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For Immediate Release

**CAST ANNOUNCED FOR COMPLICITÉ'S PRODUCTION OF
*DRIVE YOUR PLOW OVER THE BONES OF THE DEAD***



Award-winning, international touring company Complicité (*The Encounter*, *Can I Live?*) has today announced the full casting for the world premiere of a new work for the theatre *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*, conceived and directed by their Artistic Director and Co-Founder Simon McBurney. The piece is based on Nobel Prize-Winner Olga Tokarczuk's genre-defying novel of the same name, **with the tour opening at Theatre Royal Plymouth from 01 – 03 December 2022.**

The ensemble cast features long standing Complicité collaborators, alongside new performers working with the company for the very first time. **Kathryn Hunter** will play Janina Duszejko – a former engineer, environmentalist, devoted astrologer and enthusiastic translator of William Blake. She is joined by **Thomas Arnold**, **Johannes**



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Flaschberger, Amanda Hadingue, Kiren Kebaili-Dwyer, Weronika Maria, Tim McMullan, César Sarachu, Sophie Steer and Alexander Uzoka. Casting is subject to change at some venues.

The following quote from **Simon McBurney** is to be used in full: *“Olga Tokarczuk savage, funny and madly beautiful “Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead” is being brought to the stage by Complicité with a multi-national ensemble made up of long-term collaborators such as César Sarachu (Street of Crocodiles, Master and Margarita), Tim McMullan (Lucie Cabrol, Mnemonic, Master and Margarita), Johannes Flaschberger (Lucie Cabrol, Foe, Mnemonic, Measure for Measure and Master and Margarita) and a new generation of exceptional actors. We are particularly thrilled and delighted to announce that leading the company, in the role of protagonist Janina, is Kathryn Hunter.*

But we cannot, nor would we want to, avoid declaring that we are also making this piece in a time of deep mourning. Following the death of my comrade, compaignero and brother in arms Marcello Magni – co-founder of Complicité and Kathryn’s beloved husband - Kathryn and I feel it is a profound, beautiful and healing act to come together to create a piece of theatre inspired by this witty, poignant and ferocious work.”

Regarded as an eccentric outsider, the story unfolds through Janina’s eyes, veering between the comedic and macabre. Her actions question the patriarchal world which surrounds her, our deeper human intentions and the value placed on the lives of animals in contrast to our own.

Tokarczuk’s novel caused a seismic reaction in her native Poland due to its defiant attack on authoritarian structures, with right-wing press branding the writer an ‘eco-terrorist’ and national traitor. This playful, anarchic noir was translated into English in 2018 by Antonia Lloyd-Jones for Fitzcarraldo Editions. It is the first English language stage adaptation of the novel and the first time Tokarczuk’s work has been adapted for the UK stage.

The story begins in the depths of winter in a small community on a remote mountainside, as men from the local hunting club begin to die in mysterious circumstances. Janina Duszejko has her suspicions. She has been watching the

animals with whom the community shares their isolated, rural home, and she believes they are acting strangely...

A philosophical and poetic murder mystery, *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* is a rallying cry for nature and a love-letter to the poetry of Blake. At its heart it is a playful and profound work that asks us to consider what it means to live in harmony with the world around us, our place in the ecosystem, and the perilous consequences we all face if our connection to the natural world is lost.

Collaborating with McBurney on the project are set and costume designer Rae Smith, lighting designer Paule Constable, sound designer Christopher Shutt, video designer Dick Straker, dramaturgs Sian Ejiwunmi-Le Berre and Laurence Cook and Kirsty Housley provides additional direction. Completing the creative team are design assistant William Fricker, lighting associate Lucia Sanchez and sound associate Ella Walhström.

Supported by a pan-European network of co-producers, the production begins at Theatre Royal Plymouth, followed by a 3-week run at Bristol Old Vic, dates at Oxford Playhouse ahead of a national opening at the Barbican, London. The production will then tour throughout 2023 with further UK dates at Nottingham Playhouse, Belgrade Theatre Coventry and The Lowry before international dates in May and June 2023 including Les Théâtres de la Ville de Luxembourg, and L'Odéon-Théâtre de l'Europe, Paris.

Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead is the latest in a series of Complicité projects that urgently address the destruction of the planet. *Figures In Extinction [1.0]* which focused on humans' disregard for animal life, is a collaboration with Canadian choreographer Crystal Pite and Nederlands Dans Theater which recently won a prestigious Swan award and will receive its UK premiere at Sadler's Wells in April 2023. *Can I Live?* a film conceived, written and performed by Fehinti Balogun, which was presented as part of the official programme for COP26, highlighted the social injustices caused and inflamed by climate change. Complicité is a founding member of the Culture Declares Emergency initiative. Much of McBurney's (an active member of Stop Ecocide) and the Company's work focuses on the state of our planet and art's responsibility in encouraging activism.

Complicité is one of Europe's leading theatre companies. Its work is characterised by an inherent playfulness and made through a deeply researched, highly collaborative process rooted in the belief that all aspects of theatre should challenge the limits of theatrical form. Recent Complicité productions include *Beware of Pity*, *The Encounter*, *The Master and Margarita*, *Shun-kin* and *A Disappearing Number*. This December, Complicité presents *The Dark is Rising* on BBC World Service and BBC Sounds, a new immersive audio drama of Susan Cooper's cult novel, adapted by Robert Macfarlane and Simon McBurney and starring Toby Jones, Harriet Walter and Paul Rhys. The company is led by director Simon McBurney, in collaboration with a wide circle of associates.

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For further information please contact the Media and Communications team on public.relations@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.