Neil Howie in the foundation stone of British folk horror, *The Wicker Man*.

**So what's the alternative?** Perhaps it's time to return to the idea of commonwealth. Long before the idea took on a geopolitical meaning, it simply described a community working together, a form of power originated from – and exercised by – the people as a whole. The legal rights of the common people have been eviscerated, while the 1% have abused and stolen our rights, legal protections, and public services. Our personal information is mined and even our biometric

data is collected without explicit consent. Maybe we really do need to take back (collective) control, in pursuit of a common good.

**Could someone put the lights on?** Take a good look at the people around you. Whatever this is, we're all in it together. And each other is all we have to build a different future. A new commonwealth.

This performance, this extraordinary, alchemical act of generosity incites us to think differently, act in new ways and come together in pursuit of a common good. Can art really change the world? Fuck yeah.

Words by **Iain Forsyth** and **Jane Pollard**, with additional research by **Ross MacFarlane**. Views expressed are the writers' own.

## **The Carer**

### **Beth Barker**

The Carer is one of eight pieces of flash fiction commissioned by Factory International following a call out to emerging writers in the North for new stories in response to the themes of Robin/Red/Breast. It was selected for publication here by Daisy Johnson, author of Fen, Everything Under and Sisters, and the youngest person ever to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize.

You can read all eight stories on Factory+ online at [\*\*factoryinternational.org/factoryplus\*\*](http://factoryinternational.org/factoryplus)

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I lie still in the single bed, swallowed by night. The darkness is so dense that I have to blink, then blink again, just to confirm whether my eyes are open or closed. Without sight to rely on, I suppress my breath and listen to the house. Identify its movements. A boiler in the cupboard, droning and gurgling. A scurry of clawed feet, oscillating between touching distance and someplace far away. The wooden joists, beams, floorboards – creaking at first and then screaming through the quiet, like a sharp-toothed fox releasing a violent vibration into the black. These sounds are so foreign to the life I left behind in the city, yet seem so familiar that they could be coming from inside my own body.

The light pushes its way between the peeling shutters as I wake early for my first day as a carer. I have barely slept,

but I pull back the sheets and dress quickly. I want to make my new life work; I need to make a good first impression. Outside, the village is waking up too. The rural terrace is positioned along a crescent-shaped row, looking down towards a memorial garden seized by the arrival of spring. It is only 8am, but there are already people sitting on the benches between columns of crocuses, primroses and marigolds. I unclasp the lock and push open the window to let some air in, but the cold gust that enters only highlights how bad the house smells. It's as if something is rotting, in the walls or under the floor. I close the window and breathe it in, sort through the components I recognise: sour milk left out on the side, spoiled fruit leaking through puckered skin, scorched then solidified animal fat.

When I turned up at the house last night, suitcase and a gift bag in hand, Laurence didn't say anything at all. He wasn't pleased with my arrival, as far as I could tell. I introduced myself awkwardly, fiddling with the ribbons on the bag and smiling too much. Even when I crouched opposite his wheelchair and held out the sugar-dusted chocolates I'd bought for him at the train station in Manchester, he ignored me and looked the other way.

Before he wakes, I get to work on the house. Every surface is littered with old takeaway boxes, still full of mouldy morsels and metal cutlery poking out of the sides. I survey each room, pull open a black bin bag and begin sweeping through them in phases. Like how I'd usually tackle a project. Once the sides are clear and the floor has been vacuumed, I get down on my hands and knees to scrub at the carpet, mottled by dark patches that release a foul



odour when disturbed. In my head, I am mapping out the tasks for my team of one on a spreadsheet, each mess a time-boxed sprint with an expected date of delivery. My chest tightens at the thought of the job I abandoned. No letter of resignation, no warning. Just a key card scanned and one less glass-eyed project manager in the building. With my fingernails buried deep in the fibres of the carpet, I imagine the office going on without me: a knife-shaped tower descending into panic and chaos and misery. I wonder if they've even noticed I'm gone.

One afternoon, I take Laurence for a walk down the river that snakes through the centre of the village. I pour out two cups of tea from a flask but he doesn't want his, so I balance it on the arm of his chair. 'It might warm you up,' I say – but he stays quiet and averts his eyes. To fill the silence, I tell him that he is about the same age as my Dad who I haven't spoken to for years. No-one in the family speaks to him, in fact. He wrote recently, to say he's not well. Probably won't be around much longer. 'What does it mean to be a good father, do you think? Do you have any kids of your own?' Laurence says nothing, just releases a small bubble of spit from the corner of his mouth. I wipe at it, the colour strange and murky against the white tissue.

On our way back through the village, I realise we are being watched. A woman steers past us with a squealing baby, riding up onto the lawn to avoid our path while staring back. Then, despite being dragged towards us by a pair of muscular dogs, jowls rippling like strips of pink beef, an old man struggles away in the opposite direction. I wonder if Laurence is a bad apple, a village pariah. Or maybe it is

me, my tailored coat and patent loafers badging me an obvious outsider.

That night, I dream that I am back at work. Flicking frantically from tab to tab, my suited boss leaning over me, salivating. I can hear a man calling my name desperately from the end of a corridor, but I cannot see who it is. I am needed, but not in the same way as I am needed here.

I wake up, sweat pooling on the mattress. I reach under the pillow for my phone, switched off since I've been here. It isn't there. I feel around some more, rummage through my suitcase. Could Laurence have taken it? Did I leave it somewhere else? I go to his makeshift downstairs bedroom, careful not to trip in the dark. Touch him gently. His sheets are soaked through, the sour reek catching sharp in the back of my throat as I crouch beside him. In the moonlight, his face shimmers silver like a fish, wet with seawater. I'm not sure why I am crying, but I am. Though his expression is empty, eyes dark and sunken around the edges, I feel a warmth growing in him. A glimmer of familiarity. I sit on the floor and rest my head on the bed, holding his hand in mine until morning.

When the sun finally rises over the village, it feels like we have made progress. I shuffle Laurence into his chair and prop him up with a cushion so that he is comfortable. He seems grateful, especially when I wheel him over to the dining table and reveal the breakfast I have prepared. Crispy rashers of bacon, a bowl of shiny scrambled eggs. Thick slices of bread slathered with butter. It is hard work being a carer, but mornings like this make it all worthwhile. I

put on the radio and there's an old song playing, one of those tunes that sounds as if it's crackling straight out of a gramophone. Just as I'm spooning the eggs onto his plate, humming along, there's a knock at the door.

There is a pair of policemen standing on the other side, dressed in matching lurid neon and towering hats that blur through the glass. 'How can I help?' I ask after opening the door, puzzled by their expressions. One of them coughs a little, while the other shuffles his arm up into his sleeve and uses it to cover his face. They tell me they're sorry to bother me, but there's been a complaint. 'There's a bad smell you see, coming from the house. The neighbours mentioned you'd arrived recently, to look after your father? Is that correct?'

I confess, I'm a little confused. I tell them I do remember a smell, yes, but they're mistaken about my dad. I used to work in the city, but I'm here to start my new life as a carer now instead. 'You're welcome to come in if you'd like. We're just having breakfast.'

Smiling, I stand to the side and hold open the door, welcoming them in. Their eyes widen. I look at them, then back into the house. The dining room is flooded by sun, fractured by the kitchen blinds. One beam forms a spotlight on the deflated corpse in the wheelchair, limp limbs the colour of lavender. A shiny puddle of liquid gleams on the floor beneath him.

**Beth Barker** is a writer from Blackpool. She is currently completing her MA in Creative Writing at Manchester

Writing School, and was shortlisted for New Writing North's Word Factory Northern Apprentice Award in 2023.

**Daisy Johnson** says: The Carer immediately struck me with its clear, ringing writing and the cleverness of the plotting in such a small space. I returned to reread it and continued to think about it after I had finished. I really enjoyed reading all of the entries and seeing how the writers had expertly handled the themes in such different ways. The stories were uncanny and beautifully written.

## **Creative Team**

### **John Bowen**

Writer, Robin Redbreast

John Bowen was born in India, sent 'home' to England at the age of four and a half, and was reared by aunts. He served in the Indian Army from 1943–47, then went to Oxford to read Modern History. After graduating he spent a year in the USA as a Fulbright Scholar, much of it hitchhiking. He worked for a while in glossy journalism, then in advertising, before turning freelance when the BBC commissioned a six-part adventure-serial for Children's Television. Between 1956 and 1965 he published six novels to excellent reviews and modest sales, then forsook the novel for 19 years to concentrate on writing television drama (*Heil Caesar*, *Robin Redbreast*) and plays for the stage (*After the Rain*, *Little Boxes*, *The Disorderly Women*). He returned to writing novels in 1984 with *The McGuffin*: there were four more thereafter. Reviewers have likened his prose to that of Proust and P. G. Wodehouse, of E. M. Forster and the young John Buchan: it may be fair to say that he resists compartmentalisation. He worked as a television producer for both the BBC and ITV, directed plays at Hampstead and Pitlochry and taught at the London Academy of Dramatic Art.

### **Sarah Frankcom**

Director and Co-Creator

Sarah Frankcom has worked extensively as a director and dramaturg making theatre in a range of participatory, training and professional settings.

After joining the Royal Exchange Theatre in Manchester as Literary Manager she created the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting and became Artistic Director between 2014 and 2019. Her directing work at the Royal Exchange Theatre includes acclaimed collaborations with Maxine Peake on Hamlet, Miss Julie, A Streetcar Named Desire and Happy Days. She has also collaborated with the playwright Simon Stephens on On the Shore of the Wide World (winner of Best New Play at the Olivier Awards), Punk Rock (winner of Best Production at the Manchester Evening News Theatre Awards), Blindsided and Light Falls.

Other recent work includes: West Side Story, Death of a Salesman and Our Town (for which she won Best Director at the UK Theatre Awards 2018) at the Royal Exchange Theatre; The Masque of Anarchy (2013), The Skriker (2015) and The Nico Project (2019) at Manchester International Festival; and The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca for Hull UK City of Culture 2017. Her most recent work has included The Breach at Hampstead Theatre, They for Factory International, Work it Out at HOME Manchester and Betty! A Sort of Musical at the Royal Exchange Theatre.

## **Maxine Peake**

Performer and Co-Creator

Maxine's film credits include Peterloo, The Theory of Everything, Funny Cow (on which Maxine served as Executive Producer through her production company, Vexed Pixie), Fanny Lye Deliver'd, and Dance First. Maxine will soon be seen in Irish dystopian sci-fi Woken (2024), and as the title character in Anna, an upcoming political drama

about the late Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya.

Maxine is also well known for starring in TV dramas such as Silk (BBC), Black Mirror: Metalhead (Netflix), Three Girls (BBC), The Village (BBC), Shameless (Channel 4), The Bisexual (Hulu/Channel 4), Anne (ITV), and Rules of the Game (BBC). She will be seen to star in FX's Troubles drama Say Nothing, which is set to premiere in 2024.

Maxine has received three BAFTA Best Actress nominations, for Hancock & Joan, The Village, and Anne. Stage credits include Hamlet, A Streetcar Named Desire, and Happy Days (all Royal Exchange), The Welkin (National Theatre), Avalanche (Barbican), and Talking Heads (Bridge Theatre, subsequently televised for the BBC).

Maxine is also an established writer, with credits including the stage and radio play Beryl (BBC Radio 4/ West Yorkshire Playhouse/The Rose Theatre), Queens of the Coal Age (BBC Radio 4/Royal Exchange), The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca (Hull Truck Theatre), Betty! (Royal Exchange), and an adaptation of They (for Factory International). Maxine also starred in the latter two productions.

## **Imogen Knight**

Movement Director and Co-Creator

Imogen Knight is a director, movement director and Somatic Experiencing therapist based in London. She is part of the MAAT (Music, Art, Activism and Theatre) collective with Sarah Frankcom and Maxine Peake. They have created

multiple works together since 2015, including the highly acclaimed *They for Manchester International Festival (MIF)* in 2023, *The Nico Project* for MIF19, *The Skriker* for MIF15 and *The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca*.

Imogen works across multiple disciplines: theatre, film, classical and electronic music, television, performance and visual art, photography and opera. She has directed work with orchestras and musicians from the London Sinfonietta, Brass and Mandolin Orchestra of Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg, Southbank Sinfonia, Royal College of Music and Royal Northern College of Music. She collaborates with composers and musicians including Matthew Herbert, NYX electronic drone choir, Sigur Ros, Keeley Forsyth and Alicia Jane Turner.

Imogen was the movement director for the multi-award-winning *Chernobyl* (HBO) and the hugely anticipated *Ronja the Robber's Daughter* (Netflix). In Autumn 2023, she and Kirsty Housley co-directed *The Horse* for the Barbican, composed by Matthew Herbert and she co-directed *Gazelle Twin* and NYX electronic drone choir in *Deep England* also at the Barbican earlier that year.

## **Tyler Cameron**

Performer

Tyler Cameron won the Carleton Hobbs Award during his final year at LAMDA in 2023 and went on to record a wide range of audio dramas for the BBC thereafter. He recently took part in the Liberation workshop for the Royal Exchange Theatre and will soon appear in the final season of *Inside No.9* (BBC Two) which is due to air this spring. He is excited to make his professional stage debut in



Robin/Red/Breast.

## **Gazelle Twin**

Composer

British composer, producer and performer Elizabeth Bernholz developed the persona Gazelle Twin in 2009, under which she has since released the albums *Black Dog* (2023, Invada Records), *Deep England* (2021) with NYX Choir, *Pastoral* (2018), *Kingdom Come* (2017), *Unflesh* (2014) and her debut, *The Entire City* (2011).

Her experimental electronic music is influenced diversely – from classical, choral and sacred music, to pop, industrial, and EDM. Her compositions encompass euphoric and haunting choral landscapes, to intense, beat-driven avant pop songs.

Her work has featured in film, TV, video games, theatre productions, and art installations including: *The Walking Dead* (AMC); *The New Pope* (HBO); *How to Get Away with Murder* (ABC); *The Virtues* (Channel 4); *Prometheus* (20th Century Fox); *Cyberpunk 2077*; and 2022 Netflix series *Cyberpunk: Edgerunners*. With a recent move into film and television scoring, she has to date composed two feature, horror film scores, *Nocturne* (by Amazon Studios / Blumhouse, 2020) and *The Power* (Shudder, BFI, 2021), the latter in collaboration with Max de Wardener, as well as the soundtrack for TV series *Then You Run* (Sky TV, 2023). Meanwhile in 2024, Gazelle Twin has been confirmed as the composer for a theatre adaptation of Rose Glass's British horror film, *Saint Maud*.

Gazelle Twin is an ambassador for women in music and inspired the Gazelle Twin Scholarship for Women in Music Technology at the University of Sussex, UK. She frequently presents seminars to students of music and art, and often mentors young composers and producers of all backgrounds.

## **Daisy Johnson**

Writer

Daisy Johnson is the author of *Fen*, *Everything Under* and *Sisters*. Her short story collection *Fen* was the winner of the 2017 Edge Hill prize. In 2018 she became the youngest person ever to be shortlisted for the Booker Prize for *Everything Under* and in 2022 she was a finalist for the Women's Prize for Fiction Futures initiative. She lives in Oxford by the river with her partner and children.

## **Lizzie Clachan**

Set, Props and Costume Designer

Lizzie Clachan's theatre credits include: *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (Wyndham's Theatre); *The Witches*, *Rutherford and Son*, *Absolute Hell*, *As You Like It*, *Treasure Island* and *Edward II* (National Theatre); *Days of Wine and Roses* (Broadway); *August Osage County* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Malmö Stadsteater); *Assassins* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Blindness* (Donmar Warehouse, international and UK tour); *A Number* (Bridge Theatre); *Far Away* and *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (Donmar Warehouse); *The Son* (Kiln Theatre, West End); *The Nico Project* (Manchester International Festival, Melbourne)

International Arts Festival); Cyprus Avenue (Public Theater, New York, Abbey Theatre, Dublin, The MAC, Belfast); Adler & Gibb (Royal Court); Drei Schwestern (Stadttheater Basel, Berlin); Ibsen Huis (Toneelgroep, Avignon Festival); Yerma (Young Vic, The Armoury, New York, Schaubühne, Berlin); The Life of Galileo and Macbeth (Young Vic); and Carmen Disruption (Almeida Theatre).

Her opera credits include: The Greek Passion (Salzburger Festspiele); Nixon in China (Staatsoper Hannover); Lucia Di Lammermoor (The Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera); The Blue Woman and Seven Deadly Sins / Mahagonny Songspiel (Royal Opera House); Orpheus Cycle (English National Opera); Jenůfa (Dutch National Opera, Palau de les Arts Renia Sofía); La Traviata (Theater Basel, English National Opera); Pelléas et Mélisande (Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Warsaw, Tokyo); and Le Vin Herbé (Staatsoper Berlin).

Clachan won Designer of the Year at the International Opera Awards 2023, following nominations in 2020 and 2022. She was nominated for Best Costume Design and twice for Best Set Design at the What's on Stage Awards 2024. She also co-founded the performance company Shunt.

## **Lizzie Powell**

Lighting Designer

Lizzie Powell is a lighting designer for theatre and opera.

Her credits in theatre include: Macbeth – An Undoing (Edinburgh Lyceum Theatre; Rose Theatre, Kingston;

Theater for a New Audience, New York); August Ossage County (Malmo Stadsteater); Same Team: A Street Soccer Story, The Grand Opera House Hotel (Traverse Theatre); Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, The Mountaintop, Mother Courage, Anna Karenina, The Mighty Walzer (Royal Exchange); Comedy of Errors, Endgame, The Libertine (Citizens Theatre); James IV, What Girls are Made Of (Raw Material); King John, Macbeth (Royal Shakespeare Company); Avalanche: A Love Story (Barbican; Sydney Theatre Company); The Da Vinci Code, Dial M for Murder (Simon Friend Productions); Our Ladies of Perpetual Succour (West End; National Theatre Scotland); Thrown, Orphans, Red Dust Road, Adam, Knives in Hens, Venus As A Boy (National Theatre of Scotland); Victory Condition, B, Human Animals, Violence and Son (Royal Court Theatre); Our Town (Regent's Park Open Air Theatre); Romeo & Juliet (Crucible Theatre, Sheffield); and Cyrano De Bergerac (Citizens Theatre; National Theatre Scotland; Lyceum Theatre).

Her credits in opera include: Falstaff (Scottish Opera; Santa Fe Opera); and A Midsummer Night's Dream (Scottish Opera).

## **Pete Malkin**

Sound Designer

Pete Malkin is a London-based Sound Designer for theatre and film. He trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. He won the Evening Standard Award for Best Design 2016 and the Special Tony award for Sound Design, Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Sound Design in a Play and Helpmann Award for Best Sound Design in 2017, all with Gareth Fry, for

Complicité and Simon McBurney's *The Encounter*. He has been nominated for two Offies (Home Chat, Finborough Theatre, 2016; *The Unreturning*, Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2020), the Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding Design with Gareth Fry (*The Encounter*, 2017), a BroadwayWorld UK Award for Best Sound Design of a New Production of a Play or Musical (*The Kid Stays in the Picture*, Royal Court, 2017) and a Theatre and Technology Award for Creative Innovation in Sound (*The Unreturning*, Theatre Royal Stratford East, 2019).

His most recent credits include: *Othello* and *Death of England* (National Theatre); *Let the Right One In*, *Death of a Salesman*, *There is a Light That Never Goes Out* and *Queens of the Coal Age* (Royal Exchange); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (RSC); *The Cherry Orchard* (Simon McBurney, Toneelgroep Amsterdam); *Privacy* (Kilden Performing Arts Centre); *The Unreturning* (Frantic Assembly); *Pity* and *The Kid Stays in the Picture* (Royal Court); *Schism* (Park Theatre); *The Tempest* (Donmar Warehouse/St Ann's Warehouse); *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (West End); *Beware of Pity*, *The Encounter* and *Lionboy* (Complicité); *Frogman* (Curious Directive); *Treasure* and *Home Chat* (Finborough Theatre); *Unearthed* (Folio Theatre); *Am I Dead Yet* and *The Noise* (Unlimited Theatre); and *The Forbidden Zone* (Katie Mitchell/Leo Warner, Salzburg Festival).

## **Brass Band Arrangements**

Carol Jarvis

## **Brass Band**

Rachel Allen  
Megan Bousfield  
Beth Calderbank  
Emma Close  
Rebecca Goodwin  
Grace Harman  
Emily Nicolas  
Lisa Ridgway  
Sophie Smart  
Isabel Thompson  
Rachel Wong

## **Production Credits**

**Hannah Blamire (The Production Family)**

Production Manager

**Helen Fagelman** Company Stage Manager

**Pip Hussey** Deputy Stage Manager

**Tracy Dunk** Wardrobe Supervisor

**Katie Deegan** Wardrobe Assistant

**Jude Mahon** BSL Interpreter

**Anne Hornsby, Mind's Eye** Audio Description

**Splinter Scenery** Scenic Construction

**Tube UK Limited** Sound Engineering

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**Max Schule** Sound No.2

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Technicians

**Andrew Featherstone, James Greenwood**

Lighting Technicians

**Joel Pendleton, Shkiesha Pryce, Phil Thackray**

Rigging Technicians

Programme edited by **Polly Checkland Harding**  
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For a full list of Factory International staff, please see  
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**Factory International** is the organisation behind Manchester International Festival (MIF) and the landmark new cultural space Aviva Studios – helping to put Manchester on the map as a world-leading destination for art.

Producing an ambitious year-round programme of original work and one-of-a-kind events, Factory International builds on the magic of MIF – hosting the Festival every other year at its new home and venues across Greater Manchester.

Rooted in the city, Factory International creates space for the world’s most exciting artists to invent tomorrow together, while supporting the next generation of local talent into the creative industries.

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