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For Immediate Release

National Theatre Connections Festival 2021

The National Theatre Connections festival is a celebration of young people, theatre-making, and the importance of access to the arts. Each year the National Theatre commission ten new plays for young people to perform, bringing together some of the most exciting writers with the theatre-makers of tomorrow.

It's been a tough old 18 months for everyone, but these creative, talented, resilient young people- taking part in this digital festival- have proven art will always find a way! Connections WILL ALWAYS be made... between performers and an audience, between cast members and friends, but really just between people- every day. Theatre Royal Plymouth are determined to make some of those connections over this 14 day digital festival and they invite you to join them through varying size screens!

With 30 Partner Theatre festivals taking place across the country, Connections 2021 will involve at least 5,000 talented young people from right across the UK, and inspire and entertain audiences with plays for and about young people that are current, challenging, and resonant. Theatre Royal Plymouth is one of those partners.

Dani Hamlin, NT Connections Festival Producer at Theatre Royal Plymouth said: *"I am so proud of each and every young person and the journey their production has taken them on this year. From Penzance to Great Torrington to Dawlish and everywhere in between It hasn't been easy for any of the 9 companies taking part, but they've done it, they've reached the end of the process and now it's time to celebrate! These young people are the future. They are putting the arts in the South West on the map and for that I give them a standing ovation (in my living room on my own)!"*

This year the National Theatre adapted their programmes for schools, young people and community groups across the country to keep providing opportunities to create and take part in theatre safely. Working with theatres across the country, including Theatre Royal Plymouth, they've restarted activity with content delivered digitally, where it

wasn't safe to deliver in person, until live projects can be resumed.

Tickets are FREE. Book your FESTIVAL SEASON TICKET to watch all of the productions by participating schools and youth theatres. Connections is part of the National Theatre's nationwide Learning programme. Let's make sure, together, that creativity remains an essential part of young people's lives. Book your free Festival Season Ticket on the TRP website here: <https://theatreroyal.com/nt-connections-2021/>

The Shows

The IT by Vivienne Franzmann. Being performed by three companies; Young and Unique @ Callington Community College, Shaftesbury Theatre Youth Group, Great Torrington School – Pike and Musket

The IT is a play about a teenage girl who has something growing inside her.

She doesn't know what it is, but she knows it's not a baby. It expands in her body. It starts in her stomach, but quickly outgrows that, until eventually it takes over the entirety of her insides. It has claws. She feels them. Does it have teeth, skin, and hair as well, or is that feathers, or spikes she can feel, butting up against her organs? What is it? It makes a noise, like a lizard or a snake.

No one must know about it. She has to keep its presence, its possession of her, concealed. She pulls away from her friends. She refuses to speak in case The It is heard. Then the It tries to escape from her body. She can't let that happen. She cuts an isolated weird figure at school, trying to live her life 'normally'; but battling to keep The It inside of her. But she can't contain it forever, sooner or later something's got to give...

Presented in the style of a direct to camera documentary, this is a darkly comic state of the nation play exploring adolescent mental health and the rage within, written very specifically for today.

Tuesday by Alison Carr. Being performed by Starmakers Dance and Performing Arts.

The play centres on an ordinary Tuesday that suddenly turns very weird indeed when a tear rips across the sky over the school yard. Not only that, but it starts sucking up pupils and staff while at the same time raining down a whole new set of people. But

then, that's what happens when parallel worlds collide!

Confusion reigns as the 'Us' and 'Them' try to work out what is going on. How are Ash and Magpie identical? Can Billy cope with having his sister back? Who is Franky? Eventually, though, cracks appear between the two groups. As the air here starts to disagree with the 'Them', the race is on to try to get things back to how they were and safely return everyone to the Universe they came from.

The play touches on themes of friendship, sibling love, family, identity, grief, bullying, loneliness and responsibility. And in the process we might just learn something about ourselves as well as some astronomical theories of the multiverse!

***Witches Can't Be Burned* by Silva Semerciyan.** Being performed by The Plough Youth Theatre Seniors.

If you keep on doing the same thing, over and over again, you'll keep on getting the same results, time and time again. St. Paul's have won the schools Playfest competition, three years in a row, by selecting recognised classics from the canon and producing them at an exceptionally high level, it's a tried and trusted formula. With straight A's student and drama freak, Anuka cast as Abigail Williams in *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, the school seem to be well on course for another triumph, which would be a record. What could possibly go wrong?

However, as rehearsals gain momentum, Anuka has an epiphany. An experience resulting in her asking searching questions surrounding the text, the depiction and perception of female characters, the meaning of loyalty, and the values and traditions underpinning the very foundations of the school. Thus, the scene is set for a confrontation of epic proportions as Anuka seeks to break with tradition, before tradition breaks her and all young women like her and reality begins to take on the ominous hue of Miller's fictionalized Salem.

***The Marxist in Heaven* by Hattie Naylor.** Being performed by Lipson Co-operative Academy.

The Marxist in Heaven is a play that does exactly what its title page says it's going to do. The eponymous protagonist 'wakes up' in paradise and once they get over the

shock of this fundamental contradiction of everything they believe in..... they get straight back to work.... and continue their lifelong struggle for equality and fairness for all.... even in death. Funny, playful, provocative, pertinent and jam-packed with discourse, disputes, deities and disco dancing by the bucketful, this upbeat buoyant allegory shines its holy light on globalization and asks the salient questions – who are we and what are we doing to ourselves?.....and what conditioner do you use on your hair?

***Find a Partner!* by Miriam Battye.** Being performed by two companies; Launch Theatre and Performance Training Cornwall, Heles School

Hayley needs to find a boyfriend quick! She only has seconds to decide before it's too late. However, this is not real life, it's more important than that, this is a game – with strict rules. Find A Partner is a play that takes us on a journey through the closing rounds of a gameshow about coupledness. Meet the contestants, revere them, live through them, reject them. A show, played by a few watched by many, but everyone's involved.

Who's in, who's out, who likes who, who's with who, who gets a say and who gets to choose? Everything's at stake, because, well, EVERYTHING IS AT STAKE. That's life, everybody wants a partner, don't they? No partner?....impossible to imagine...isn't it? Impossible to live like that. Isn't it?

***Like There's No Tomorrow* by the Belgrade Young Company by Justine Themen, Claire Proctor and Liz Mytton.** Being performed by Acorn Young People's Theatre.

There are strange cracks appearing in the land on the other side of the world, turning habitats into wastelands and creating a new wave of climate refugees. However, no one's worrying about that here – where a mayoral candidate is promising more, more, more. It's what the people want. Apart from Maru that is, who's asthma is really bad because the air is already thick with pollution, and their mantra of reduce, reuse, recycle, is falling on deaf ears.

However, as plans emerge to build on the park, and Maru's parents appear to be seduced by the mayoral candidate's invitation to consume as much as you can – something has to give. So, when a crack appears in Maru's new state of the art

bedroom furniture and then it spreads to the centre of town, and Maru seems to be the culprit, it's enough to focus everyone's attention – as they seek to deal with the symptom, whilst remaining oblivious of the cause.

ENDS

For further information please contact the Media and Communications team on mediaandcommunications@theatreroyal.com / 01752 230439

Theatre Royal Plymouth (TRP) is a registered charity providing art, education and community engagement in Plymouth and across the region. It engages and inspires with the aim of touching lives. Theatre Royal Plymouth presents a year-round programme of world class productions on all scales as the South West's principal centre for performing arts.

Theatre Royal Plymouth works with partners to understand the challenges people face accessing the arts, especially vulnerable and disadvantaged people. It creates pathways that are genuinely accessible to those who might otherwise never get to engage with the arts. They collaborate to co-create and co-author work that represents the community, creating the space needed for people to tell their story in their own way.

Theatre Royal Plymouth is the UK's largest regional producing theatre. With a focus on embracing the vitality of new talent and supporting emerging and established artists. It collaborates with a range of partners to provide dynamic cultural leadership for the city of Plymouth.