

Part of VoicesFromUkraine #Українськіголоси #Ukrayins'kiholosy

March-July 2024 season at the Finborough Theatre

The London premiere run

THE TAILOR OF INVERNESS

Written and Performed by Matthew Zajac

Directed by Ben Harrison

Design by Ali Maclaurin. Lighting by Kai Fischer. Music by Jonny Hardie and Gavin Marwick. Sound by Timothy Brinkhurst

Presented by Dogstar Theatre Company in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

With Matthew Zajac, and Violinists Jonny Hardie or Amy Geddes.

"I come from a farm, from the forests and fields of green Ukraine. From the resettlement camps of Germany. From the beaches of the Adriatic. ...And the cool air of Inverness."

The London premiere run of Matthew Zajac's internationally acclaimed ***The Tailor of Inverness*** opens at the multi-award-winning Finborough Theatre for a four-week limited season on Tuesday, 14 May 2024 (**Press Nights: Thursday, 16 May 2024 and Friday, 17 May 2024 At 7.30pm**).

A true story of journeys of how a boy who grew up on a farm in Galicia (then in Eastern Poland, now in Western Ukraine) came to be a tailor in Inverness...

His life spanned most of the 20th century. Taken prisoner by the Soviets in 1939 and forced to work, he was freed in an amnesty after the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union, and joined the thousands of Poles fighting with the British Army in North Africa and Italy. He was then resettled in Britain in 1948, joining his brother in Glasgow.

This is the story he told.

But was the tailor really who he said he was?

Combining storytelling, songs, poetry and physicality with a rich soundscape of live fiddle music and effects, Matthew Zajac's stunning play about his Polish father has entranced over 40,000 people, playing in a huge variety of venues in twelve countries, from sold-out runs in prestigious theatres in cities such as New York, Adelaide, Kyiv, Malmo, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Brussels, Dublin, Lublin, Lviv, Copenhagen and Berlin to tiny village halls in the Scottish Highlands. Its many awards include a *Scotsman* Fringe First, *The Stage* Best Solo Performer Award and Best Actor at the CATS (Critics Awards for Theatre In Scotland) Awards.

A long overdue opportunity for London to see this unforgettable story of displacement and survival in war-torn Europe – a powerful allegory for all victims of war.

Playwright and actor **Matthew Zajac** has worked as an actor for 42 years. He is Artistic Director of Dogstar, most recently directing *The Stornoway Way* by Kevin MacNeil and *The Fallen Angels of the Moine* by George Gunn. His other plays include *The Sky Is Safe* and an adaptation of James Robertson's novel *The Testament of Gideon Mack*, due for production in 2025. Matthew has also worked with Sweden's Riksteatern, Profiteatern and Vasterbottensteatern, Citizens Theatre Glasgow, Royal Exchange Theatre Manchester, Everyman and Playhouse Theatre Liverpool, Bristol Old

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439

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

Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 03448268.

Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.

PRESS INFORMATION

Vic, Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh, Bush Theatre, The Young Vic, Half Moon Young People's Theatre and Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith. Film and Television includes *Happy Valley*, *State of Happiness*, *One of Us*, *Shetland*, *Still Game*, *We Were The Lucky Ones*, *The Crucifixion*, *Valhalla Rising*, *And Violet*, and *A Lonely Place To Die*. Matthew has also appeared in numerous radio plays for the BBC and is an experienced documentary narrator. A documentary film, *Circling A Fox – the Story of The Tailor of Inverness*, directed by Brian Ross, was broadcast by the BBC in 2021 and 2022. His best-selling book *The Tailor of Inverness* was published by Sandstone Press.

Director **Ben Harrison** is Co-Artistic Director of Scottish theatre company Grid Iron. He also works all over the world as a freelance director. Recent work includes *South Bend* and *The Brunch Club* (Grid Iron), *A Game of Death and Chance* (Enlightenment House for the National Trust for Scotland), *The Buke of the Howlat* (Findhorn Bay Arts Festival) and *Let's Inherit The Earth* (Dogstar and Profilteatern, Sweden), *Crude*, *The Devil's Larder*, *Letters Home*, *What Remains*, *Spring Awakening*, *Decky Does A Bronco*, *Barflies* and *Roam* (Grid Iron), *Factor 9* and *The Sky Is Safe* (Dogstar), *Biding Time* (Remix) and *Music is Torture* (Scottish Tours for Tromolo Productions) and *The Tree of Knowledge* (Traverse Theatre, Edinburgh). His production of *Peter Pan* toured the US for two years from 2010, visiting San Francisco, Costa Mesa, Atlanta, Chicago and Boston, and was revived in 2015. It has been seen by over a million people. Ben was Artistic Director of Muztheater in the Netherlands from 2004 to 2007, Associate Director of the Almeida Theatre 2000 to 2002, and was a NESTA Fellow from 2001 to 2005. He has taught site-responsive theatre in many countries, including Lebanon, Jordan, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal and South Africa. www.benharrison.info

Previous acclaim for *The Tailor of Inverness*

"A triumph... A beautifully realised tale of the reality of survival in war-torn Eastern Europe... Matthew Zajac's moving performance is a triumph of evocative staging and storytelling." *The Observer*

"An ardent, deeply personal play...Compelling, impassioned...a fine actor." *The New York Times*

"Matthew Zajac, compellingly pieces together his father's patchwork of truths and omissions, then methodically unravels it, in this taut odyssey that spans continents, decades, and even vaster zones of the heart still marked by war..." *Village Voice* (New York)

"A towering piece of work with a glorious performance by the author." *Sunday Independent* (Ireland)

"A universal work of theatre." *Sunday Herald* (Scotland)

"Don't miss it." *Radio Adelaide*

"Sometimes, the universal can be revealed by the particular...Precisely this wonder occurs when Matthew Zajac... takes to the stage." *Dagens Nyheter* (Sweden)

"Zajac's internationally acclaimed show remains as powerful as ever, all its elements of music and design in perfect tune. Ben Harrison's direction superb, and the theme, of course, never grows old; because it is the pity of war..." *The Scotsman*

"Both familiar and unpredictable, challenging yet funny, epic but also profoundly moving." *The Stage*

"Unbelievably moving and unexpected." Misha Glenny, author and journalist.

The press on playwright and actor Matthew Zajac

"An emotionally charged and politically powerful masterpiece...The energy and chemistry between both performers, including Zajac himself, is hypnotising." *Edinburgh Festivals Magazine* on *The Sky Is Safe*

"The show boasts two outstanding central performances, from Molly Innes as Antigone and – especially – Matthew Zajac as Creon." *The Independent* on *Antigone* at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow.

"Matthew Zajac is outstanding." *The Observer* on *Don Carlos* at the Citizens Theatre, Glasgow and Edinburgh International Festival.

The press on director Ben Harrison

"How we cheered...very well-directed. By site-specific specialist Ben Harrison" *The Independent* on *Peter Pan*

"Spectacular... a show so timely in its theme, and so ambitious in scale...an unforgettable experience." *The Scotsman* on *Crude*

"In a class of its own...a sensational experience." *The Herald* on *Roam*

"Ben Harrison's fluid and supple production" *The Times* on *Spring Awakening*

"One of the most anarchic, timely and memorable shows on the Fringe". *The Scotsman* on *Let's Inherit the Earth*

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439

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

Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 03448268.

Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.

PRESS INFORMATION

"Grid Iron, surely now one of the most sophisticated site specific theatre makers in Europe, never mind Scotland." *The Times on Barflies*

VoicesFromUkraine #Українськіголосои #Ukrayins'kiholosy

In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Finborough Theatre began the **#VoicesFromUkraine** **#Українськіголосои** **#Ukrayins'kiholosy** programming strand.

Online releases include *Otvetka* by Neda Nezhdana, *He Who Opens The Door* by Neda Nezhdana, *The Peed-Upon Armored Personnel Carrier* by Oksana Gritsenko, *A Dictionary of Emotions in a Time of War* by Yelena Astasyeva, *A (Ukrainian) Midsummer Night's Dream* – Shakespeare's play performed in Ukrainian, *I Want To Go Home* by Oksana Savchenko; poems as part of the Pro-English Theatre of Ukraine's *Stus-Festival 2024*; interviews and responses to the war in Ukraine. All online releases are available on the Finborough Theatre YouTube channel, and available with subtitles on Scenesaver.

Live productions included *Two Ukrainian Plays* featuring Natal'ya Vorozhbit's *Take The Rubbish Out, Sasha* in a double bill with Neda Nezhdana's monologue *Pussycat in Memory of Darkness*, pairing Ukraine's leading contemporary playwright together with a Ukrainian playwright making her UK debut, which played at the Finborough Theatre in August 2022. *Pussycat in Memory of Darkness* also returned for a solo full run in March 2023. In December 2022, *Pussycat in Memory of Darkness* became the first play performed in Ukraine by a foreign company since the Russian invasion, and has since toured to the United States, Portugal and Germany.

PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 16 MAY 2024 AND FRIDAY, 17 MAY 2024 AT 7.30PM

PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 14 MAY 2024 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, 14 May – Saturday, 8 June 2024

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

Prices until 26 May 2024 – Tickets £20, £18 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £18 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £20 all seats. Previews (14 and 15 May) £15 all seats.

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

£15 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea and the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham on Saturday, 18 May 2024 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

Prices from 28 May 2024 – Tickets £23, £20 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £20 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £23 all seats.

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

Performance Length: Approximately 70 minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Finborough Theatre on e-mail press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **020 7244 7439**

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

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439

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

Registered in England and Wales as a company limited by guarantee, no. 03448268.

Registered Charity no. 1071304. Registered address: 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED. A member of the Independent Theatre Council.