



03 // **OPINION**  
*Zzzzzzooooom*

04 // **OPINION**  
*Online Theatre*  
Wilde Wilde West

05 // **OPINION**  
*Online Theatre*  
A great escape?  
Together, Apart

06 // **OPINION**  
*NSDF 21*  
Synopsis Optics

07 // **FEATURE**  
*The SCRUBBERS Guide to Drama School*  
In our rehearsal Zoom  
*Genius*  
Big-brained Big Brother

08 // **FEATURE**  
*NSDF 21 - Jigsaw*  
Virtually Possible

09 // **OPINION**  
*Online Theatre*  
Musical memories  
Showing inclusion

10 // **INTERVIEW**  
*Rum & Coke*  
Cuba Libre  
**REVIEW**  
*Seen*

Seen: Performed: Felt

11 // **FEATURE**  
*This Is A Love Song*  
Diary of a Love Song

12 // **REVIEW**  
*to hunt violets*  
A look at Lydia Kendall-McDougall's messages

13 // **REVIEW**  
*Seen*  
What a funny world  
Seen and heard

14 // **FEATURE**  
*NSDF 21 - This Is A Love Song, to hunt violets*  
On your Marx

15 // **REVIEW**  
*The Light Catcher*  
Behind the lens  
Framed

16 // **REVIEW**  
*This Is A Love Song*  
Evol  
Love song on repeat

17 // **NOTICES**

## Editorial

Whenever we write an editorial, we try to sum up the contents of the magazine, the mood of the festival – and, in the first issue of the NSDF week, what's happened in the past year.

It's difficult to do that here.

At last year's virtual festival, everything felt new. Zoom was a new concept for us. And NSDF without shows was a new reality too. An NSDF on Zoom without shows felt like stepping through the looking glass. Except, with the whole world still streaming in. Over the past year, the unknown has expanded and enveloped us. The reality of this pandemic has become mundane while the world has continued to shudder, and throw its challenges at us with full force. Black Lives Matter protests. Introspection and rage. The US election. An insurrection. Reclaim the Night vigils. How can you begin to respond to that?

On the first day of the festival, *Seen*, made by students at New Vlc Sixth Form College, did

just that. A response to injustice, food poverty, racist policing in the UK, *Seen* asked its audience to care, and most, importantly, to see young people. "Do I look like a threat?", Moses Oridoye asked the audience, in a monologue that felt unflinchingly honest and deeply raw (reviews on p10, 13). *to hunt violets* was about the lives of young people too – but approached the topic from a different direction. Redrafted in the wake of Sarah Everard's death, Juniper Theatre's production slowly probes its audience, seeding in warning signs about how society excuses and abets rape culture. "His heart's in the right place," one man says of another early on. That clearly isn't enough (more on p12, 14).

There are more reviews inside this issue of *Noises Off* – of *This Is A Love Song* from Tiny Change theatre, and of *The Light Catcher*, a startling new film made by Theatron and Thespo, NSDF's equivalent in India. There are other articles to sink your teeth into, written by our super-team of *Noises Off* writers, who've launched themselves into NSDF 21 and into the strange world of making theatre over the internet.

Having seen some of the NSDF 21 shows, we've been thinking a lot about how young people are seen and listened to, are respected, are given equal chances in life regardless of their race, class and gender. Sometimes having an editorial in this magazine feels like saying: these are not just views these are the views of the editors. You should read very carefully. This is important.

That's not the case. This is your magazine. A space for all fest-goers to be seen and heard. We hope that you will make use of it. We are also making our annual *Noff* zine with a big group of people over Zoom on Thursday night. Everyone is welcome to pitch in and suggest ideas, and that feels like a positive step too.

**Naomi and Florence xoxo**  
**Editors**

*The conversation continues online [nsdf.org.uk/noises-off](https://nsdf.org.uk/noises-off)*



**@noffmag**  
**noff@nsdf.org.uk**

# Zzzzzzoom

Issy Flower has Zoom fatigue before the festival's even started



**NSDF hasn't even started yet, and I'm spreadeagled on my bed with the heating up, feeling exhausted. I have been struck with the feeling of total inertia you get the morning after an after-party, post-show blues without there being a show, and a general lack of desire to do anything. It feels like I've already done a week at the festival – and it doesn't even kick off until Saturday.**

To be fair, this has been going on for a while. After months of creating, watching, and reviewing online productions, I'm pooped. The feeling of effort it takes to watch these shows, divorced from the pleasurable social aspects and change in scenery found in normal times, is often immense, and incredibly disproportionate to their quality. Some I've even watched on 1.5x speed just because the thought of staring at a screen for two hours fills me with dread. I have to do this for university, for work, to write, to see my friends – and having to do it for theatre as well is exhausting.

NSDF last year was a baptism of fire – a week-long whirlwind of workshops and talks, which were a brilliant distraction during the first lockdown. However, it was also incredibly difficult to keep up with. Talk after talk after talk, often tightly packed together, leaving maybe five minutes for a coffee break before plunging back into the next career development webinar.

Consequently, I've started worrying for my critical faculties. With the excessive amount of screentime this week, I'm worried that when I watch the amazing shows lined up by the festival, I'll be thinking about the next workshop, or my tea, or working out if I can fit in a five minute walk before the quiz. This is even more of a problem when some of them, like *SCRUBBERS*, have an audience interaction element. What if I'm no longer up to interacting? I'm worried that I'll have nothing to say and will have exhausted my brain on the five hundred other things I've been doing that day, and will spend three hundred words making vague, boring statements that offer neither critical feedback nor an

interesting read. I'm scared that I'll go into a workshop with little enthusiasm and get nothing out of it because this is the sixth one I've been to in a row, and I'm sick of the Zoom icon flaring up at me, mocking me.

I know deep down that this won't happen. I'm being over-dramatic - this is not a shock. These experiences are a lockdown thing: the natural consequence of months and months of screens. Everyone's in the same boat, and the truth is that from the first minute of the first show I watch, I'll get that feeling again. That pre-show, orchestra-tuning-up, rustle-of-programmes feeling – a glorious anticipation and reinvigoration of love for drama.

If I feel up to clicking the Zoom link, of course.



# Wilde Wilde West

Anna Mahtani investigates the curious tale of an online adaptation of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

As movie theatres close, theatre movies are moving in. The National Theatre (NT) has launched its streaming services, NSDF has made the digital leap, and more and more productions are being created and shown entirely online. With scenes filmed on stages and special effects, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* feels right at the centre of an emerging genre.

With its gorgeous set design, moving performances and Wilde-like wit, *Dorian Gray* is more than worth a watch. The play is delightfully self-aware: the self-deprecating in-jokes keep coming at you; Alfred Enoch's Harry Wotton mocks NT At Home while heralding *Coriolanus*, the play he himself was in; and the sheer volume of Shakespeare and Wilde references is enough to make any literature student jump with glee. But the play stumbles in its second act, and the irony of receiving lecture about the dangers of social media in an online production creates an imbalance in an otherwise strong production. How does the story benefit (and potentially suffer) from the theatre-film hybrid?

Texts, videos, hate comments fill the screen; title cards indicate what's to come; music plays over previously seen moments, changing the tone. The camera is used sparingly, though to great effect. We zoom in on Lady Narborough and snap back when she refuses close-ups, slow-motion and

lighting give an impression of a vibrant world of intimacy despite social distancing, and in Harry and Dorian's first calls the colour fringing and blurred edges give the impression that they are the only ones in the world. The production seems to strike the perfect balance between play and film.

Later though, the effect is lost. What in theatre could be glanced over, forgiven and forgotten, in film is immortalised. The act of filming gives authority, permanence. If Harry Potter walked onto screen in a blanket and asked us to imagine it's an invisibility cloak, we'd laugh. When Puck says, "I am invisible", we believe him. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* neither has the high-budget special effects of cinema nor the suspension of disbelief of stage: Dorian's Instagram becomes lacklustre, his videos are boggish, and the attempt at horror in flickering between the real Dorian and his image is laughable. Were he on stage we'd give in to the magic readily. Neither dazzling nor darkly attractive, Dorian's online self disappoints. The character's reaction to it is powerful, but ours is not. Instead of adding to the experience, the visuals detract. A lack of subtlety, sometimes necessary on stage, feels condescending on screen.

The production's true-crime documentary style provided excellent hindsight, unmatched comedy, delightfully unreliable and reluctant narrators, and a heart-breaking knowledge of

the ending. And the final revelation that Basil Hallward is "executive producer" throws the question of authenticity up in the air. Just as the camera directs our attention, the characters of the play stop us from seeing the whole stage.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a story about the filters we put on for the world. This adaptation is a surprisingly unfiltered form of film.

There's a disconnect between the expectations of film, and those of theatre. And if this new format is to find its footing, not only must it set itself aside from both, but we must set aside our expectations. The tradition in theatre is to tell, in film it is to show. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* tries to do both. Theatre films are opening theatre up to a wider audience, but it remains to be seen whether the format will stand on its own, toeing the line between stage and screen, or if it'll fail to be either. Generosity, and a willingness to experiment is needed to give the genre life: trust the actors, trust the audience, and let the camera bring the two together.

With the exciting upcoming NT *Romeo and Juliet* – filmed half on stage, half on location – the genre is only just picking up speed, and could, quite literally, show all the world to be a stage.





## A great escape?

Beth Edwards asks if theatre can offer more than a mirror of our world on stage

**The pandemic has been tiring. We're all tired of masks, tired of Zoom meetings, tired of briefings where nothing really changes. But there's been a constant light in the darkness, a way to escape.**

Although in a completely different form for the past year, the theatre is as comforting as ever. I myself have found solace in recorded performances, an echo of times past. A time when you could be sat in a theatre, while your heartbeat synchronises with those around you, regardless of whether you know them or not. Until that time comes back around, I'm able to plug my headphones in and disappear for a while, whether that be into 1700s America in *Hamilton*, or Northern England in the 1840s in the National Theatre's *Jane Eyre*.

Theatre productions have given so many of us respite from the past year. We can immerse ourselves into these worlds, and leave this world of Zoom meetings and masks behind us for a while.

However, with the theatre being more widely accessible than ever, should we be using our performances to make current affairs more accessible, rather than creating more ways to escape? Is that the theatre's primary duty? It's important to watch theatre that's been born of societal issues, and there are so many fantastic political pieces that make you leave the theatre with a new mindset and a new determination in your step.

But to watch a performance to escape reality can be just as powerful. The beauty of theatre is the way that we might not even notice when something has made an impression on us. We watch a performance, and then weeks later, there might be a headline that reminds us of it. We remember that character's face, those gestures, the subtle lighting changes that reflect the tone of the scene. Take something like *The Tempest*. Although we might watch for romance, or for the poetic language, there are deeper themes within. We are prompted to think of colonialism, the patriarchy, morality, and many

more issues that are prevalent today. Although we may not have been watching with politics in mind, it's made an impression on us. Everyone who has seen that production will have taken something unique away. Some new philosophy, some eye-opening message, or even just a joke they're going to repeat later on. We're part of a new community. We shouldn't erase fantasy and fiction from the stage, as these often best convey one of the most powerful messages of all – that we are not alone.

The headlines can tell us what we should know, but the theatre can give us what we need. Costumes without masks, worlds without Zoom meetings. Stories of hope, of community, of love. The theatre continues to bring us together virtually, and I can't wait for the day we are brought together in real life – all of our hearts, beating in sync.



## Together, Apart

Esti Bragado reflects on community, and the togetherness that theatre can bring

**There is something about watching a live performance in a theatre full of people that thrills me.**

I don't mean the story, nor do I mean the actors' performances either. It is more of a feeling: something in the atmosphere, which I seem to become part of the moment I reach my seat.

I remember having a look around before a performance started, and then again as it finished. I would look at the people sat next to me and discreetly listen to their conversations, I would check some people's fancy dresses and some others' comfortable clothes, as I had a look at the different people in the audience,

sometimes wondering if they were on a date, were friends of someone in the production team, or maybe were drama students like me.

At the end – my favorite moment – I would look at the audience again and watch them turn into a moved and vivid wave of applause in unison. In this way I used to feel connected to them somehow, as if sharing the same space and listening to the same story would involve us in the same conversation. That is not that different to 'meeting' someone, if you think about it...Well, more or less. I guess what I mean is there is some proximity to strangers when being part of the same audience, some sense of...community. And that is what is special about theatre.

What happens now? I wonder. Not with theatre as such – much has been said about it already – but with us as a community. What does the fact that we are confined in our houses (limited to online meetings and performances) say about ourselves and the lifestyle we have created? A lifestyle based on distance, isolation, fear of strangers and of socializing. I ask myself – and therefore I ask you – if this pandemic and the different lockdowns we have been through may

be the reflection of a society which forgot to value the little and ordinary things that unite us, because we preferred to hide behind screens and virtual profiles rather than looking at someone in the eye...

I must admit it: I forgot to appreciate them myself. So many times. I took for granted that I could always meet my loved ones freely, as I took for granted that I could always go to the theatre and stare at my fellow audience members, believing we were doing something together. We lost that. I lost it, and I cannot help thinking it is a consequence of what I prioritised in the past. Of what we did.

So I hope through this festival we get closer to the community we could be. I hope we all enjoy ourselves 'together' as we grow watching, listening and discussing...although, I especially hope we miss doing this in person as we keep in mind that theatre is about people coming together, even if we are doing it differently right now.





**I think a play synopsis is kind of like a dating profile: uncomfortably one-sided and often guessing at what wants to be heard. Like a dating profile it must be brief but detailed enough to be unique, self-advertising but not arrogant, and above all, avoid clichés. Truthfulness can carry a play a great way, but bound by a word count, I think synopses rely a lot more on cleverness, on artifice.**

We must admit that the first thing we turn to on a dating profile is the picture. And if I'm being generous to our superficial society, I'd throw out the idiom that 'a picture is worth a thousand words'. So, what do the images for this year's NSDF shows tell us about them?

The most powerful visual, for me, is *Vibrations*'. Its collage combines different mediums, with photography and almost infantile sporadic drawing, reminding me of the irregularity of Matthew Grimes' art. Combined with the image's use of garish colours alongside monotones, it brings me to question how art can be a unified whole while the individual elements are never fully resolved. And then the distorted,

twistedness of the central image gives it energy, even connecting to the auralty implied by the title. Perhaps this picture is worth a thousand words, because I have a primarily a visceral response, and only secondarily an intellectual one. Perhaps art, not written synopses, are more like theatre in that sense.

*Vibrations*' two sentence synopsis seems to be a pretty conventional plot. But their image makes me anticipate something less predictable, or even explicable, something beyond plot. The awesome writer, David Shields, describes collage as "an evolution beyond narrative". I really hope this play's image is not a catfish, and we will see theatre evolve in an online format, but in other ways, this year.

But, probably much to the relief of the publicity teams, my interest was sparked by more than just the images.

The energised comedy of *The SCRUBBERS Guide to Drama School* was purely fun, and I'm so here for seeing feminism approached in a joyous not profound context!

*Home and Rum & Coke* intrigued rather than interested me. They give barely any actual information, and like a frame without a photo, I want it to be filled.

*This is a Love Song*'s self-referential, meta style made me uncomfortably aware of their artistic control. And pulled at what, for me, is the core of theatre: destabilizing this sense of our everyday, comfortable selves.

*Seen* describes itself as "a cry to be understood". This longing to express foremost and impact secondarily is raw and impassioned. It reminds me of Steven Berkoff's author's note for the play *East*: he sees it as his personal experiences and demons "struggling within [him] to escape". And doesn't passion, rather than anything constructed to appeal, draw you in?

Basically, I've come to think, synopses, like dating profiles, are a lot more to do with emotions, and less about giving information, than we might care to admit.





# In our rehearsal Zoom

Caitlin Magnall-Kearns on how the SCRUBBERS made a show over Zoom

In May last year I joined a scheme called NSDF Labs. A group of 16-25 year old creatives from around the world came together to do workshops and have discussions, with the idea that maybe, just maybe, we might work together to create something to present at NSDF 21. Jump to March 2021, and five groups that were started during this process are presenting new work at this year's festival, including myself and Lydia Crossland, aka the SCRUBBERS.

I knew Lydia was the girl for me when she mentioned in one of our Lab sessions that she has just been watching Peter Andre's old reality series on YouTube. Since that moment not only have we become great collaborators, but also great friends, which is pretty remarkable considering I've never met Lydia in real life. I am based in Belfast in Northern Ireland, whereas Lydia is based in Huddersfield in the North of England, and yet we have managed to make a brand new piece of theatre together. Zoom

might be awkward and tedious, but you can't tell me that's not quite cool!

We have made the show through a mix of collaborative writing, chats over cups of tea and devising sessions where we would generate material. Google Drive has been our best friend during this process, with countless pages of ideas, monologues and sketches filling our Scrubbers google drive folder. Originally we envisaged a solo show for Lydia that was a pretty conventional piece of theatre. I had initially thought of writing two interconnected monologues set one hundred years apart (as you do), but we soon discovered that we had so many other things we wanted to explore and look at that wouldn't be possible in that form.

I hadn't performed in anything for nearly two years, so initially shied away from the prospect of performing, but we decided early on that actually we really enjoyed performing together, and there was a real sense of play and camaraderie

when we performed as a pair. So now our show has transformed into a two person Zoom spectacular. If I were to describe it as a cocktail I would say it's part sketch show, part pantomime, part hen do, with a generous slug of heart in there for good measure.

Our show uses drama school as a frame to interrogate bias, class and privilege within the arts, but in our own unique, slightly left field way. It is pretty remarkable how me and Lydia seem to be completely on the same page in terms of our joint knowledge of niche British pop culture, and our shared slightly strange sense of humour. I'll say now, that a good understanding of Jane McDonald's back catalogue is not essential for enjoying our show, but it will certainly help. Ultimately we wanted to create something that was fun, uplifting, a little bit scathing and most of all just a good time, but I guess you'll just have to come along to our show and see for yourself...



## Big-brained Big Brother

Mark Smith speaks to the creative team behind Fishbowl's work-in-progress *Genius*

**Geniuses, you are live on Channel 4. Please do not swear.**

Reality television: the cultural phenomenon tightropeing the fine line between taboo guilty pleasure and outright fodder for controversy and heated debate. Albeit not to everyone's taste, there is a certain sadistic joy in the act of spectating, ogling at everyday behaviours. Viewing the lives of others so intensely has come back to bite; reality television now pervades every channel, bombarding us with yet another series of *Love Island*, or the inevitable reincarnation of structured reality shows à la *TOWIE*.

In conversation with Fishbowl Theatre members, writer Aaron Kilercioglu and director Issy Snape, I am invited into the world of *Genius*, a work-in-progress at NSDF this year. Written and devised entirely during lockdown ("I haven't even seen Issy in over a year," Aaron tells me), *Genius* mobilises reality television as the vehicle to explore issues of exceptionalism within our society. Through this familiar framework, Fishbowl Theatre are interrogating the way society awards value to figures we barely know,

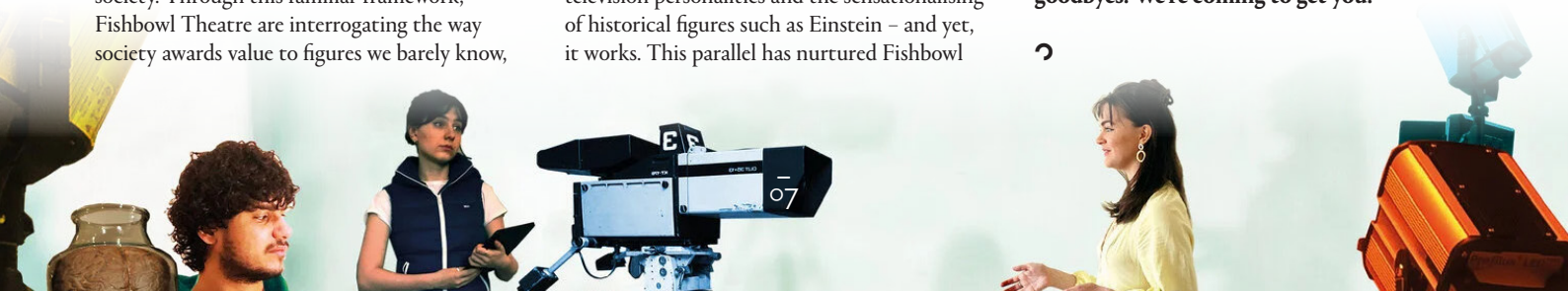
valuing them over others based on characteristics they perform on our screens. In our discussion Aaron and Issy take me through their creative process: *Love Island*, Elon Musk, and the image of Einstein's brain in a jar, being the seemingly disjointed components that led to their brainchild, *Genius*.

Fishbowl find inspiration in "real-life stories you probably haven't heard of." When asked about the specificities of *Genius'* inspiration, Issy introduces me to the scandal surrounding the brain of Albert Einstein. Stolen by pathologist Thomas Harvey during his autopsy, Einstein's brain became the subject of investigation, defying Einstein's adamant wishes that his body was not to be studied posthumously. "There's really interesting intersections between ideas of reverence toward geniuses and celebrity culture," Issy continues, elucidating on the notoriety Einstein accrued from people who were unable to understand his work, let alone who knew him. It is a grotesque parallel – our current treatment of television personalities and the sensationalising of historical figures such as Einstein – and yet, it works. This parallel has nurtured Fishbowl

Theatre's trajectory towards reality television being their theatrical backdrop.

*Genius* pits an ensemble of so-called "Einsteins" against one another, the winning couple having to produce a genius baby capable of solving present-day emergencies. Here, Aaron circles our conversation to the now, commenting on his frustration that solutions to present issues "are so focused on individual exceptionalism," satirising the ethos that "Elon Musk is going to save climate change!" The cult of celebrity is at boiling point; a saviour complex in reverse and dialled to 100. Fishbowl Theatre are allowing us to confront the energy we put into influencer culture and the media figures whose presence only goes skin deep. If the world is a stage, these reality stars are its travelling troupe. The raw realism *Big Brother* introduced us to has become a parade of performativity. Hate them or love them, we revel in the performance of it all!

**Geniuses, you have 30 seconds to say your goodbyes. We're coming to get you.**





# Virtually possible

Lydia Kendall-McDougall looks back on NSDF 2020, and towards NSDF 2021

**Having written the odd piece for *Noises Off* last year amidst the uncertainty of what we now call 'Lockdown One', I'm shocked to find that, this time around, I will be very literally in the same chair I was sat in when I last logged onto the festival a year ago. So, how will this year's online festival feel different to last year's? Does my experience throughout the pandemic reflect those of theatre-makers? How can virtual festivals work well? To find some answers, I spoke with Matt Owen and Molly Parker from *Jigsaw* – an autobiographical show exploring Molly's experience growing up with two non-verbal autistic brothers.**

*Jigsaw* was originally scheduled for last year, but due to the cancellation of the 2019 in-person festival it's been rolled over. "We didn't know what we were doing," says director Matt, "we didn't intend to make digital theatre". Molly, playing herself in *Jigsaw*, also stresses the uncertainty of that time, and the benefit of having a year to "work out how to do this in an online format while staying true to the message we want to bring to the show". It seems that the time granted since last year's festival has provided a breather, an opportunity to refresh, re-imagine, and rework. For many production teams, digital

theatre is completely new, and as an audience member, I'm eager to see how imaginative digital shows will be now that theatre has been online for so long.

I'm keen to focus on how the virtual nature of the festival is beneficial to shows and audiences alike. Matt tells me, "I'll be able to sit and watch [*Jigsaw*] without being on the edge of my seat. There's something liberating about that, and I can watch all the shows without worrying about ours." Molly adds that, thanks to NSDF workshops on accessibility, "we've been able to caption the whole show and have an audio descriptive link which I'd be more nervous about achieving if it was live. We've been able to prep to make sure it's as accessible as it can be." What I gathered is that streaming a pre-recorded show enables you to showcase the best version of the show possible; worries such as making mistakes and being inaccessible are completely removed in this context.

And as an audience member I'm able to, as Molly very accurately describes it, "roll out of bed and log onto my laptop". I'm also a student in Leeds, so the festival being online may well be the reason I'm able to attend as travel time/costs, accommodation, and time away from university

work no longer has to be considered. I can do both, and I can watch as much as I like! Matt also points out that there are some big names at this year's festival who we might not have been able to get to Leicester: "Josh O'Connor...mental." I also wanted to know what the process was like in creating a show remotely. Matt informs me that "it's pretty much all been on Zoom." The only in-person activity was two days in a studio with Matt and Molly, with the band superimposed in later. Despite it being a "slow process," Matt reflects, "it meant that we could carefully consider every bit that we put together." Also, Molly says she feels lucky to have had some "work-in-progress" material prior to NSDF 2020 that she can tap into now.

It seems that both show-makers and consumers are looking towards this year's festival with a bit more clarity and hope. The time taken between now and NSDF 2020 has opened people's minds to the possibilities afforded to both digital theatre and virtual festivals. In some ways, this feels like a final push as we consider a possible in-person event next year, so let's make this year as rewarding and exciting as it can be.





# Musical memories

Katie Kirkpatrick *delivers an ode to the cast recording*

**What makes musical theatre so remarkable as a genre is the way in which it uses music as an instrument of storytelling. Whether this is characters sharing their innermost struggles, as in the case of 'She Used to Be Mine' from *Waitress*, or coming together to unite for a cause, such as in 'One Day More' from *Les Misérables*, it's hard to deny that the added aspect of song can contribute a lot to a piece of theatre.**

For many musicals, the songs carry so much of the plot that it's possible to follow the entire storyline without having ever seen the show. Some productions even deliberately capitalise off of this, such as the recent musical *We Are the Tigers* which features a cast recording track that warns listeners that the next song will feature a key plot reveal. In this way, cast recordings are their own form of storytelling, and function independently of productions themselves.

*to hearing dead voices sing about the joy of living  
to reliving the cliff-edge overture feeling*

In a year where curtains have barely risen, cast albums have taken on a new currency. We are able to reminisce on shows we've seen in the

past from our own homes, in many cases entirely for free. But cast albums were important for accessibility even before the pandemic. With ticket prices, especially for West End musicals, shooting into the hundreds, the young people who form so much of the musical theatre fanbase can quickly be priced out of seeing their favourite shows. The lack of cost, both in actually experiencing shows and in terms of travel, means that recordings help them reach a much larger audience. This can even mean that productions that have closed can gain a following from their cast recordings alone – as in the case of the musical *Be More Chill*. The show originally closed in 2013 as a regional production, but the unprecedented popularity of the cast album led it to run on Broadway and the West End several years later.

*to harmonising with the boiling kettle's hum  
to choreographing a dance to the idea of stillness*

It's true, of course, that cast recordings cannot capture live theatre in its entirety. If they did, we would rely entirely on the radio play format for all kinds of theatre. At the same time, however, it's possible to get some semblance of the live experience from cast albums. Singing

along to 'Seasons of Love' from *RENT* is a sacred theatre kid rite of passage, and who hasn't tried to become the next Rachel Berry belting 'Don't Rain On My Parade' in the shower? It is our involvement in recordings – be it dancing along in our bedrooms or taking part in a group karaoke session – that brings them to life, and brings live theatre into the everyday.

*to aching with the memory of emotion, with the aftermath  
to singing until your throat burns with the sting of alcohol*

Live theatre will hopefully be back soon, and we will be able to experience storytelling in person once again. However, the cast recording will remain an essential path for stories to make their way into the world and find an audience, and for theatre to find its place in day-to-day life.

*to tasting the echo of hairspray in the air, acrid, thrilling  
to feeling almost, not-quite, perhaps, if-only, maybe, what-if  
to holding stage light in your hands*



## Showing inclusion

Elisha Pearce *asks how the last twelve months of online theatre have made the artform more – and less – accessible*

**On Monday 16th March 2020, Covid-19 took hold of the UK theatre industry and live performance as we know it came to a standstill. The livelihoods of many hung in the balance as theatre-makers, technicians and audiences alike awaited response and support from the government: who too, were uncertain about the future of the performance sector.**

This is where live-streamed performance stepped in. Physically unable to frequent theatres in the same way, keen theatregoers were ushered into digital spaces. Despite many protesting that live-streamed theatre 'just isn't the same': for many people with access requirements, live-streamed and online theatre might be the way forward.

Theatre livestreams, Zoom theatre and videos plucked from theatre archives (the most prominent example being the National Theatre collection), have brought resourcefulness, imagination and most importantly, ease of access to theatregoers from a wide range of backgrounds. This includes audiences who use a wheelchair, and D/deaf audiences. Online

theatre provides a new form of connection which is simply too valuable to lose as audiences are invited back into studio spaces and auditoriums once again. For once, people with access requirements are not a side thought, their needs are incorporated into the experience.

On laptops, TV screens and mobile phones: the pandemic has unlocked opportunities for those who were unable to access theatre venues previously. One advantage to theatre moving online, is that disabled audiences such as wheelchair users, don't have to worry about the physical barriers that have previously prevented their involvement in theatre and live performance. The magic of theatre is delivered straight to our screens. Popular live-streamed performances, like the Old Vic's *Lungs* also have the option for live captioning, which enables the D/deaf and disabled community to be involved. If the pandemic has highlighted anything, it is how much more venues and companies alike, can and should be doing to enable everyone to see their work. Is it really enough to stick one 'accessible performance' at the end of a run? Absolutely not. One or two accessible

performances are not going to cut it anymore. Inclusion should be at the forefront of every theatre's ethos and values. All theatre should be accessible for everyone, full stop. Likewise, the move towards online performance should not merely be a placeholder before we can return to a 'real' theatre experience that enables only some to see and experience it.

And whilst theatre's move online might benefit some, everyone's experiences are different. Online shows cannot cater for visually impaired people who have to navigate new online platforms, or for neurodivergent audiences who have lost out on touch tours.

I really hope we don't abandon live-streamed events and Zoom theatre. It would be an incredible shame to lose something that for many, has been a lifeline in the pandemic. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that when the theatre doors swing open again, we need to hold them open for those with access needs, not shut them.



## Cuba Libre

Sam Ross speaks to the team behind *Rum & Coke* about how they met and how the show was created

Jack Goodison, Sidal Kekilli and Valia Katsi were brought together under unusual circumstances. They were all participants in the NSDF Lab scheme. "We were all put in a group, and NSDF told us 'Go ahead and create anything that you want to create,'" Sidal explained to me when the three team members spoke to me earlier this week, "Then we realised that us three shared a passion for diversity. Jack had the music. Me and Luwa [Adebanjo, co-creator] had the writing and the creative ideas behind it. So we thought 'Look, why don't we create a theatre company where we can continue doing things like this, even after NSDF is over?'"

The result of this process is *Rum & Coke*. The team are all cautious not to give too much away. "It follows four friends," Valia explained, "It starts off with a night out. Something happens. And then it follows those four characters on their journey to understanding what that was. And in a sense, it's also about their relationships and their friendships, and what comes out of this whole situation."

For the team, the diversity of the four characters is significant to the narrative. "Instead of

focusing on it from one character's perspective we tried to add in the self-identity of the other characters and how they reacted to that specific situation," Sidal elaborated, "That's what the unique approach is: how each different character looks at it from their own perspective."

Initially, it was Jack, Sidal, and Luwa who began the devising process. Jack was very keen to go down the gig theatre route: "I absolutely adore gig theatre. Like Middle Child are always in my brain as the people I want to [emulate]. It's a form that I want all of my work from now on to be." Meanwhile, Sidal and Luwa were interested in working with monologue and spoken word, and wanted to break away from the normal structure of theatre, so were intrigued by the possibilities of gig theatre. "It fit perfectly," says Sidal, "because we get to break away from the normal dialogue and then find snapshots into the mind of each character." The gig theatre format proved useful when developing the play, especially for the writers, like Valia: "When I was writing my own monologue, the music really did inform what I was writing. There was a conversation in the process of it."

Last year Jack had attended a workshop on accessibility run by Nicki Miles-Wilden and

Chloë Clarke. "The biggest thing I learnt from that was your ideas need to be accessible from the very get-go," he says, "You shouldn't be altering them at the end – you should be making accessibility the very core of your work. There's very creative ways of doing things, which I thought was very interesting."

The company were given an access budget from NSDF and worked with Chloë to integrate audio description and captioning into the show. The language within the script is particularly descriptive, and they make use of sound design to evoke different locations, alongside other accessibility features.

It's wonderful to me the extent to which the company have gone to ensure this play speaks to as many peoples' experiences as possible. "It's all about friendship at the end of the day," concluded Jack, "Showing that you become a family at university, and you all become such close friends – that's a massive part of it. It's just a lovely warming feeling that you get when you think about that, and we want to bring that feeling to people in such a shitty time."

## Seen: Performed: Felt

Inspired by Take A Breath's *Seen*, and their description of it as a manifesto, Emma Robinson responds to the show

**Seen-TAKE A BREATH**

**CONFRONTATIONAL**

**IF I AM LOUD WILL YOU HEAR ME?**

Clap...clap...punch...RUN...clap...run...throw...trip...punch...dance...clap...sing...run.clapclapclapclap

Are you overwhelmed? If not, were you listening?

**POI ASSAULT**

**Racism**

**sexual harassment**

The visceral quality of physicalised emotion. Of a camera shaking. Of the world off kilter. When stagnant blood starts pumping again.

**Are you proud to be British?**

Because, even if these life experiences don't relate to your own, they exist in a space that you share...

Literary MANIFESTOS have a history of being unconventional.

**BLAST** **MINA LOY**

**DaDa**

To be arTICuLATE you do not HAVE to be coherent. You can be c l e a r and still misunderstood. You can be understood when nothing is clear.

A dissonant crescendo cannot stay one note.

I am young but I have a story. I am young, and I ask for a future.

**Caricatures are not realism.**

They are what becomes REAL when the moment is over. They are the most potent memories. They are still TRUE.

# Diary of a Love Song

Mark Fenton, the writer of *This Is A Love Song*, on the journey the play has taken

*This Is A Love Song* is a play about a lot of different things. Mainly it's about time. The idea of time passing is imperative to the story of the play, but it's also central to the process it took to write. Two years have transpired since the first ideas for the play came into my head, and we've both seen a lot of jolting and jarring change.

## January 2019

The previous month has been feverish, but at the very end, there's a little bit of time where everything feels still and quiet. While tidying my room one day, I think that maybe the next play I write should be a love story.

## Spring 2019

Two concepts start to develop: one is that the theatricality of the play should grow as the relationship grows, and the other is the idea of love on a deadline – how films like *Before Sunrise* and *Eternal Sunshine* push more emotional connection because of the fact this love will be going away. I'm walking to the big Sainsbury's and listening to the Pulp song 'Like A Friend' when the final image of the play comes to me.

## Summer 2019

I start to get really inspired by the idea. I read Sarah Kane's complete works, Mark Z Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, and watch my friend's plays to the moors and re:Woyzeck. I'm actually crashing in Sam Nason's room for a wee bit when I write a word vomit of the last scene. It feels special.

## October 2019

I write the first draft in about a week, visiting my favourite pub for a few hours each day and sitting with a half pint in a corner seat, so no one can look over my shoulder. Writing first drafts is the only time where I feel like Jo March – sitting down, fully concentrating, fierce, being ambidextrous just to get the story out. When it's done, I know it sucks, but I feel proud.

## November 2019-Feb 2020

Things get bad again around this time. I'm a big redrafter, but looking at this thing just feels knotty and exhausting. At some point, Megan Farquhar, our co-director, reads it. She has a lot of nores, but she says it's her favourite thing I've done.

## March 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> 2020

I get to do the sound design on the VAULTS festival play *She Is A Place Called Home* and have a lovely time. I feel reenergized and optimistic about theatre and about the future, and decide to properly, properly give this play a shot.

## Rest of March 2020

Happens.

## April 2020

I give up on the play entirely.

## July 2020

Somehow, I've managed to feel a climb back towards the light. I get back to my flat in Birmingham and read the last draft. I like it a lot more than I remember, and I think I know exactly how to fix it. That's a pretty positive way to read your own work.

## September 2020

Megan says we should enter it into NSDF. A couple of days later, I realise that's probably exactly where it's meant to be.

## October 2020

I think it's done. I send it to a few friends for feedback and get a really nice response – some people literally say perfect and some say helpful things that have given me a lot of comfort. Megan and I ask four people we really admire to be our cast, and they all say yes. Midway through our first readthrough, we realise that they're perfect. I feel confident about where the play's going.

## November 2020

Happens.  
But we still do a few rehearsals! Just chatting, mostly about our favourite films and plays and gigs. It's really lovely.

## January 21<sup>st</sup> 2021

We propose it to NSDF. They're all lovely about it. I forget to ask when we'll hear back so spend the next few weeks constantly refreshing my emails.

## February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021

When sitting with my mum and arbitrarily checking my phone, I see the email from Lizzie.

## February-March 2021

We tell our cast of students and/or full-time workers that they have to spend their recreational time on Zoom. This starts a pattern of me feeling guilty about the difficult situations the cast sometimes have to be in, and them responding with warmth and exquisite work. Another pattern begins where, midway through the week, something happens that completely devastates my confidence. But it starts to get there. Each week feels better than the last.

## March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021

My brain jolts me awake at 6. I open my laptop and change the length of a cut. Megan watches it and changes it back. Then we send it to NSDF. A few hours later, I can see it on their Vimeo page. There's nothing left to do.

*This Is A Love Song* will be shown in a few days and I have no idea what people will think of it. When looking back over these dates, there's a lot of times where playwriting does not make sense to me. Where it feels arbitrary and overwhelming, and utterly lonely.

But what does make sense is the way Gina Hunt chooses her pauses to make something I've written feel brand new to me. The way Emily Storme smiles as she lists off her friends in the final scene. The way Sam Nason says "hey" in his first line as George. The way Tom Garrett's eyes spark when he's saying a line I think he likes. The way Ruth Berry expresses her unabashed and honest enthusiasm no matter what. The way Megan Farquhar comes alive in rehearsal and offers up these utterly unique and beautiful ideas. And the wonderful moments across the past few months where I got to sit back and listen to these people talk about these things that were in my head for two years.

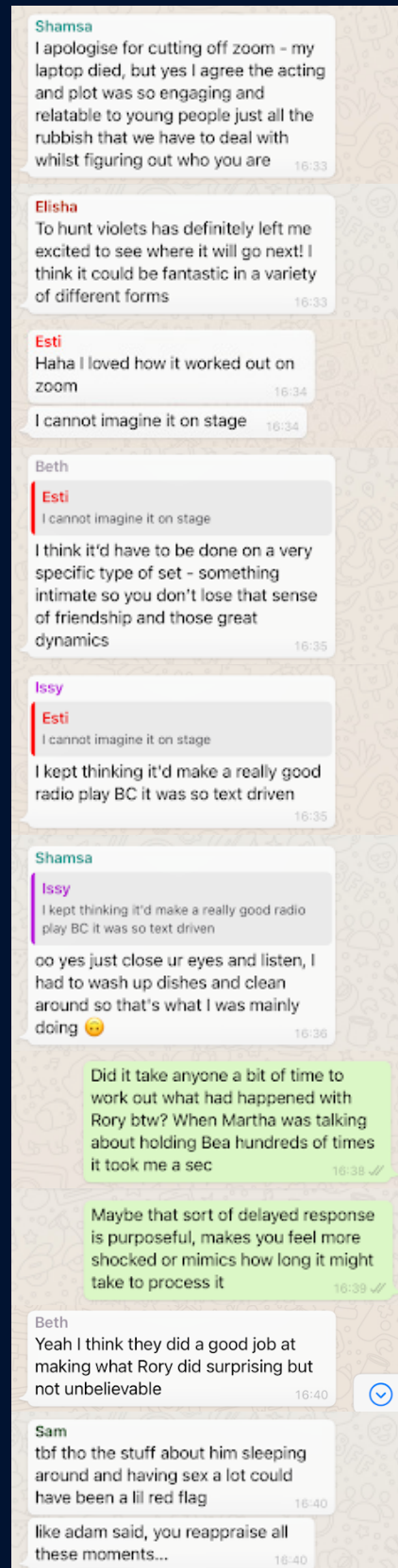
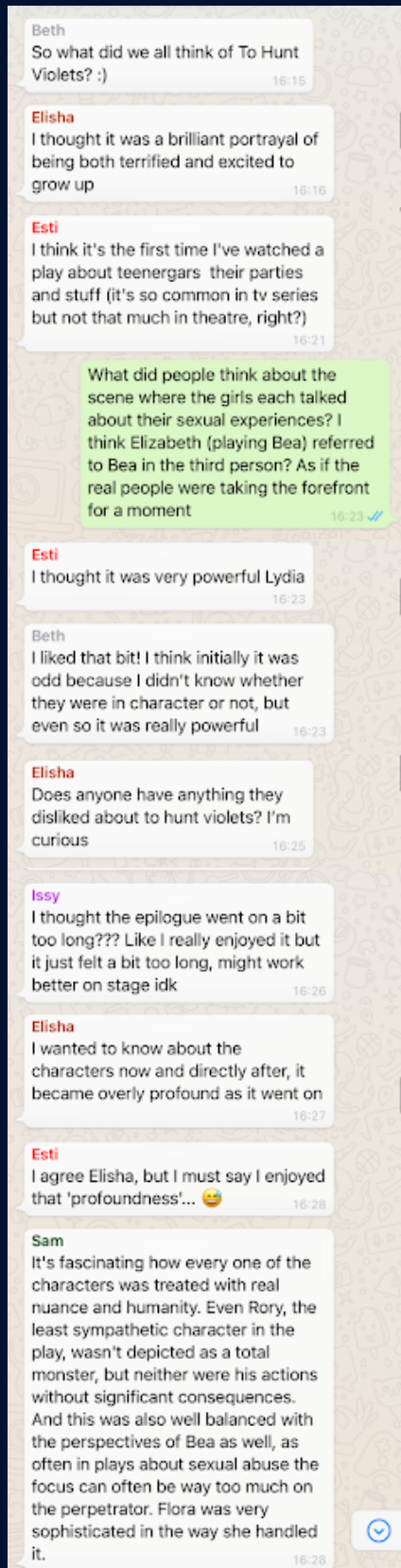
I'm not sure what future this play has, but regardless, I'm happy it happened the way it did.

☺



# A look at Lydia Kendall-McDougall's messages

The Noff writers discuss to hunt violets





# What a funny world

**Shamsa Kiwanuka** is still thinking about *Seen*

**After seeing another news headline of 'A young black boy stabbed in London', or just a reminder that the world is maybe a not-so-nice place to live in, my lovely grandma would always say 'what a funny world'.**

This sort of phrase cannot be taken literally, as there really is nothing funny about this world. It is us who intentionally make the jokes, find the hidden good in the blinding bad. After watching *Seen*, it was another reminder that the world can be the most uninviting place we are all forced to live in. I noticed, throughout, there were scenes or mannerisms to chuckle or smile at, but I didn't. I just watched closer. The scene with politicians especially, with the clapping. And the clapping. And the clapping. It was like, oh yeah sure, they really can't hear the girl screaming behind them about the nation's endless list of problems which they swore to solve. They just clapped louder. It wasn't funny. It is to my understanding that it may have had some humorous intentions, but it made me

feel uncomfortable. Brecht or Epic Theatre as you may know it can have that effect on you. In this scene, the discomfort drew me closer to the meaning of what they were saying, with the sound of their palms striking against one another.

Unfortunately, I could relate to parts of the play that no one should ever have to experience. The monologues and the interview at the beginning still felt tense to watch through a laptop screen. The breathing and the cyclical structure, introduced to us in the beginning and repeated throughout as a motif, signified in the stop and search scene when Moses Oridoye lay on the ground; a moment we have become too familiar with. Too comfortable with. It reminded me to stop and breathe in this funny world. After hearing from the talented cast in the post-show Q&A, it upset me that the stories were personal to them, though it did not surprise me. It should have occurred to me as they were using their real names. I could not help but slowly nod in

agreement when Aman Basha said that he would not change anything if they had the chance. "It's out there."

I cannot imagine the atmosphere, had I 'seen' this live (see what I did there?). All the actors had their purpose on stage. What I appreciate about online theatre is that I can pause, rewind and zoom in on certain moments and facial expressions to work out what was going through their head. With *Seen*, I did not need to because the movements helped to convey and guide me through the plot. Young people have been speaking up about inequalities and bringing awareness to important issues that even I could not inform you about. Out of fear, desperation, and hope that one day we can live in that society where people will no longer have to relate to experiences no one should ever have to endure. Children should not be seen but heard. *Seen* spoke for all of us.



# Seen and heard

**Mark Smith** was moved by the passion and pain of *Seen*

**Never have I ever had my identity questioned...**

For Take a Breath, sharing *Seen* with audiences has been a long time coming: their devising process began in 2019, with April 2020 as the originally scheduled performance at NSDF. Finally, they can breathe a sigh of relief as the culmination of their hard work is presented virtually to audiences. I can confidently say it has been worth the wait.

**Never have I ever had my rights debated...**

While time may heal some wounds, the same cannot be said for the difficult topics raised by Take a Breath. This tenacious ensemble of actors takes their frustrations, accentuated by but by no means limited to the events of

the last year, and pour these emotions into a piece radiating passion and pain. Drawing on personal experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination, the actors dance, sing, laugh and cry; communicating in every which way messages urgently needing to be told.

**Never have I ever felt like an Other in my own country...**

Flashes of light-hearted banter between friends are quickly quelled by unflinching representations of aggressions towards racial minorities. Moses Oridoye shines in particular, inviting the audience into a distressing stop and search scenario which he confides later in the Q&A as being motivated by an experience from his own life.

**Never have I ever been proud of my own country...**

*Seen* is an overwhelmingly raw performance, intended to linger on in the minds of its audience. While moments of this production might require refinement, with clunky transitions interrupting an otherwise seamless flow, you simply don't care watching. The heart and soul of *Seen* transcends the glare of a computer screen. In the post-show silence, alone in my room, I am compelled to ruminate on the struggles this country is yet to truly see.



## On your Marx

Does the race to respond to political events with theatre consume plays at NSDF? **Issy Flower** finds out



**An endless question around the student theatre scene is that of politics. Should theatre always have a political dimension? Are all pieces inherently political? And what the hell counts as 'political' anyway? With the world the way it is, these questions have emerged in full in this year's programme, with workshops on creating political theatre and if theatre works in its current form abounding. So I decided to ask a couple of the artists whose work we'll be critiquing, analysing and splitting apart this year if they feel these elements are actually reflected in their work. Neither said they were setting out to write political pieces – but politics are inescapable in their plays.**

This is likely due to the events of the last year. Since last year's festival, we've had the Black Lives Matter movement, the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Reclaim the Night protests after the tragic death of Sarah Everard. Mark Fenton, writer of *This is a Love Song*, has questioned "the relevance and importance of the things I make when important topics are being discussed. Earlier this month, for example, we were looking to start promoting the show properly, and it just felt completely inappropriate. What place does escapism have when we're neglecting important problems?" But for Flora Wilson Brown, writer of *to hunt violets*, being "drawn to stories about anything but what's going on in the world" is in itself political, due to the focus on human experience rather than global politics. I feel this is the way to go – to untether yourself from expectations of engagement and allow them to emerge in the work, without fear of being shouted down

for not displaying the correct level of political knowledge. It's theatre, not Philosophy 101. This is absolutely not to say that theatre doesn't always have a political dimension. Mark says "if someone can read political undertones into a piece of work, it's political". I agree with Flora that "even if you try to omit politics you're still choosing what to omit and that says everything about what you consider to be political or important". This is to such an extent that "you can't escape it whatever you write". This is not to negate the work of those that are setting out to explore political topics and stories – just that regardless of intention, you are always making a statement about something, even if you didn't realise it.

Mark found himself writing about "toxicity", having set out to write a simple love story, and that the unsympathetic elements of his lead character, Theo, became a statement in themselves – unintentionally or not. In this way, what we choose to write about comes with its own connotations and conclusions. Accepting or rejecting within your story is itself a statement of intent. *to hunt violets* was being redrafted when Sarah Everard went missing,

meaning that the "constant stream of awful news and the outpouring of stories... really changed it" – completely changing the play's original format and making it "really tough to write". Our politics and our world become part of our writing process, as well as what we put on the page.

But should we be aiming to create more explicitly political pieces, that rip apart the fabric of society and build it anew? For Flora, telling "good stories that are real" means political work will naturally emerge, due to the circumstances of our times, but that these are rarely big budget: "Like a big West End musical with a super famous cast about the fact that we have like 10 years to save the planet, maybe that's what we need". But Mark highlighted a key issue which is still a massive problem in the industry – "people from marginalised groups are often made to feel they can only write about their issues and that they have to be political – whereas the cis white guy can write about whatever he wants."

It's not an easy answer. You can't escape the fact that all art comes with politics at its core, due to the circumstances of writing – but this doesn't negate the need for escapism. If plays are fantasies that explore the key topics of our time, more to the good. But writers should be able to write about what it is that speaks to them. We shouldn't prescribe it. It should be up to us, the audience, to seek those political subtexts out. Politics is everywhere in theatre: you just have to look for it.





*The Light Catcher*

## Behind the lens

**Elisha Pearce** was drawn in close by a thought-provoking story

**The Light Catcher by Theatron Entertainment, Pune, and Thespo highlights just how much can be captured with one single flash of a camera.**

In this vivid one-woman production directed by Sanket Parkhe, Ritika Shrotri effortlessly transforms into a range of unique women whose feminine beauty the main character, Senora, aims to capture in her distinctive photography.

*The Light Catcher* catapulted me into snapshots of different women living under varying circumstances. Simple camera effects, costume changes and the use of different rooms within what appears to be a photographer's studio serve to transport us across the world and into the context of each picture.

The show takes the form of an interview between Senora and a rather annoying,

shrill-sounding interviewer who wants the scoop behind each photograph. As we learn throughout the interview, the photographer reduces the beauty she captures, along with the world, to shades of black and white. The concepts of beauty and life being reducible to grayscale highlight just how warped our concepts of beauty truly are. As Senora teaches us throughout her story, beauty is all around us. It is every woman that we know and meet.

*The Light Catcher* felt different from anything else I have seen previously. It was refreshing to learn about a culture that is very different from my own. The interweaving of Indian and English language in a script written by Niranjan Pedaneekar assists in efficiently conveying both Senora's story, and Indian culture.

However, Senora's desire to take the perfect photograph leads to her demise. One invasive

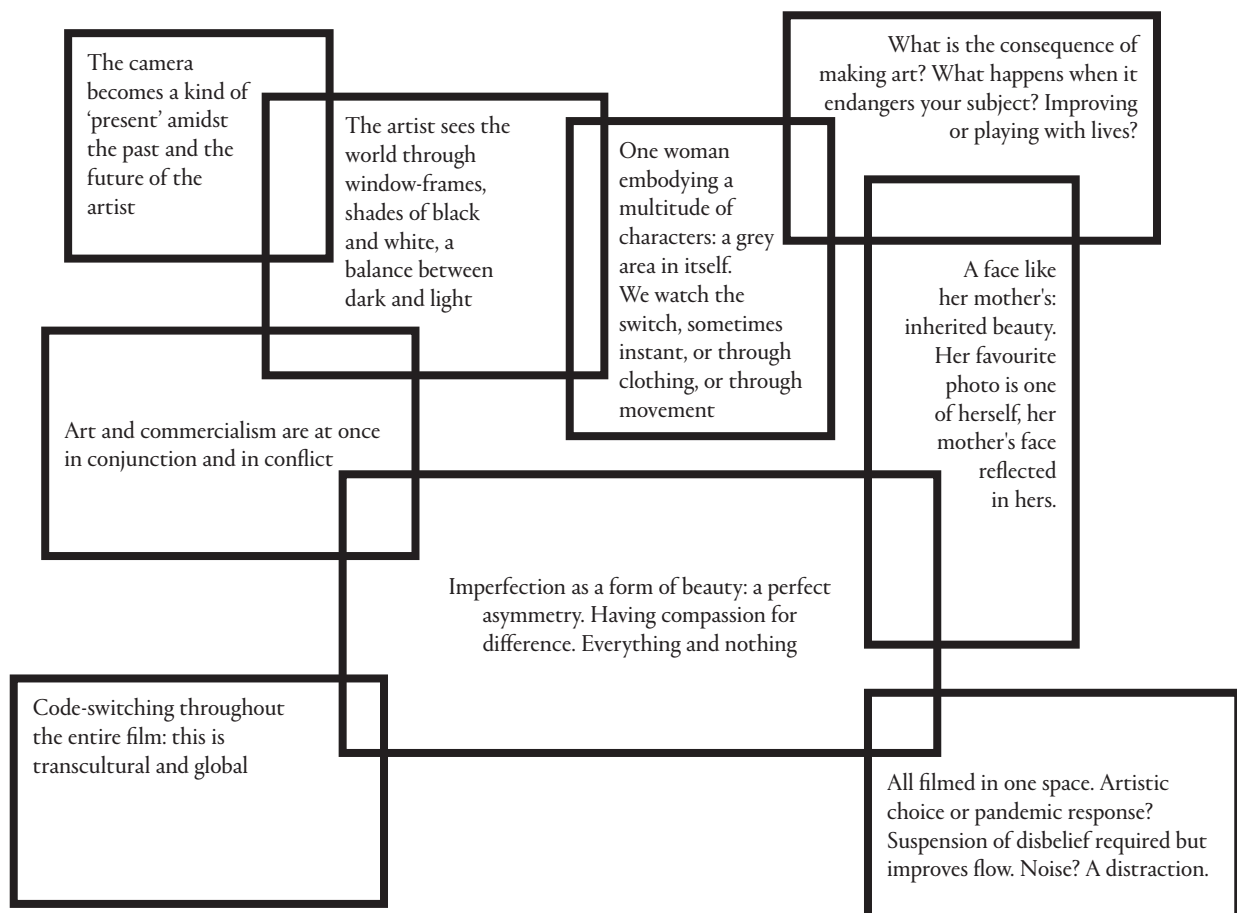
picture, one invasive question, all proves too much as one woman is left negatively affected by her photograph being taken. Suddenly Senora's art does not serve to improve the lives of the women she captures, it destroys it.

As this timeless story draws to a close, I was left contemplating just how much our concepts of beauty will change in the future. I was also reminded of the love and appreciation I possess for all of the women around me. I will remain heavily invested in Senora's story, and the stories of the photographed, long after the National Student Drama Festival draws to a close.

?

## Framed

**Lydia Kendall-McDougall** was drawn in close by a thought-provoking story







This Is A Love Song

Evol

Emma Robinson explores This Is A Love Song from start to end.

### I'm going to say three things...

To be honest, I really like you.  
It could be called love.  
Because I'm going to die.

### And reversed...

Because I'm going to die, it could be called love.  
To be honest, I really like you.

### Did they mean the same?

*This is a Love Song* works backwards. We're told from the start that these women will fall in love and they will die, along with everyone else, when the world ends.

I will reach my point in eight sentences...  
A timer counts down to this ending.

### Seven...

Because of this, each woman resolves to face their past.

### Six...

But they fall in love, insularly, as the world ends only peripherally. This makes the love seem less impulsive, so truer.

### Four...

The world has ended in a lot of films, often functionally, to add tension. But in this play, it feels less of a functional catalyst, more merely a context.

### Two...

If you removed the fact the world was ending, I think the characters would scream the same.

### One...

At what point did it feel I was counting for the sake of it?

The RSC's 2018 production of *Macbeth* was

underwhelming for numerous reasons, but it did have one perfect, if unoriginal, aspect: a huge, red timer counting down throughout to Macbeth's death. What made this so evocative, so tense, was Macbeth's unceasing attempts to fight such unaffected constancy. The incessant, energised and tragic futility of it.

But *This is a Love Song* reached acceptance before it had displayed resistance. It anecdotally mentioned riots and had only one intense outburst. It existentially questioned what matters in life, before anyone had cried. It felt like the timer was a reminder for the audience of the play's narrative, not a reflection of the character's oppressive consciousness of time.

?

## Love song on repeat

Anna Mahtani and Mark Smith respond to *This Is A Love Song*

*This Is A Love Song* is the perfect indie rom-com; simple structure with vivid characters, plenty of highs and lows, and a killer soundtrack. But do the songs add to or detract from the play itself; are they simply a gimmick, or essential to the art?

More of a film trope than theatre, songs resonate with people so well they risk speaking to the universe, without really saying anything at all. At times, tunes become shorthand for genuine emotion; and the real tear-jerkers were when the soundtrack took a back seat. A good playlist plasters up any flaws in the story, but without them can it still stand? Some scenes felt like simply a build up to the next great song. When

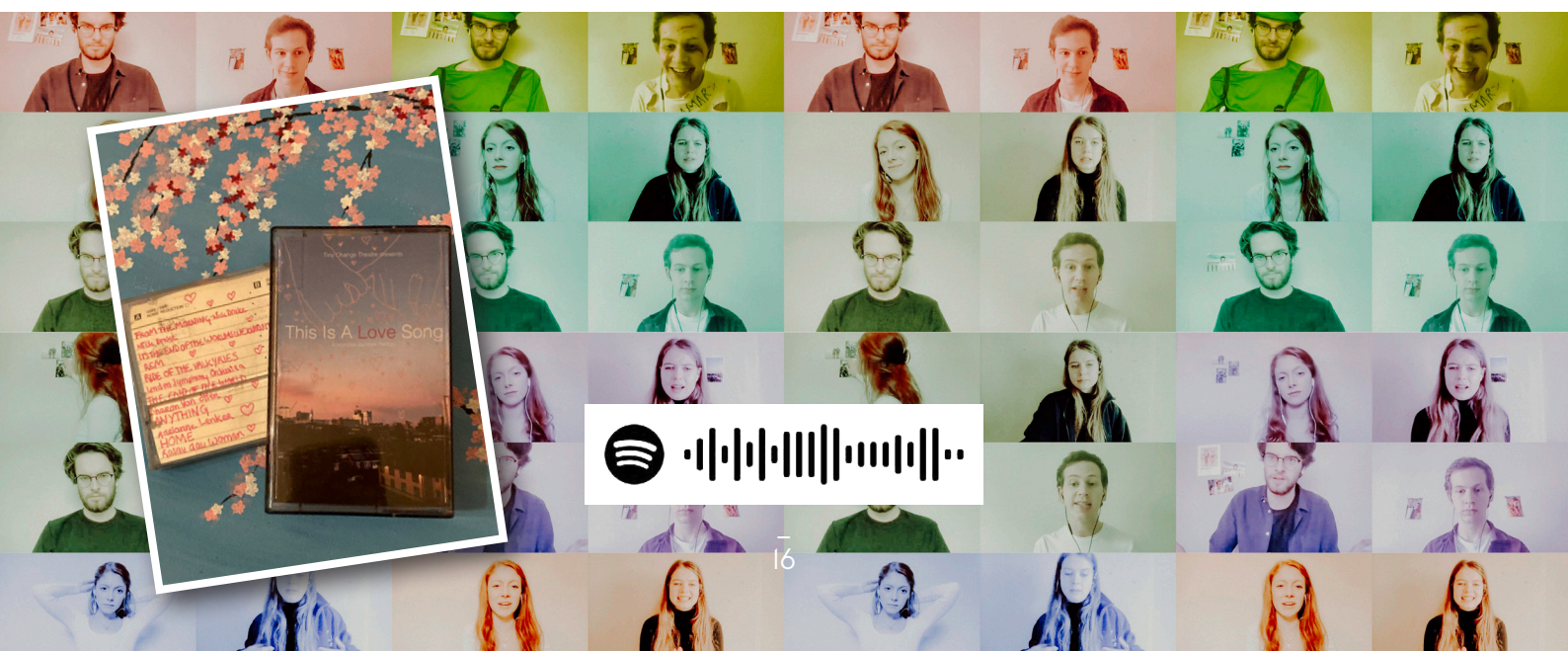
the song ends, you expect the emotion to end with it, and with so many perfect endings, the real ending loses what could have made it so powerful.

In one particular interlude, however, exterior shots flutter by, underscored by Adrianne Lenker's 'anything.' This moment conveys quiet introspection. We become privy to the characters' surroundings, a poignant pause for breath amidst the complex drama of the piece. Lenker's song exquisitely encapsulates the characters' frustrations: "I don't wanna talk about anything / I wanna kiss, kiss your eyes again," she coos, embodying the protagonists' urgency to forget their impending doom, to

trade it for intimate moments even if they are fleeting. As their world crumbles, cracking around them, this track reminds us comfort can still be found in the darkest crevice.

Tiny Change Theatre have soundtracked their piece well: an assortment of apocalyptic indie-rock bangers that, while aligning with their premise and reinforcing certain moods, hold the potential to diminish the central conceit that these characters are confronting a matter of life and death. The end is here; the end is here.

?





## Love is all around

*Love isn't just in Richard Curtis films, Katie Kirkpatrick finds out*

'And I love to be alive' – Hera Lindsay Bird

This is a Love Song was a piece of online theatre that wasn't afraid to dive into the messiness of love, and, by extension, of life. It took a rom-com-style narrative and drew from it a visual piece that discusses memory and emotion through fireworks and photographs: I was consistently impressed by the inventiveness of the piece, and the beauty it created.

'All you need is love' – The Beatles

This production was an impeccable example of how to incorporate music into a straight play. Scenes like the two main characters Sally and Jamie dancing to the Rolling Stones, and then later, Sally's partner contemplating suicide while the Beatles play at ear-splitting volume, meant that song was as integral to the piece as love.

'Love is awful' – Fleabag

The show dived headfirst into situations with no easy solution – these characters were not always kind towards each other, and some, such as George, went from difficult to root for to hugely sympathetic. With that said, perhaps there was too much complexity for a show about immediacy: cutting it back would have given the moments of real emotional intensity a lot more power.

'I look through the windows of this love' – Taylor Swift

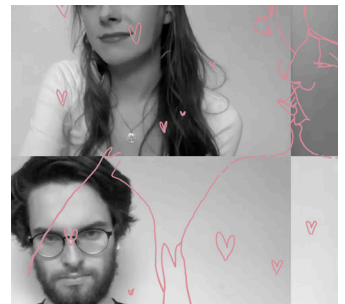
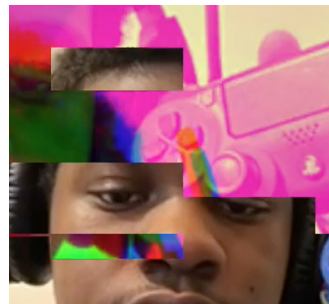
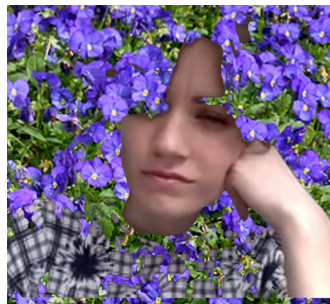
For a show about the apocalypse, *This is a Love Song* was brought to life by its little details. References to that scene in *Call Me By Your Name*, fuckboys, and the Twitter account 'Thoughts of Dog' made it feel culturally rooted in the present, and were essential in making the end of the world feeling real.

## Meme of the day

Sam Ross

(yes it's back back back again!)

### NSDF Meme of the Day #1



## Funnies

how does rory fit that many ring binders in his bag??

Henlo we are the National Student Drama Festival! We represent student and emerging theatre from across the UK!

That's great, where are you?

What do you mean?

Where do you hold your festival?

England. Always England.

every day i open my silly little laptop and do silly little workshops for my silly little national student drama festival and watch a silly little zoom play about a silly little world-ending apocalypse x

?

## Quiz

1. If you google anything, will Chris Thorpe a) appear in your house like the Grim Reaper and cart you off to death or b) send an Amazon drone with a small dead rat to your doorstep?
2. What is general knowledge, and why is it so difficult?
3. What actually are the plots of any of the NSDF shows?
4. Are you good at recognising theme tunes, true/false?
5. Are you worse at recognising theme tunes than you thought you were, true/false?
6. How much time do you need in a breakout room to work out Beyoncé's grammys?
7. Does this make you wish you could experience a NSDF quiz in person?

Answer: Yes.

"a win for noff is a win for us all 😊"

?

ISSUE #1

# NOISES OFF

NSDF 2021

## Editors

Naomi Obeng  
Florence Bell

## Photography

Beatrice Debney

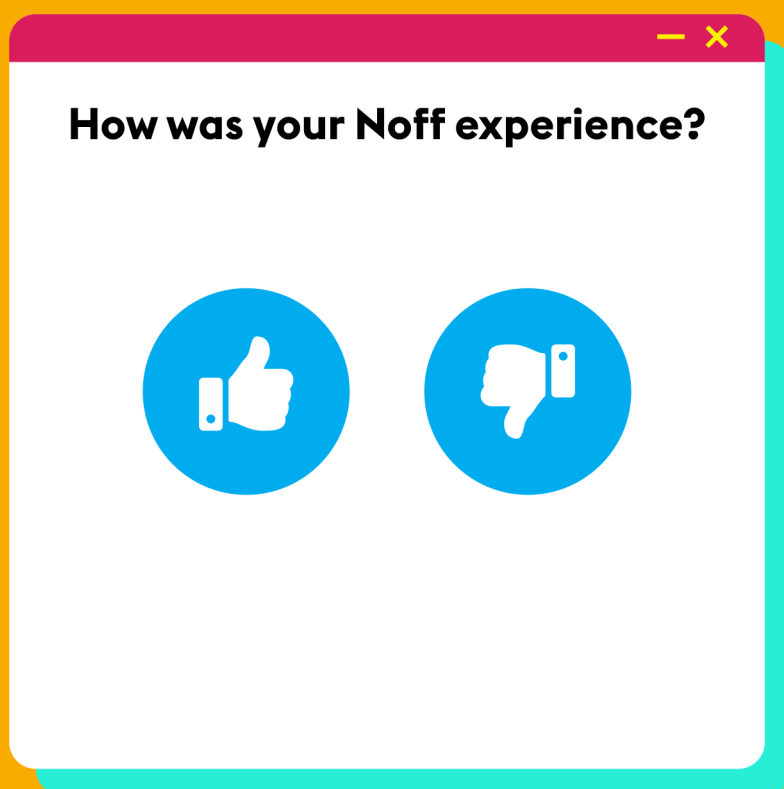
## Design

Robin Wilde

## Contributors

Esti Bragado  
Beth Edwards  
Mark Fenton  
Issy Flower  
Lydia Kendall-McDougall  
Katie Kirkpatrick  
Shamsa Kiwanuka  
Caitlin Magnall-Kearns  
Anna Mahtani  
Elisha Pearce  
Emma Robinson  
Sam Ross  
Mark Smith

*@noffmag*  
*nsdf.org.uk/noises-off*  
*noff@nsdf.org.uk*



Article Copy



Images



InDesign



Memes