

The English Premiere

THE STRAW CHAIR

by Sue Glover

Directed by Polly Creed. Associate Direction by Imy Wyatt-Corner. Set Design by Alex Marker. Costume Design by Carla Joy Evans. Lighting by Jonathan Chan. Sound Design by Anna Short. Musical Direction by Rori Hawthorn.

Presented by True Name Productions in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

Cast: Finlay Bain. Rori Hawthorn. Jenny Lee. Siobhan Redmond.

"There is a lesson you should learn from your stay on Hirta: the danger of being too troublesome a wife."

In a production commissioned by the Finborough Theatre, the English premiere of ***The Straw Chair*** by award-winning Scottish playwright Sue Glover opens at the Finborough Theatre for a four week limited season on Tuesday, 19 April 2022, starring Royal Shakespeare Company Associate Artist **Siobhan Redmond (Press Nights: Thursday, 21 April 2022 and Friday, 22 April 2022 at 7.30pm)**.

1735. Isabel, barely seventeen, is sent from Edinburgh and the life she has always known, to live with her new husband on Gaelic-speaking St Kilda, an island on the furthest edges of the Outer Hebrides, in the storm-tossed waters of the Atlantic Ocean.

Struggling to adapt to island life, Isabel meets Rachel – a wild, seemingly mad woman, shunned by the local inhabitants. Over time, Isabel learns that Rachel is none other than the infamous Lady Grange, kidnapped by her husband following their bitter divorce and long imprisoned on the island. Lady Grange clings with tragic dignity to the two things she has left in the world – a consuming rage and an old straw chair.

Inspired by a true story, *The Straw Chair* is a modern Scottish classic, exploring liberty, marriage, madness and incarceration, and female empowerment, against the backdrop of the lost way of life of the Western Isles.

First performed in 1988 at the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh, in a co-production between Focus Theatre and the Traverse, and revived on an extensive Scottish tour in 2015, *The Straw Chair* finally receives its English premiere at the Finborough Theatre.

Playwright **Sue Glover** was born and brought up in Edinburgh, and has lived most of her life in East Fife. She now lives in the East Neuk, close to the beach which was the inspiration and setting for her first theatre play, *The Seal Wife*. She writes for radio and television as well as theatre. Her plays include *Bondagers*, *The Straw Chair*, and *Shetland Saga* (all for the Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh), *The Seal Wife* (The Little Lyceum, Edinburgh), *An Island in Largo* (Byre Theatre, St Andrews), *The Bubble Boy* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow), *Sacred Hearts* (Communicado), *Artist Unknown* (Citizens TAG), *Blow-Outs*, *Wrecks and Almanacs* (Pittenweem Festival), *Bear On A Chain* (Òran Mór, Glasgow), *Marilyn* (Citizen's Theatre, Glasgow, and Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh). *Bondagers* won a first in the Thames Television Awards. The television version of *The Bubble Boy* won awards in Chicago and New York Television Festivals. Television includes *Homefront*, *The Spaver Connection*, *The Bubble Boy*, *Dear Life*, *Mrs. Miller and Madame Montand*. Adaptations for radio include works by Kipling, Maupassant (one of her favourite authors), Tove Jansson, and Jessie Kesson. Her radio work includes *The Watchie*, *Shiftwork*, *The Benjamin*, *The Child and The Journey*, *The Doll's Tea-Set* and *Losing Lottie*.

Director **Polly Creed** is a theatre director, playwright, and filmmaker. Polly is a founder of Power Play, a production company that tells women's stories of injustice on stage and on screen. Power Play's debut site-specific showcase at the Edinburgh Fringe 2018 won a Fringe First for Emma Dennis-Edwards' play, *Funeral Flowers*. Polly's directorial debut,

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e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

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Next Time received an 'Outstanding Show' accolade at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Polly is also writer of *Humane*, shortlisted for the Charlie Hartill Award and published by Aurora Metro Books. It has also been adapted into an audio drama. The play version will have a stage run at The Pleasance in November 2021. Her play, *The Empty Chair*, was shortlisted for a Sit Up Award and won Best New Writing at LSDF 2018. In 2016-2020, she ran a successful petition and media campaign, calling for Harvey Weinstein to be stripped of his honorary CBE.

True Name Productions was founded by Imy Wyatt Corner and Polly Creed in 2019, making work exploring social injustice, connecting places and people. Previous work includes *All Rise*, an immersive co-production with Plan B Earth about climate change at the Tate Modern. and *Humane*, adapted as an audio drama for Theatre Deli Sheffield, the Arcola Theatre, Omnibus Theatre and Compassion in World Farming, with a stage run at the Pleasance, London in Autumn 2021.

The cast is:

Finlay Bain | Anneas

Productions at the Finborough Theatre include *The Flowers o' Edinburgh* and the rehearsed reading of *100 Men*, as part of *Vibrant 2013 – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights*.

Trained at Birmingham School of Acting.

Theatre includes *Trainspotting Live* (UK Tour), *Living a Little* (King's Head Theatre), *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (King's Theatre, Edinburgh) and *Blackwatch* (UK Tour for National Theatre of Scotland).

He wrote, produced and performed in *Living a Little* with his theatre company Riot House Theatre at Vaults Festival, where it won the Origins Award for Outstanding New Work. It then transferred to The King's Head Theatre.

Opera includes *Imprisoned in Edinburgh* (Edinburgh Grand Opera) and *Sam Wanamaker Festival: Othello* (Shakespeare's Globe).

Rori Hawthorn | Isabel

Productions at the Finborough Theatre include *Jeannie*.

Trained at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama.

Theatre includes *Macbeth* (Stafford Festival Shakespeare), *Call Me Fury* (Hope Theatre), *Wishbone* (Bunker Theatre), *We Walk Tall* (Southwark Playhouse), *Survivors to Thrivers* (Amnesty International), *Greek Tragedy Rhesus* (Rehearsed reading), *Michael Bryant Shakespeare Performance* (National Theatre) and Research and Development on *New Shoes* (National Theatre of Scotland).

Film includes Danny Boyle's *Creation Stories*.

Television includes *Guilt*, *Red Election* and *Game of Thrones*.

Radio includes Audio Award-winning *Sea Longing* (BBC Radio 3).

Rori grew up close to the Isle of Skye.

Jenny Lee | Oona

Productions at the Finborough Theatre include *I Didn't Always Live Here*, *The Flowers of Edinburgh*, *Little Red Hen*, and the Olivier Award nominated *It Is Easy To Be Dead* and its subsequent transfer to the Trafalgar Studios, Òran Mór, Glasgow, and the Tivoli Theatre, Aberdeen.

Theatre includes *A Skull in Connemara* (Coliseum Theatre, Oldham), *Diamond* (Bush Theatre and Edinburgh Fringe Festival), *Driving Miss Daisy* (Wyndham's Theatre), *The Slab Boys Trilogy* (The Young Vic), *Markings* (Southwark Playhouse and Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh), *Anne of Green Gables* (Lilian Baylis Theatre), *The Normal Heart* (Royal Court at the Albery Theatre), *Hurricane Roses* (National Theatre Studio), *Jessie Kesson – A Good Crack At Life* (Royal Shakespeare Company and Highland Tour), *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *Fifth Of July* (Bristol Old Vic), *Kindertransport* (Queen's Theatre, Hornchurch and Opera House, Manchester), *Great Expectations* (UK Tour), *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich), *Happy Days* (Edinburgh Festival and Tour), *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* (Gateway Theatre, Chester), *Birds of Paradise* (Garrick Theatre), *Your Own Thing* (Comedy Theatre), *Squire Jonathan and*

His Unfortunate Treasure (Royal Court Theatre), *The Steamie* (Pitlochry Festival Theatre) and *Miss Veitch's Roses* (Òran Mór, Glasgow and Lemon Tree, Aberdeen).

Film includes *The Silent*, *Exposure*, *Creatures of Light* and *Have I Passed?*

Television includes *Hollyoaks*, *Dr Who*, *Still Game*, *Monarch of the Glen*, *Hope It Rains*, *On The Up*, *EastEnders*, *Hot Metal*, *The Unknown Soldier*, *Nothing Like A Dame*, *Doctors*, *Roughnecks*, *Taggart*, *Extras* and *Holby City*.

She co-founded the Attic Theatre Company in Mitcham and was its Artistic Director until 2014.

Siobhan Redmond | Rachel

Theatre includes *Grandpa's Great Escape*, *Vassa* (Almeida Theatre), *Top Girls*, *Dido*, *Queen of Carthage* (National Theatre), *Imperium*, *Richard III*, *King John*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Spanish Tragedy* (Royal Shakespeare Company), *Dunsinane*, *Mary Stuart*, *The House of Bernarda Alba* (National Theatre of Scotland), *Talking Heads*, *Exit The King* (Theatre Royal, Bath), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Shakespeare's Globe), *Thou Man Molière*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *As You Like It* (Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh), *Perfect Days* (Traverse Edinburgh, Hampstead and Vaudeville Theatres), *Us and Them* (Hampstead Theatre), *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* (Tron Theatre, Glasgow, and Royal Court Theatre), *An Experienced Woman Gives Advice* (Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester), *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Look Back In Anger* (Renaissance Theatre Company) and *A Month of Sundays* (Duchess Theatre).

Film includes *Creation Stories*, *The Party's Just Beginning*, *Beautiful People*, *Karmic Mothers*, *Captives*, *2 Hours* and *Latin For A Dark Room*.

Television includes *Inside No9*, *Queens of Mystery*, *Beep*, *The Nest*, *Unforgotten*, *Lovesick*, *The Clique*, *The Replacement*, *Code of a Killer*, *Bob Servant*, *The Town*, *Benidorm*, *Lift*, *The Catherine Tate Show*, *The Smoking Room*, *Sea of Souls*, *Every Woman Knows a Secret*, *In The Red*, *Midsomer Murders*, *Wokenwell*, *Deacon Brodie*, *Rab C Nesbitt*, *Nervous Energy*, *Between The Lines* and *Alfresco*.

She is an Associate Artist of the Royal Shakespeare Company.

The press on *The Straw Chair*

"Miss Havisham meets King Lear..." *The Guardian*

★★★★ "Richly enjoyable...a play that demands attention for bringing so many unheard and marginalised voices – Gaelic, St Kildan, and intensely female – to the very centre of the stage." *The Scotsman*

★★★★ "An exposé of the arrogance and need of control of both class and religion over women in particular at the time that holds timeless echoes for the present day." *Edinburgh Guide*

"A vivid portrayal of St Kilda, an evocation of 18th century Edinburgh (with a hint of turbulent Jacobite politics), and added to this 3 strongly drawn female characters. This is a play that will certainly stand the test of time." *Lothian Life*

"Glover's play is notable for its superb structure and balance." *Scottish Stage*

"An unassuming little gem of a play...Sue Glover's script weaves together Lady Grange's experience with those of three very different characters she encounters there, and captures the loneliness, desperation, and surprising tenderness of an existence on the edge of civilisation and sanity." *Qmunicate Magazine*

"One of the most powerful and contemporary plays by Sue Glover...rich with diverse and relevant themes regarding the place of women in society." *The Wee Review*

"*The Straw Chair* has authentic power...A play about women, about freedom and about communication" Ian Bell, *Glasgow Herald*

"Though Sue Glover's *The Straw Chair* deals in other times and is set in a wild place, it is very much a play for us today...written with conviction and a deceptive simplicity." John Fowler, *Glasgow Herald*

"Very sensitively written." Allen Wright, *The Scotsman*

"There is much to admire in the way the dramatist establishes the feeling of being on the edge of the world and yet being part of a more civilised society than that of supposedly sophisticated Edinburgh." Allen Wright, *The Scotsman*

"Its strength...lies in its beautiful, lilting use of language and its humour." Sarah Hemming, *The Independent*

"A little gem...The dialogue is crisp and telling and has no truck with the whimsy and feyness which so often bedevils Scots writing about the past." Robert Dawson Scott, *The Times*

The press on director Polly Creed

"Important and hard-hitting theatre" *Fringe Guru* on *Next Time*

"Polly Creed's direction shines....truly magical" *ERA Journal* on *As You Like It*

"Joyful and defiant" Sally Stott, *The Scotsman* on *Next Time/Power Play Showcase*

"Compelling and serious drama...an outstanding show" *Fringe Review* on *Next Time*

COVID SAFE

As an intimate theatre venue, we are taking every possible precaution to ensure the safety of performers, staff, and audience members during the current pandemic. Audience members will be temperature-checked upon their arrival at the theatre, and **masks are mandatory at all times, including during the performance**. Our staff will be wearing masks for audience members' safety as well as their own. We have reduced our audience capacity to 80% and temporarily increased our ticket prices to reflect this. We have been reviewing these protocols every month and will lift them as soon as it is safe to do so. For full information, please see our website.

PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2022 AND FRIDAY, 22 APRIL 2022 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 19 APRIL 2022 AT 1.00PM–1.30PM

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

Box Office 020 7244 7439

No booking fees

Tuesday, 19 April – Saturday, 14 May 2022

Tuesday to Saturday evenings at 7.30pm. Saturday and Sunday matinees at 3.00pm.

Prices until 1 May 2022 – Tickets £23, £20 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £20 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £23 all seats. Previews (19 and 20 April) £14 all seats.

£10 tickets for Under 30s for performances from Tuesday to Sunday of the first week when booked online only.

£14 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on Saturday, 23 April 2022 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

Prices from 3 May 2022 – Tickets £25, £23 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £23 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £25 all seats.

Group Bookings for all performances – 1 free ticket in every 10 purchased.

Performance Length: Approximately two hours with one interval of fifteen minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Matilda Russell on e-mail press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or 07384 379624

Download press releases and images at <http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk/press-resources.php>