

# **FINBOROUGH | THEATRE**

VIBRANT **NEW WRITING** | UNIQUE **REDISCOVERIES**

October 2019-January 2020 season

The world premiere

# **SCROUNGER**

by Athena Stevens.

Directed by Lily McLeish. Designed by Anna Reid. Lighting by Anthony Doran. Sound by Julian Starr.

Presented by Sarah Lawrie for Aegis Productions in association with Neil McPherson for the Finborough Theatre.

Cast: Leigh Quinn. Athena Stevens.

"And I don't know how to engage,  
With people of the wrong side of justice,  
That can't be bothered to tell their left  
From what's right."

The first production of the Finborough Theatre's 40th anniversary year, the world premiere of Finborough Theatre Playwright in Residence and Olivier Award nominee Athena Stevens's new play **Scrounger** opens at the Finborough Theatre for a four week limited season on Tuesday, 7 January 2020 (**Press Nights: Thursday, 9 January 2020 and Friday, 10 January 2020 at 7.30pm**).

On the streets of Elephant and Castle, everyone likes to make speculations about Scrounger. She needs help, she must not be aware of the complexities of the world, she is sent from the demons to torture her mum... at least according to her Nigerian Uber driver.

Scrounger doesn't care. A successful online personality, she's got more power from her bedroom than anyone on the Southwark estates could dream of. She's educated, she's ballsy, and with a huge network of online allies, Scrounger is a woman who knows how to make change happen.

That is, until an airline destroys her wheelchair.

Inspired by real events and a lawsuit initiated by Stevens herself, Scrounger drives towards the realities of how Britain is failing its most vulnerable and the extreme cost paid by those seeking justice.

Originally seen as part of Vibrant 2019 – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights, Scrounger now receives its world premiere at the Finborough Theatre.

## **Athena Stevens** | Scrounger / Playwright

Athena Stevens is a Playwright on Attachment at the Finborough Theatre, where her productions as actor and writer have included Scrounger as part of Vibrant 2019 – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights, Genie as part of Vibrant 2015 – A Festival of Finborough Playwrights and Schism (which subsequently transferred to the Park Theatre). For her work on Schism, Athena was nominated for an OffWestEnd Award for Best Female Performance in a Play and an Olivier Award. Athena Stevens is a writer, performer and director. She is a Creative Council member and Associate Artist at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Writing includes Reluctant Spirit (BBC Radio 3) and Hello to the Trolls, a new commission from the National Youth Theatre. She is a BBC Writers Access Group member, a former writer on attachment with the National Theatre Studio and recently completed a screen version of her series Recompense as part of the Channel 4 Screenwriters Programme.

Acting includes understudying for A Day in the Death of Joe Egg (Trafalgar Studios), Juliet in Redefining Juliet (Royal Shakespeare Company at the Barbican Theatre) and Lady Macbeth (RADA).

Writing and acting her own work includes The Amazing Vancetti Sisters (Tristan Bates Theatre) and Dark Night of The Soul (Shakespeare's Globe).

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[www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk) Artistic Director Neil McPherson

# Press Information

Forthcoming productions include directing and curating Notes to the Forgotten She-Wolves (Sam Wanamaker Season 2020 at Shakespeare's Globe).

Film and Television include the feature documentary Day of Small Things (Channel 4), the short film The Conference (BBC) and three web series for YouTube.

She is currently launching the self-advocacy platform Make Your Own Damn Tea, is a Huffington Post contributor and is completing her first non-fiction book. Athena is also a TEDx speaker, and Equality in the Media Spokesperson for the Women's Equality Party.

Born in Chicago, she now lives in London. Athena was born with athetoid cerebral palsy.

## **Leigh Quinn | P.A.**

Trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

Theatre includes The Crucible, A Little Night Music (Storyhouse, Chester), Troilus and Cressida, Richard II, Henry IV Parts I and II, Henry V, The Famous Victories of Henry V, Two Gentlemen of Verona (Royal Shakespeare Company), Pride and Prejudice (Open Air Theatre, Regent's Park), The Low Road (Royal Court Theatre) and Dancing at Lughnasa (Tobacco Factory, Bristol).

Television and Film includes Ye Sweeney, Case Histories, Shakespeare Live!, Three Lives, Best of Men and 8 Minutes Idle.

Director **Lily McLeish** is a creative fellow of the Royal Shakespeare Company, long-term Associate Director to Katie Mitchell on productions across Europe, and director of Fizzy Sherbet, a new writing initiative for women playwrights. She is currently opening While You Are Here by Eve Leigh, a new play for dance with choreographer Jonathan Goddard for DanceEast and The Place. Direction includes Schism by Athena Stevens (Park Theatre), The White Bike (The Space), Unlocked (Glenside Hospital Museum and alldaybreakfast, Bristol), A Colder Water Than Here, awarded the Origins Award for Outstanding New Work (The Vaults), Three Lives (Fringe Arts Bath), Housekeeping (Southwark Playhouse), Absence (The Young Vic), This Despised Love (Royal Shakespeare Company Fringe), Old Times (Artheater Cologne), Footfalls (Severins-Burg-Theater, Cologne). Recent work as Associate Director include Orlando (Schaubühne Berlin), Norma Jeane Baker of Troy (The Shed, New York), Bluets (Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg), La Maladie de la Mort (Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris), Anatomy of a Suicide (Royal Court Theatre), Ophelias Zimmer (Schaubühne Berlin and Royal Court Theatre). Based now in the UK and Germany, Lily graduated from the University in Cologne with a first class honours degree in English Literature and Art History, where she also trained with theatre company Port in Air.

## **The press on Schism at the Finborough Theatre**

"It has a palpable authenticity... a testament to the drive and willpower of disabled people." Michael Billington, The Guardian

"Refreshing honesty....remarkable...both candid and brave." The Reviews Hub

"Schism is inspired by the social mobility difficulties faced by those who are impaired, but it also deals with the compelling, universal and cosmic themes of success and failure, love and duty, vision and its oppression." Exeunt Magazine

"The world needs authentic stories about disability, and Schism is as authentic as they come." Time Out

"Beautiful writing, funny bits and great performances." London Pub Theatres

"Drawing on her own experiences of life with cerebral palsy, Athena Stevens gives a hugely committed performance in this engaging two-hander about expectation and ambition...offers a seldom seen perspective on lives which are too often overlooked and stereotyped." The Stage

"Stevens gives Katherine compelling vitality: she's opinionated, angry and funny... Its gutsy heroine is hard to resist." The Times

"Stevens' characters are ferociously well observed, defying lazy assumptions or easy categorisation." The Stage

"As the writer-actor of Schism, Stevens has a unique insight into both characters. She seems to pour real life experience into the story yet not make the play one-dimensionally centred on her disability." A Younger Theatre

## **The press on director Lily McLeish's revival of Schism at the Park Theatre**

"One of the best pieces of theatre I have seen." ★★★★★ Musical Theatre Musings

"Stunning, candid and compelling." ★★★★★ Stage Review

"Schism offers a deeply human and refreshing take on the power play at the heart of our relationships." ★★★★★ Theatre-News

"Stevens isn't afraid to make her audience squirm and her play is all the more powerful for it." ★★★★★ Radio Times

**PRESS NIGHTS: THURSDAY, 9 JANUARY 2020 AND FRIDAY, 10 JANUARY 2020 AT 7.30PM**

**PHOTOCALL: TUESDAY, 7 JANUARY 2020 AT 1.00PM–1.30PM**

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# Press Information

**FINBOROUGH | THEATRE**

Book online at [www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk](http://www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk)

No booking fees on online, personal or postal bookings

Box Office 01223 357851. (Calls are free. There is a 5% booking fee.) Lines are open Monday-Saturday 10.00am-6.00pm.

**Tuesday, 7 January – Saturday, 1 February 2020**

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

**Prices until 19 January 2020** – Tickets £18, £16 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £16 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £18 all seats. Previews (7 and 8 January) £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, 11 January 2020 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

**Prices from 21 January 2020** – Tickets £20, £18 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £18 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £20 all seats.

Performance Length: Approximately ninety minutes with one interval of fifteen minutes.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

**Livvy Perrett** on e-mail [press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk](mailto:press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk) or **07889 794858**

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