



THROWN | RESOURCES TRANSCRIPTS

THROWN | EFÉ AGWELE

The start of the play Imogen's just moved back to Scotland, her twin sister has died and she's joined a wrestling team.

For me unless the director has asked me to do something, then I'll just go in blind on the first day because the first week of all rehearsals usually is table work so usually there isn't anything to do unless they've said specifically, learn a line, do this prep for your character because I'll just do it when I get there and I'm quite immersed in the environment. I think especially because I was moving, to move to Scotland for it I was like if I don't have to do anything I'm going to prep for this move instead yeah.

I think we were quite lucky in the sense that I mean I, I was thinking is this going to be like black watch like is it going to be like so I think coming into it I was a bit of a couch potato so I was a bit scared coming in but it wasn't too too bad I think from a wrestling perspective but I did go to the gym during all of rehearsals because it was like just in case and also you just felt more comfortable because we were stretching every day, we were moving, now the moves feel like second nature but I do feel like the first couple of rehearsals we were still easing in also because we were trying different things like we've had movement sequences change and some added, some taken away so I think it just made me feel more capable coming into the room definitely.

Johnny's the kind of director like obviously he's got an acting background so he's the kind of director who does like line read sometimes which I think sometimes can really piss an actor off but like I'm neurodivergent so for me if you tell me 'kind of like this, say it like this' that's like that's really clear I can follow that I can say it like that, so I I quite like I quite like that yeah.

A lot of Imogen's story and journey isn't spoken about in the piece so I had to make a lot of decisions in terms of who she was why she was there how things were affecting her what she was really thinking moment to moment, like her motivations for things her experiences behind that even down to her accent, so Imogen is a Black Londoner but she speaks quite colloquial, she speaks with an MLE accent which isn't typically a middle class or an upper class accent that you would expect from someone of her background so for me I was like she's a loser- which kind of surprised everyone in the room they were like I thought Imogen was really cool, I was like no London she'd be a loser because we'd all be like why do you talk like that like we know that you should have an RP accent so you're trying really hard which makes me feel like that is someone who actually probably isn't completely comfortable with their Blackness not completely accepted by the Black community in London, they're trying really hard to want to be seen a certain type of way so that reveals something about the kind of person she is that's she's a poser herself, she's telling everyone to be real and true to themselves but she's not, I know that because you know being a Londoner and obviously it being performed to Scottish people they're like 'oh so she's like and I was like no' like you it's almost it's interesting it's almost like an Easter egg like unless you've you know lived amongst those people in London you don't realise that that's not normal and that her character, her accent down to the way that she's been the way she uses slang that's not normal, but this is a character going through grief right so then you've kind of got this double end where you're like is she trying to be something new and different because she's just lost her sister and she doesn't know who the hell she is, did she speak with an RP accent when she was in London and then she comes to Scotland she wants to be something different, what is that, who is that you know so there's just so many questions and layers that could unfold between how much her grief has played a role in her acting this way or has she always been this way.

I think especially seeing that I think the final argument between Chantelle and Jo is so strong I would say it's almost my favourite thing in the whole piece because you have such a wonderful payoff from seeing their fun bubbly friendship to kind of them confronting all of these unsaid things from all their bus stop moments but I think me Efe, you know the Black activist hearing a lot of the things that Chantelle says is incredibly frustrating because I would know what I would say in response to that in these topics and questions about identity when you're a non-white person in the white majority country and topics of privilege and all the rest of it but Jo doesn't have the vernacular for that, Jo doesn't have the words for that and so actually one of the things that I definitely like spoke about was the fact that how do we deal with the fact that a white majority audience might be thinking like Chantelle, hear what she's saying, hear no real argument against that and leave the space in with this unresolved tension I think one of the things that you really have to make peace with with theatre is that you have to start the conversation but you can't guide the conversation, it's not useful to tell them what to think we can only open up the conversation and hope that they themselves will put it upon themselves to learn because even if you had Jo saying no it's this and it's that and the third can they really hear is that really going to undo all those years and moments of change I think people who were already identifying with what Chantelle was saying were not going to see an hour and 20 minute show and suddenly come out and be like I do completely understand the intersectionality's of privilege and I feel like ah Scottishness can be all these things, they might even felt preached to so in a way seeing themselves represented with no real answer maybe might give them the space to also feel like this is still an ongoing conversation and I don't have to feel like I'm behind and I just I'm the only one who hasn't gotten the answer yet the answer is still to come so that in that regard the open-endedness it makes people feel less judged and gives them an opportunity maybe to try and learn themselves which is good.

Yeah I think she's the only character in the play who has like quite a significant moment with every other character, which is really interesting because she is the outsider coming in so you know you do have this thing of like there are existing social dynamics and someone has kind of come in and put an earthquake through all of that, and I would say her main relationship is with Jo with Adiza's character just because she's obviously looking for some form of sisterhood, you know that's a black and mixed race person so she tries to relate to that person but you know which can be very common, with lots of people who are I don't say controlling but maybe are used to having more authority over the people in their life, Imogen comes in and tells Jo how to live her life you know and that involves getting rid of her best friend of how many years Chantelle, like it's quite entitled quite arrogant in a way but she does this with everyone she comes and tells everyone how she thinks they should live their life who she thinks everyone is she makes all of these decisions and what I found quite interesting in terms of the whole journey I guess because it's dotted around throughout you kind of you kind of just need to see the whole thing to see how Imogen's relationship is with everyone because she has a direct interaction with everyone, she triggers Pam's relationship to her body and to her ovaries and her you know relationship to motherhood not even on purpose but just by you know expressing herself, and also you know she encourages Helen to be more confident which later on Helen uses that confidence against Imogen you know, and Chantelle and Jo's characters both had to confront something that was already unspoken between them because Imogen kind of wouldn't let it go but I think what was I found really interesting is just that I think no one, none of the characters really confronted Imogen for who she was, you know no one really noticed that this was a person who was telling everyone how to live their life but wasn't living their life authentically or honestly or even in a good way you know but she just she felt like she could see everyone but I don't feel like even with her relationship with Jo, that Jo even really sees her you know, but Imogen is someone who's going through grief and to some extent I'm sure she doesn't really care because I think she's just trying to survive you know and I think that was a conversation we did have at the very end I think maybe after the first couple of previews I think with Johnny and with Nat where it was kind of agreed that Imogen was so far in the beginning of her grieving process she hadn't really come to terms with anything because originally they had her journey be that she hadn't cried since the death of her sister and then she would cry as she was singing the song in Gaelic but what we found was

that wasn't really reading because there just wasn't enough time to to process that for the journey.

I think also because the scenes are so short the moment where she'd have that it was like 5 seconds later she was up in a different scene with the Adiza, it's like so for me even as an actor it's like fine you get there emotionally, you're crying, you don't have time to process it the next scene you're laughing there's tears in your eyes it's quite weird for the audience, it's weird for you, so it changed to be like she is at the start of her journey you know and so because of that it's interesting I wonder to what extent the audiences themselves might even notice and reflect that this is a person who wants to change everyone else but they themselves remain unchanged.

I would say key moments, probably talking to Jo on top of the bars because this is where it's very clearly said my sister has died and she talks about it plainly I think she doesn't talk about it plainly at any other point.

I would say probably her monologue just because it's an opportunity to kind of hear how her brain is processing being rich in a capitalist society but also being Black in a White majority society and how she feels about that I think it gives the audience an opportunity to think about things differently, and I also think her conversation with Jo just before that monologue because she so very clearly tells Jo why she shouldn't be friends with Chantelle, you know with a complete disregard to their history she's just basically telling Jo to be selfish which is it tells you a lot about Imogen that A. she feels comfortable doing that and B. that she would tell someone to do that like to leave everyone that they know like and I think the fact that she and Jo don't fall out after that when they're both being so bluntly honest with each other does suggest that maybe there is some real friendship in there because a lot of people wouldn't be able to come back from a conversation like that but they kept going, so I don't know - I think my therapist would say that it's probably a trauma bond between them because they've only known each other about 8 week weeks because it's the whole length of the play should be taking place across eight weeks and 10 highland games, so to do all of that unpick all of that and share all of that in two months suggests that they got very close intensely you know. Jo can't escape her Blackness and Imogen won't let her and she doesn't let up about Chantelle from that point it's like after then it's negative Chantelle this, negative Chantelle that, and she does become very antagonistic towards their friendship and quite a aggressively negative so it's really important because from that point onwards it's no longer a miscommunication, Imogen doesn't care if she's misunderstanding Chantelle she she just wants her gone which is not fair but it puts a lot of pressure on Jo.

If you have acted a certain way in your friendship for years and it's never ever been a problem like I get it an outsider can come in and say like this there's something wrong with this but within the friendship I feel like you always have to give people the opportunity to change and if Chantelle's never had the opportunity to change, if she's never had Jo tell her I don't like this you need to speak up for me and then she's let her down it's you know at the end of the day she's being honest Chantelle when she says I didn't know what to do because she didn't no one's ever taught her no one's ever told her and I get it, it's different maybe as a Black Mixed Race person you say no one taught me like how to react, I had to learn this, I had to learn that and I understand but if you want to keep those people in your life you have to give them the opportunity to change there's no point villainizing them because Chantelle does care about Jo, she does love her, and her ignorance isn't a reason to vilify her, give her the opportunity if she flops then fine but I think she didn't she didn't have the opportunity the first time she found out about it was in that final dialogue when they're fighting and I think that's something that the audience definitely empathise with, like I think with Chantelle they're like I give her the opportunity to change and I think I would hope if there was one journey then that they come out with reflecting on it that if their friend gave them the opportunity to change that maybe they would they they don't want to be like Chantelle they don't want to lose something, they might work a bit harder you know to try and learn.

You know we're having different conversations about race in London, just like they're having different conversations here because the experiences are similar but they're distinct, you know so when we have people brought together from those different environments and especially with the International Festival from all over the world and all the conversations they're having there, you would just hope that they come away from this with the idea that we can try a bit harder to give all of ourselves the opportunity to change because we are all going through our own wrestle like it's like as clearly as Helen says like their wrestle is their wrestle and you don't know what they have to go through to get up every single day, so we try a bit harder some people are going to be dicks and that's fine we've made our peace with that but most people I think especially the people who were coming to see this play they're trying you know and as long as you're trying there has to be something right.

THROWN | CHLOE-ANN & ADIZA

We find them in a gym hall, so Jo my character has been dragged along by her best friend Chantelle, they've grown up together and this is their first time trying out a new hobby of backhold wrestling.

Yeah like Adiza says Chantelle sort of dragged Jo along, because we've sort of in the rehearsal process discussed that Chantelle has probably tried a number of different things in order to try and become Instagram famous, go viral, so this is the kind of niche thing that she thinks is going to sort of like separate her from the rest.

Really interesting actually because you see a script go through quite drastic changes as well and that's absolutely what Thrown has gone through not only from development to rehearsals but from the first day of rehearsals to the end of rehearsals, like if we think about it like the script was 90 Pages, we have 62 scenes in the play and that's after cutting it as well so even that in itself is like wow like how do you truncate and strip away all the meat and and get straight to the bones.

I remember specifically in the development how being struck by a particular scene that actually now has been sort of shortened to get to that, it's the scene where they're talking about Tartan it really felt like the core of the play was there about the the injustices that are going on, the ignorances that are happening, the uncomfortableness that's happening within some of the Dynamics within the show that's not just what the show is about but if you're talking about character driven stuff that it was really really in that scene because before in the script, it was - there was lots of different things going on and it was amazing and it was very very high energy like it is but sort of out of realism and then now being doing that scene and actually being a shorter scene and it and really we really get to the core of it very very quickly and get to the the drama within it very very quickly as well because actually what we get is all that tension that originally was built around one scene actually starts from the beginning of the play and we see that build and build and build and build and that's one of the moments where everything explodes, so that's an interesting thing about watching a writer go through her process.

The writer is a mixed race Scottish woman so the first meeting I had with her and like chatting to her was so beautiful and different because we are both mix but I'm like African, mum from Airdrie, She's Coatbridge, dad from Jamaica so for me it was nice to talk about her experiences and my experiences because we are so similar but completely different and that really taught me about, oh my God the mixed race experience is universal but so different for each and every one of us, so this story was not my story this was Jo's story, so that's what really taught me of how to find a way in and not make it about my own trauma.

Actually in my career a kind of pinnacle moment because I've never- sometimes it's hard to separate you from the character and I thought yeah this was a really, the writing was just so beautiful and it was nice to find a way in through the process and tell the story so when I do get to those emotional beats that's Jo that's in that state and not me thinking about all the racial prejudice I've had to deal with growing up.

Even though we have brown people on the team it's still predominantly white space but everyone has went above and beyond to try and make it as comfortable and as, not easy process but you know so from the first day the producer came in it's like you know we've got therapists on hand for the actors, when it came to talking about costume and hair you know me and Efe both of us being black women and what our hair means and what it does and how hard it is to keep up with your hair in a Scottish summer, so we had that discussion very early on and the NTS made sure that you know we got the right support finding hairdressers for us to like go into and things like that so for me out of you know

out of all the jobs I've had this has definitely been a very beautiful supported experience and it's very exciting to see big companies like this go in that direction, and that's what's so clever about Nat's writing she really hit the nail and the head with relationships and dialogue and how people interact with each other and how important language is and how they use it because till this day you know there's still words that were okay 10 years ago but they're not okay now or words that we use in our experiences and not understanding how it affects somebody else and it's so easy to go defensive and be like 'I didn't mean it like that' 'dinnae mean it like that' yeah I know but your experience is different from this person and how and what's great about all five characters as we're all in our own universe like, I remember Efe actually saying remember you're always in your own universe and if you take things personal it's not always about you that person is just in their own kind of universe going through something so it's I thought that was quite a nice little kind of line in my head I was like okay so it's not about-

You're the only person who the centre of your universe-

Yeah this character was very far away from who I am so I try and do as much research to come in just so that I you know so my first thing I done was I watched Glow from Netflix because it was about wrestling then I realised it's got nothing to do with backhold wrestling so then you know I went and watched lots of videos of backhold wrestling, I kind of you know done a bit more research into the culture the Highland Games things like that and then I read the script about three times I try not to read it too much because I know it's going to change change and I definitely don't start learning lines because I like to start fresh and see you know the way that we're all going to move and speak together.

And fitness wise because it's a very physical show I did start you know getting into the gym getting myself ready for like stamina because when you're doing theatre versus TV it's a different type of game, it's kind of like a marathon not a sprint so I always try and get in shape you know cut out things that are unhealthy - not too much but you know just trying to get my body and mind ready to go into this process.

Every play is different for me it depends like you say how close the character is to you. I definitely think Chantelle is very different to me, in so many ways there are similarities but I was like for me I felt like if I started doing way too much research I was going to get into my own my head before so I was like I need to work this this out on the floor for me. You know I'm on Instagram and all those sorts of things so we know what those influencers are like and things like that even though actually I think Chantelle isn't even as good as that, do you know what I mean like so it was like I don't want to influence it too much I want to just try and see what comes out of me because we've been speaking about authenticity and like like what's the internal motor what's your internal motor and then how can that drive the character.

So for every play it's different sometimes I do an insane amount of research before I go in for this I just wanted to see what everyone else was bringing and kind of yeah just work it out in the room.

I'm a very practical person rather than theory so for me I love to work things out on the floor as well, feel the energy because when you're reading it to yourself you have in your head what you think the other character is going to sound like but bare in mind some of them have not even met them or their voices or their bodies or their energy so there's only so much work you can do on your own, so I always say take the pressure off don't feel like you have to know it for going into the room , it's like the first day of school you're going to you're all on the same boat and you're going to get there.

Because obviously these women are in their late 20s they're not at school anymore but yet Chantelle still I feel definitely carries this friendship, carries the codependency of what it is to grow up in schemes or grow up in you know less affluent areas where you kind of you band together and all you have is each other and they carry that and that's one of the crux of the play between these two

anyway and I kept thinking about relationships that I've had growing up in in where where I'm from I kept thinking about I kept thinking about where the girls that bullied me were now and who they could possibly be and like that's the stuff that kept influencing me throughout it. Chantelle is lost like she doesn't she's just kind of reaching out for different things and trying to get some sort of stability in her life because Jo's the only stability that she has and I felt that quite deeply at points in the in the rehearsal process of thinking about the codependent relationships I've had with female friends.

So me Adiza as a mixed race women when you know and I date a white man, I've got lots of white friends, during the BLM movement I had a chat with him I was like if you are my friend, you have to be anti-racist you can't be on the fence, you can't be unaware you have to you know, if you want me in your life, I can't just be your Brown friend and I made that very clear and you know my white amazing allies rose to that and the ones that didn't were the ones that I couldn't have in my life anymore, it was painful but it had to be done- so I feel like with Jo so Jo's a different version of me, she's not you know doesn't know much about her black side not quite educated but in a different way so she's not quite clued up with the kind of anti-racist chat and things because she's only been around white people, so I feel like the first moment that Jo actually realises that Chantelle is not anti-racist is that massive moment when her and Efe are in the field and get shouted a slur and no one stands up for them I have been in those situations and they are painful, painful and the ones that rise to the challenge you feel safe and I think that's a moment where she doesn't feel safe anymore so it's a big moment for her and of course what happens right after that she gets the job so it's almost like okay this is okay-

there prophecy fulfilling itself-

she makes a decision when Chantelle get goes viral that's her out, she's like okay yeah she's going to be fine now she's all right she's got this viral, she's going to get the money she's going to get out of that broken home, this is my yep I'm I'm gone I think that is a moment I've probably said it I'm definitely going but up until then it was like I kind of knew in my heart I was going to go but I just didn't know how

And it's interesting that all three of us, the moment is the slur where things shift and for Chantelle it's not that she knows that she's done wrong, it's that she knows she'll never get Jo back in the way that she's like something has shifted now and for for Chantelle it's sometime -every show is kind of different when I'm trying to work out the journey because it's like you're trying not to judge a character the whole time as well because I'm looking at this person she's not seeing the cause and effect the impact that she's having, because of her own trauma because of the way that she's been brought up and all those things but you know something can only be an excuse for so long right but that shift is this moment the moment at the Highland Games is the shift for Chantelle where she has lost grip of of that friendship and she doesn't know how to get it back anymore whereas before she's is watching this closeness start to evolve right from the minute that she walks in the room from the minute that she says 'Wah gwan fam?!' it's like what, like what's happening here like from and and really for me the first it's not Wah gwan it's it's the click, it's the handshake, it's that what's that what is that I don't know what that is and the whole time it's Chantelle going I don't understand this, I don't understand this, I don't understand this and her thinking that like the line that's got nothing to do Imogen it's got everything to do but and know it's got everything to do with Chantelle and she doesn't see it for the first time she doesn't see herself at the centre of something she sees somebody else and again that's her ignorance and this is where it comes up where people some people think she's racist, some people don't think she's racist if Jo was there on her own I think with that racial slur, she probably would have just been like oh yeah Scotland, Scotland but because there's a brown girl there going it's not okay Jo that's not okay I'm with you like I know you're not alone in this so there's something about the two of us and okay so that's when Jo starts to kind of shift.

Yeah for sure.

I mean the last scene is a key moment-

Yeah I mean it's a big key moment like for sure like because the it's all out it's all out and it's being played for in that it's like-

Pain, it's two women in pain who love each other so much and you know remember friendships are also like love relationships you know apart from without the intimacy part and it's like the breakup - sometimes they're more intimate you know I mean like they can-

Especially being women yeah definite, I think yeah that key moment the key moment is probably when Jo tells her finally what she wants.

Yeah I would say that because it's it always feels like impactful I don't know how long it's been since Jo's probably said to Chantelle No I didn't want to do that or like you know you know obviously they can be like that shut up like they can always be but really be like honest like and not not internalise everything because she's worried how Chantelle will react, will Chantelle be hurt, Chantelle has nobody Chantelle's the centre, has been the centre for too long do you know and it's it is a big shift and she's obviously a character that's going to feel a lot of pain and trouble obviously the games it's like that's the not knowing for Chantelle something shifted and I'm never going to get it back but I don't know what it is. It's when Jo tells her that she's got a job in London and she told Imogen first, it's huge for Chantelle there's a- I go up and you can't see what I'm doing but obviously we never leave the stage so it's like you've always got to just be in some form of the story right I climb the ladder and I burst into tears because I remember Johnny being like that she wants to get as quickly out of that shop as possible when that when that information is given to her because she's going to burst into tears when I go into that scene I know she's going to tell me that she's she's going to London by herself I know- you feel the tension you do - but and that's why it's all this what do you mean, like tell me what's your secret plans all this tell me, I'm begging for you slap me in the face with it, because like I can't take the not knowing anymore, yeah

And like the two things I always say that humans hate is rejection and desperation I say that everything in jobs and you know I used to do sales like if you're really desperate if you're too it's all about being in the middle so there is nothing worse than being rejected and that's a massive rejection for Chantelle,

Yeah and basically throughout it I feel like Chantelle is desperate she's trying, it's like this desperate- and then for Jo desperation is really, it's the same in any relationship how many times have you know -oh they're too keen- oh they're not texting me -oh so it's that kind of like so we've got the two things that humans hate and they're both giving it to each other in a big way.

I want the audience to leave being open to having more conversations I've always said this is something that it's a really cheesy thing that someone- a Drama teacher said to me, at drama school was, good theatre makes you, when you leave makes you want to go and phone your mum or whoever that person might be phone them and be like that either I love you or I've be meaning to talk to you about this or whatever it is- like a good story not just good theatre but a good story right and I want I want people to be leaving, not going not well, one I would like people to start doing backhold wrestling and two I would like people to be going see that scene, what you think they were talking about there like how did that make you feel, like and especially if we're playing like we are playing to predominantly white audiences I want them to go away and I want them to reflect on the conversations that they're having and how they then enter other conversations and the impact that that then possibly could ricochet on having.

Not being scared to be uncomfortable I would like audiences to leave not feeling alone, so I feel like each woman could represent because the themes are so universal sometimes when I see another mixed race young women in the audience I get really excited especially when I see them laugh at the

jokes or the kind of nuances and that's yeah all you want is to move them in some way we're not going to change them we're not here to preach or tell you how to think but if I can just make you feel something whether it's good bad we've done our job in storytelling.

THROWN | MAUREEN AND LESLEY

My character you meet at the beginning, after Jo I meet, Jo and Chantelle when they joined the the backhold wrestling class and I turn up at the beginning of the play, very nervous.

Helen is the oldest in the and the most naive I suppose, the most innocent can I say innocent, is she innocent? I think she is in her own way but she's been married for 40 years and her husband leaves her and I know a few women that they are, like they don't know what to do it's they they gave their life over to this man and her family and then the husband just says well I'm leaving you now and Helen's sort of abandoned you know and she doesn't know what to do with her life and so back- which is an odd way of she sees the flyer in the post office and says I'm going to try that she she does and she comes into this mix of women and I think she she goes on her own journey of trying to listen and you know and tries to understand about race, about gender, you know dis body dysmorphia, because she doesn't understand she's as I say she is innocent, she's naive but she wants to learn she wants to know.

Pamela has organized this gathering of team members she's put out a a flyer or you know she's been advertising for new people to get into backhold wrestling because it's her thing and I think she wants the sport to survive and she's at a point in her life where that really matters because she also we discover later wants to have a baby and is going to have to be out of the loop for a while and backhold wrestling is a bit of an endangered sport and so she needs to kind of find new people particularly like women because it's a really male dominated but it's also a sort of quite an endangered thing so for lots of reasons she's trying to gather some new people together to form a team to compete in this season's Highland Games, to win the championship so it's kind of for her it's about investing in the future of the sport, it's a possibly a last hurrah for the for doing this, this tournament for her so it's a big deal so when we meet her she arrives into the space and where wherever the first training session's been organised probably some village hall or something to see these four very diverse women who've all turned up for their own reasons to this first training session.

Pamela is a a psychologist and a therapist and has definitely taken a kind of slightly new-agey holistic approach to therapy although she's like she's right into winning when it comes to sport and that's a big thing for her, her kind of world view is all about nurturing and sort of mothering and ensuring the future of the planet and you know she wants to have a a baby, she wants a world for the baby to live in she wants a world for backhold wrestling to exist into the future as well.

Well always to think that thing is like reading reading the script and your first impressions are really really valuable so it's just to kind of like sometimes I'll just voice note that because I can speak and think faster than I can type or scribble I can't read my handwriting anymore so that's what I usually always do and for me it's like finding the voice is the way in and what are the, what's encoded in the text like what is there in the lines that the character says that that gives that way.

What do what do people what do other people say about them, what do they say about themselves, what do they say about other people. So those things are kind of really good practical things what do I say about myself what do I say about other people what other people say about me and things like you know worldview and all that sort of thing and also like it's kind of go what's my character's blind spot what do they sort of go some way towards discovering and then it's just about it's clues you're always looking for clues to kind of reveal the character more and more to yourself and that never stops, like I know people who are who run fitness classes, I'm related to some of them so like you've got references in your life, to kind of go like what have I got that I can use for this, what's in my workshop, what's in my pantry of experience and relationships in life, you draw on all that, what do I need to look outside of me for so you kind of think well things like the IVF that was something you had to research had to kind of look into.

The gender questioning that was something that I when I was cycling into work which was practical but also a wee bit like you know keeping fit that's one of the other things I had audio books about people's experiences of like gender dysphoria and all that which was really really useful the most useful thing I did on that subject was talk to Nat about what she intended for the character because I went down different roots in my head and there's a line that Pamela says to Helen I'm not punishing anything that that's what what the character is not doing with strapping and things like that which and I thought maybe that's that's a body dysmorphia thing, who's moving towards top surgery or whatever but actually it's not that and I only found that out through talking to Nat and then you kind of negotiate well how do I then sort of make the story work for me so, so it's a bit you know what clues are in the text and then just investigating in various different ways through conversations with people through like reading around and all that sort of thing, but one of the most useful things was, when we fortunately with this play for part of it we got to go on tour in the Highlands and Islands, so I got to- and my character is of the Highland Games and I so I actually met somebody in on Mull who- an American woman- but I was like straight away was like that's my character that's Pamela and that having that reference in my head and chatting to her a bit and on her physicality and all that I was like that kind of it really changed the game for me I was like oh I think I know better now who she is.

Like one thing that came to mind that they said on day one is like where are the wins in the script for your character and it's useful anyway kind of just in a sort of dramaturgical sense to think like who's you know what are people trying what's your objective in the scene and who wins the scene you know who's who kind of comes off but because it's this sort of sporting thing and it's all you know where are the wins for your character and really really play those because then it sort of makes you feel really active and so that was a kind of really good thing to start with, and he would tell us to really go for it with the WWE bit at the beginning and make that as huge as you want because it's sort of like it just flexes all your acting chops and muscle and literally all your muscles for kind of starting in that sort of energised way it's a it's a real kind of rocket launch into the into the show,

And another thing was like we're a team so to kind of make sure that we're we have that in mind when we're doing these big scenes together and like this the team dynamic and the team spirit was something that he was like always telling us to remember and really go for.

Helen is the kind of, she doesn't connect with anybody at first in fact they ignore her, everybody ignores her but she keeps going, she keeps going so it's it's she doesn't have that real connection and and then you find that in the rehearsal room and I think funnily enough I think the one person she does connect with is Efe's character Imogen and we have wee looks, we find looks and that that's what's been great the process, because they they do cut Helen off she's the older woman and it is quite rude and but that's that's their they all have their own pains and angst and so does Helen to go through, and that's how they treat Helen even Pamela.

Mo's character Helen is very much in Pamela's story and what's brilliant about what Nat's done with that is like Pamela is supposed to be the therapist and it's supposed to know what other people need and how to approach it and she she tries to kind of she's got this tough love approach to Helen which is probably not a great way to inspire but nevertheless Helen takes it and runs with it and actually does probably Helen thrives off it somehow anyway, but Pamela gives Helen some not great advice but Helen has got much more insight into what Pamela needs and gives her much more than what Pamela gives, so it's kind of like that brilliant sort of role reversal where you know you'd expect Pamela to be able to solve her problems but the other the opposite happens and that's really good storytelling I think.

With Helen and Pamela's character is when you ask me to come to give the injection that moment is when it flips actually, the relationship flips where Helen takes charge of Pamela and takes care of her and that's when she's and she's not phased by helping her with injection and there's no judgment,

there's nothing there's just I'm here for you I'll do it whatever you want so I think that's a key moment for Helen and Pamela's character for me anyway. I think is that scene where I yeah give you the injection.

Absolutely because one of the first things Pamela says is needing others is a weakness, validation comes from within because she's determined to do something by herself so she's on a journey towards accepting that everybody needs people that no person is an island do you know we're all connected to each other her kind of like blindness or her that's her need that needs to be kind of be enlightened about by the end of it and it's via Helen that that happens and it's at a moment where having had Helen first of all feel like inquire about what's going on with her and that makes her uncomfortable makes her feel like she's you know that that feels quite intrusive but that connection that Helen's making with her with compassion and generosity and like real sort of tenderness and concern eventually whenever she's up against the wall it's Helen that she phones up and says I need your help and that's when she sort of starts to kind of come round to being you know to realising that the only way forward in her life for you know to live a kind of happy full fulfilled life it's not to win a baby and win the tournament those things would be amazing but there will there'll be you know you can't human connections everywhere it's not just you know in your head, so I think that's a big deal.

A smaller beat with Imogen and it is just a brief thing because of Pamela's relationship to Motherhood she explodes at Imogen there's a moment and it's a horrible moment and she handles it really badly and then tries to resolve it and slightly kind of is cack-handed about that as well but they meet minds and bodies in that when Imogen challenges Pamela to wrestle and I think that that's sort of there's there's they resolve it there and I think it's sort of understood that even though Pamela has crossed a line big time and used some really quite unfortunate language not meaning to have any kind of racial aspect to it but it's unconsciously there that that they have found sort of a some sort of resolve there because Imogen is one of the best in the group like she's the one who's really going for it.

Jo and Chantelle have their own angst to engage with Helen and she tries but I think the one she connects with is Imogen and says the wrong thing of course she says about being a wonderful colour and of course it's a racist remark, but she didn't mean it like that it's not she so naive and so innocently said Imogen's character does connect with Helen which I do like but there's not many scenes, there there's one scene, what am I talking about, she gives her the hype song to help her get through the fight so there is a connection with Efe Imogens character.

That story of their friendship is so central to the to to the whole thing it's kind of the the engine of the plays a great extent driven by that triangle of those three youngsters.

I think arriving and seeing that people have actually turned up and that there's four of them and that this could happen, I think that is like game on for Pamela and she's like you're all here, right here we go having this aspect of her personal life discovered by Helen is another key moment and then the last bit when we all get rallied I think is big for us all but specifically- so that's sort of goes without saying so but the next one whenever Helen comes around and helps Pamela with the injection and she says this is the last time I'm trying and she's kind of like well I'm going to be there to do it with you, I think that's huge for Pamela because she's kind of she's accepted, she's accepting help and making herself vulnerable so in a way that she just hasn't gone there with anybody present before.

There's quite a few Helen has actually in her journey, arriving at the, for backhold wrestling it's something she wouldn't have seen herself doing if her husband hadn't left her. The tie dye t-shirt was a moment which is really sad because she's so excited about getting this tie dyed t-shirt and she loves the colours so it's that control he's had over her life isn't it and that's to get so excited about a tie dyed, it's quite sad but it's also quite uplifting and I think that's a change she puts it on and then she fails because she gets beaten by a 12-year-old wrestler but she gets up because she enjoys the pain there's the the then is the pain speech which she finds you know uplifting that she felt felt she

felt something was the first time she felt something in years to to be thrown into the ground to feel the grass so that was a huge change and then helping Pamela the trying to understand Pamela's journey and what it's all about her dysmorphia is she a male, female, wanting a baby because Helen's got so much experience to give but she doesn't realise that until she starts talking to Pamela. Helen's got so much to give I think all the way through the play whether she gets listened to or not it's another matter from some of the younger ones but and then then at the end she gets to make a kilt with the different threads and the colours and tries to bring them together and say come on let's just a team is you know acknowledging your differences, let's do this be there on Saturday, I'm going to go so so can you why can't you be there if I'm going and and they do turn up.

Acknowledging people's differences, listening to people, don't judge try not to be too judgmental allow people to fail, allow people to make mistakes, also enjoy it is a it's a fun piece it's very funny but it's also has an an important message you know that that we're all vulnerable, we've all got baggage every single one of us no one's perfect- thank goodness and try not to be harden yourself and other people.

You'd want the audience to feel the kind of the buzz of you know all of that visceral like throwing each other about and the pumping music and all that so like I hope that the audience like get a get a real thrill from watching it and also that they can considering experience of people who might be nothing like them not part of their demographic not in their echo chamber or whatever on online or not in their age group so that like chasms between like generation gaps and and sort of um where people might be polarised, they kind of they're introduced to to the to the voices of of of and experiences of people they maybe wouldn't necessarily intentionally or otherwise listen to.

I know like members of my family who' come to see it have had that experience of like being kind of like oh right okay yeah I really thought about that and entrenched views sort of like less entrenched now and also that sense of like your identity whatever that means to you but you know and your sense of nationhood some people just think they assume they know what that is and like Chantelle's got a speech like well you know what it is, it's a, it's a, it's I'm not going to do what she does but it says it's like rolling glens and whiskey and all that sort of thing and haggis and you know like it's all right to kind of go like what is that for me and so hope people come away asking what is Scottishness for me and and to keep asking that because it doesn't it's not a fixed thing it can change like your sense of who you are can change like your you know like cause we're always changing, all the time we're not locked into one sort of sense of self and actually acknowledging that it is a wrestle sometimes with I feel like a bag of contradictions well we all are that and I think that I hope that people can have go well you know it's not wrong to feel conflicted it's completely normal and universal.

Yeah

Yeah

THROWN | NAT MCCLEARY

I think I would describe Thrown as an attempt to do a deep dive into the reality of difficult conversation, of finding a sense of belonging and unity when you disagree fundamentally with the people that you're trying to engage with or belong to.

The initial idea for Thrown came through a conversation with an amazing woman called Heather Neilsen who is herself backhold wrestler and we were just having a chat during a project that we were doing for NTS at the time called Them and yeah we got bored because we're hanging about waiting for camera crew to get their stuff together and as always happens and so we started to chat and I just asked what she did in her spare time and she said backhold wrestling and I said what, so the reason backhold wrestling then became a catalyst for story for me was that it's such a perfect vehicle for discussing what it is to wrestle with a sense of self, a sense of national identity, a sense of belonging, yeah it was just the perfect metaphor for yeah this self-discovery.

One of the really exciting things for me when I write and this sounds really cliché but the characters do speak and their voices feel really distinct and very clear, certainly in this process, we'll see what happens next but in this, for this play and it was exciting because sometimes they would even surprise me in the direction that they took conversations of the things that were said and I have a really visual mind so the scenes and scenarios played out very clearly almost like watching a film and I it was almost like I was dictating the film, rather than creating the narrative if that makes sense so I got to watch something and write it down and document it so for me that the process of finding the characters, I just knew that I wanted an intergenerational cast and as soon as I knew that then the characters appeared really quickly and readily they did shift and change over the process, so their struggles weren't exactly the same struggles that they had necessarily at the start of the the plays life and through development working with actors who would help draw out aspects of their character or potential struggles in in their past, I guess the the characters journeys became richer and more layered but certainly in terms of their core personality that was quite set for me right from the beginning.

One of the things I most enjoyed about the process of developing the the piece was how collaborative it was and having people read your work, feedback on your work, it was always really surprising to see the different ways in which what you've written was interpreted you know and you always think oh yeah I know exactly what I'm saying here and then someone's like oh you mean 'A' and I was like no I really meant 'C' but okay right where did they get 'A' from and so one of the the fun parts was to have a body of writing that other people read and then fed back on and then to watch how that changed and how that became more nuanced or completely different in fact and my very first draft is so radically different to, was so radically different to the second draft, but so radically different to the show that we have now so I was quite specific about who I let speak into the work for lots of reasons, predominantly because as a debut writer I didn't want to be overwhelmed by opinion and have my own voice lost and amongst the melee of albeit experts, expert voices, I just I wanted to make sure that the voices that spoke into the work I first and foremost trusted, had some understanding of the themes and ideas explored in the work, were people who were able to give constructive feedback and not just opinion so I had the incredible wealth of experience and talent and knowledge of Rosie Kellagher, Adura Onashile, Johnny McKnight, Dawn Seivewright and Euan Black and these were people who for me really helped shape and form the work specifically in relation to the text but also there were all the actors who you know were part and parcel of the developments who generously gave their creativity and their energies and their talents in order to help me form the characters into the characters that they are now and you know I am totally indebted to everyone who invested their own creativity their own abilities and talents into this work because it just wouldn't be

what it is now without that contribution, you know people who really understand character and story and drive I really wanted *Thrown* to be fast past but to not lose any of the richness of the story or the characters just because it was fast and driven.

Our understanding of ourselves has gone through a crazy sort of evolution the way we talk about ourselves the language we use it's you know for a lot of people it's it feels like catch-up and I think we are allowing ourselves now a freedom of self- definition that historically we've never had and I think what's exciting about that is that there is freedom for people to be truly who they want to be and who they, and to become who they truly want to be and to discover who they truly want to be but alongside that there are historical and rooted ideas that will butt up against that and that maybe won't make space for that sense of newness around self and I think the reason that *Thrown* feels relevant to me is because I think we need to discover when the- what that process looks like and embrace the mess of everyone on a discovery, on a transition, on a sense of shift and flux and also then on top of that to try and discover how we find language that not only has a sort of universal relevance and understanding but also feels that it does encompass most fully everyone's understanding of themselves but I think that's the thing for me you know there's nothing wrong with holding an opinion there's nothing wrong with having a conviction about something but it's about how do you hold that in a way that doesn't rob the other of empathy, that dehumanizes someone or that reduces someone to the sum of their argument, how do you hold your own convictions in a way that still allows for care and respect and tolerance and I think my concern around social media is partly why Chantelle's character is so rooted in that world is that you know we don't, it doesn't create space for that it you know there's a right opinion and a wrong opinion and everyone has an opinion it's a space for opinion to be stated with 100% conviction and with no compromise, no space for conversation, no space for curiosity and I think that concerns me societally as we move forward and I think you know community is more complex than that it's messier than that and actually we lose some of the beauty of disagreement we don't know how to disagree anymore and disagree with respect and tolerance. I think we're heading towards a really polarized or at least a really disjointed and disunified sense of community where community actually now means people who think exactly like you, who dress the same as you, who um only can agree with you and and I think we we're going to lose something of the beauty of what it is to be human, and human community if we if we go down that route. Yeah I didn't want to create a political manifesto piece I didn't want to offer a solution because I actually don't think there is one and I think the truth of it is that the solution is empathy and conversation and discussion and curiosity at its core. I think the solution is curiosity and I think the reason that there's not a conclusion as such in the play, it was a very intentional choice I do have opinions, I do have my own thoughts and ideas on all of the topics explored in the play but it wasn't about that it was about, for me it was much more about how do we approach one another as people as people in process as complex beings who aren't the same person day to day even in that process and what is it to engage with the messiness the honest messiness of being human and to give that grace and empathy and space to exist in the form that it is going to exist in on that day without the expectation of of people or self having to meet the expectations of certain labels or certain um categories or categorisations of human so I think the the play I hope is more of a springboard for conversation and discussion, it's more about the process of being in a community of diverse and differing backgrounds, ideas, ideologies even, experiences, senses of self and even realities you know like and what what that looks like when we now then try to form a unified team.

The key themes for me I think get back to our drive our core drives as people and I think that for me is belonging and a sense of self I think those are the key themes and sort of on top of that layered on top of that are the ideas of friendship and unity and team yeah but and then on top of that again there's like the other each individual struggle on top of that but I think at its core belonging.

I wrote *Thrown* because I wanted the experience because of the kind of experience I would want as an audience member right, so I love things that are 100 miles an hour, I love things that you're always surprised by or you're playing catch-up with or, I didn't want to write a boring play I didn't want to write something that people would even subconsciously have time to take a glance at their watch you know like the idea is that you know it's got the pace of a wrestle you know and they can last two seconds or they can last 30 seconds and so it was fun to take the sort of timing structure of the wrestle and also it's so relevant to my ability to hold attention and so scenes are of varying lengths so you're never sure you can look away just in case there's a scene shift or you miss something important and there's a lot of physical language as well for that reason that the communication isn't just verbal there's a lot of physical communication as well little moments of unity, little moments of conflict that are physical for that reason as well but yeah I, yeah I really, I really wanted to write something that when you sit down it's just bang bang bang bang done, the performers are so incredible all of them but I couldn't help myself but like have a wee glance around at the audience you know like they almost became the performers for me and on press night in the pishing rain in Dunoon and yeah so watching with an audience for the first time feeling their energy and their reactions was really exciting as well that's definitely a highlight.

THROWN | JOHNNY MCKNIGHT

So Thrown started in the rehearsal room before I had ever joined, it started. Nat had an idea for the show and had asked me if I was available- I wasn't available at the time she was getting to do like a 3-day workshop with some actors just to try out some ideas, I wasn't available for that workshop and the director who was just cause it's everything loops and always in a circle was Leslie Hart.

So Leslie Hart ran the workshop for three days and it was just looking at Scottish identity and backhold wrestling and what it was how the notions of being female and Scottish and wrestling all kind of came together, so I wasn't involved in that process. I came in at the next point of development which I think Natalie had written a draft to the play, we received the play the night before, I think it was Sunday night we received the play and we group actors just to read it and go through what the play was, that play bares no resemblance whatsoever to the play that ended up on stage, that was just sort of like as Nat calls her thesis on what she thought was the themes and the things she wanted to put across.

It wasn't necessarily about character journeys or who the characters were or that wasn't quite as fleshed out in that draft, so that that was a process of just what is behind, what, who's the characters that can tell this bit of the story, these different viewpoints that Nat was interested in, and then we went to how do we tell the story workshop, we did a couple of days workshop and it was during Covid which in retrospect I hadn't appreciated that obviously how do you tell a story about wrestling during Covid when you were not allowed actors to touch, so that was kind of weird where if people were just imagining wrestling themselves for like a day, but actors are brilliant people who will go in that journey with you, and actually some of that ended up in the show, where theres points where they are pretending to wrestle someday, and it's they and space themselves

And so it was a movement that then and then we did another day with a choreographer, and then we went into actual rehearsals so it was like three or four, maybe four really small development days just to look at what's the story, what's the characters, how do we tell the story, and what's the physical language of the story was sort of all the things that we wanted to look at.

I don't really block anything in advance, I don't, I'm not a big planner. I don't plan where actors are going to stand or move or do or anything like that, I sort of just go in the room and try and be as alert as I can be in the room and responsive to what actors are suggesting and what my thoughts are and what I think the scripts telling us and then I just let it go and we just try and literally experiment in the room and also find a sort of way where we can be open and honest enough to go that was terrible let's try this another way entirely, can we try this, tthat's horrible, right I'll take responsibility for that, let's try another way but I don't ever really think I have a set process other than here's a list of all my scenes, here's a list of all my transitions, and I now need to view like a tick list and how many do we need to get through and how quickly and how much time, I think time's always the is probably my biggest thing I plan is to go I like to make sure every actor gets at least four runs of the show before we hit anything technically just so they feel safe and they feel they get a chance to find a character in the running for beginning to end and we can get questions and note it and make it tight and slick and safe and that's probably it and I'll work backwards for there and go right so now I've got two weeks, so in two weeks I need to achieve this, but in terms of an actual process I've never really I think it just finds itself depending what it is, if it's a musical the process might be for the first week we need to let MD teach everybody the songs and for the next two weeks we need to panic cause we need to get everything ready, or it might be we've got six weeks to do this play, so we can afford to sit run a table for two weeks and we can really dissect it, on its feet and round the table and then put it in its feet, whereas in this was quite a short rehearsal period so it was really kinetic and it was really movement

based, I didn't want it to feel like it was stuck at a table so we did two days around the table just asking questions of the script, interrogating the script, and then tables get pushed away and it was on its feet with the full set in place and it was just trying to stage it and make it feel as kinetic and as energetic as it possibly could for beginning to end.

Well me and Nat have got a really good open relationship as in we are both really frank and clear and honest with each other, and also I'm a writer as well, so I kind of understand what it's like being in a room.

Personally I usually go for like day one, day two and then I leave everybody alone and go email me what you don't like and anything that's not working but that's mainly to do with my anxiety and me wanting to get up and go, can I change that there, say it like this, I think it should be they standing there and they should do that and they should move there, because I think as a writer you've got so much in your brain maybe you haven't necessarily put down on the page or certainly I don't, I try and avoid writing stage directions so then sometimes when I watched them I go I didn't want that, I wanted this, because at the same time you don't want to limit a director by putting too many stage directions down, but the process I thought it was really valuable because if the actors had a question about where something was coming from or I had a question, Natalie was literally there to answer it and it might have been that it was already there in the text and we've missed it or it might be that she needs to go and rework that line or re look at that monologue or certainly for cuts is always, every room you know, every piece of theatre will be cut or should be cut because you want to keep your story as brief and as concise and as tight as possible and so that was really helpful for points going through it, going right we need to maybe lose another five minutes, keep the pace up, where could it go from here, does this monologue need to go here, could this overlap with this bit. So it was a really valuable relationship in terms of making, making the piece that everyone collaboratively felt really unified and happy about.

There came a point where it was like right we've got the story, we know what the story is, I kind of said to Natalie you can have your life back now for the next week and come back, where we can surprise you and show you something, because the other thing that I think is dead important about that relationship with the writer, particularly when it's a new piece of work cause you do more often than not, have the writer at points in the room, is there really valuable for an outside eye because you get so caught up in what's going on in the room that actually I really also needed Natalie to go away for a bit so that when she came back she could look at it with fresh eyes and go yep that's clear, I don't like what I've wrote there, can we look at that wee section I'm not quite sure if that's telling the story clearly enough and I think that's, for me that's always been the best way to work with a writer that you use them as another pair of eyes on a project, cause they know the story but you also and the other flip side as you want to sort of have a wee show and tell and go haven't we all done well, do you like that bit?

Do you know what I mean like heres a wee compliment every now and then, do you like that bit, do you not like that bit, right what bit do you like though.

So it's a wee bit of that you want to present something to a writer as well.

So there's a point where I think it's really helpful really useful, and then there's another point where the writer sort of needs to go away and let everybody else as I always say rear the child for a bit and it's all that anxiety of somebody taking this thing that you've brought into the world and they're going to raise it the next few weeks and then you need to go back and see how it's turned out.

The biggest challenge for me was, how do you make a show that's I think it's 62 scenes, how do, how do the transitions keep the storytelling alive without it becoming like dead space of how do you make it feel fluid and dynamic.

Natalie's brief always from the start was, I don't want to make a boring play, I've always kept that in my mind as my brief as well as we are not making a board in play, which means kinetic and energy and punch in the face and keep it up and don't give the audience too much room to breathe.

So for this pace was quite a challenge cause at some points we did runs and it was like wow there's too much now pace I can't take in any the stuff that's happening, so it was trying to find the right tempo was quite a big thing but the biggest thing for me was 62 scenes set on Highland Games Fields, a chippy, outside the chippy, at a bus stop, in people's houses, at nightclubs, how do you do that really theatrically and economically and keep up tempo and exuberance and don't drop the stakes, so that was, aye I spent a lot of time really thinking about, there was a lot I'm sure if you ask any of the actors, there was a lot of talk about chairs, who moves chairs where, who's moving the chair for this bus to this, I mean it's a logistical minefield even though there's very little props and stuff used, there was a lot of time spent in rehearsals going that chair moves from there to there, who picks that up and gets that chair, move the bag to there, let's do it in two seconds one two can we do it and one.

A lot of the time actually weirdly enough was spent on transitions of scenes to make it feel dynamic and still no drop the ball.

The transitions became part of the movement language as well, so I worked with Lucy on this as movement director and so the two of us would look at how do we link up and I think a lot of the time blackout is the death of a scene because you're kind of said the pulse has stopped, so for me I always try and avoid a blackout where possible even if it's like in a big show like panto, where it covers a scene change, I would try and still have a narrator talking in the blackout or a big bit of music or something that still continues the story cause sometimes it just feels like turn the light off, turn the picture off the telly screen, you don't get it in a film, very rarely, for a reason so I always think there's a much more interesting thing if you can give the audience something to watch and something to feel and a way to continue the story even if that's just to go were in a rehearsal room and a chair going like this becomes an ice bath we're just giving them a moment to see something visual and the lighting and the sound can take them on that journey and you know. So Lucy brought a load of that to it, also I studied in devised theatre so I was kind of quite well versed in that stuff from my training days, I don't, I always think I don't use it but then some times then I go all right, I can see where that training sort of came in of that devised language and using movement and unspoken words and montages and stuff like that. I also think what it does as well, is it gives that sort of sense of anything could happen whereas blackout you sort of go I've just to sit and wait and then so I get to sit back and then I need to re-engage but I think if you're watching someone constantly you might be going what's going on here you know it keeps an audience active which I think is your job.

For me anyway that was the biggest challenge directing wise cause it was so logistical and there was so many transitions that even at points I would be like what's the bus five transition, how do we get the and that became a real, yeah for everybody involved you know there was a couple of days where we were all just literally in the room you know crosseyed and brains falling out our ears but you get there then it becomes you know and ingrained in people's bodies and stuff and all that's there and and I think you know for the actors I think it's it's an interesting piece because there's some key scenes that in a norm- in a traditional play you'd have one protagonist, one story that would sort of be the backbone and you'd see every bit of that story to its end completion. Throws I think pretty different cause you see moments of people's stories, but there might be massive things that have happened offstage that you don't get to see or massive turning points or massive leaps so as actors there was a lot, certainly the actors were are going, how do I jump for this bit to this bit what's happened here and how do I make, they need to embody that and just carry that with them storywise

A play like this has got so many different themes, and it would be interesting because I reckon a lot of people have all have different things that they've attached to it.

For me the biggest theme was, what is team, what is team and what do we hold onto in life, they were the two things that for me why I loved the backhold wrestling metaphor cause I was like I think it's people who hold onto stuff for far too long and we're terrified of being thrown to the ground so we just hold on and we keep holding on tight in the hope that nobody chucks us, well throw us, some I deliberately never had a conversation with the actors about what's the theme of the play because I felt like everybody's characters on such a different journey that I didn't want to dilute what they thought the theme of the play was and I didn't want to put my idea of the theme on to them either, that I wanted them to sort of embed what they think the story is they're telling cause their characters tell on a completely different storyline but for me it was about what is team and you know, I know for Natalie it's definitely about what is Scotm what is Scottishness but I kind of went bigger than that for my theme, I felt it was much more about what is team but how do we be in the same place and exist in the same place even if we don't like or even if we don't hugely respect at points each other how can we still tell, storytell or fight for each other or stand in the same space together with some sort of solidarity and shared viewpoint. So that that to me is what I, for thrown is what I felt was the main backbone.

It's interesting cuz I think that theme's really spelled out clearly at the end like Mo's character at the end really says it clearly and even in the development, even though that script for the very first development change loads, the very final speech about standing in a patch of grass that's just a patch of grass but the land holds the story that's always existed and I remember I think that was the second speech and in the first development I remember saying to Natalie, I think that's what the plays about, is about power of land and land told stories and how how do we tell stories and why do we tell stories and and that you know going oh that's interesting I never felt like that was but for me that big final five, ten minute section really speaks to that theme it's sort of for me it's there the whole way through it even in the visual of the five of them sitting in their chairs at the start there's a visual of them all doing the same you know the WWF fight is the first thing and then the next thing is them in the same space at the gym hall then all sitting up the back in their chairs, all sitting in a bus, there's loads of moments all the way through the visual keys that are sort of like here's a group of people existing in the same space, even if they're at the bus stop the other three are still sitting there, nobody gets to leave the space at any point, once they're on their on so even like directing it wise I always knew soon as they start they don't get to leave cause they need to share the same space and the same patch of grass in the same land for beginning to end, even if they're no facilitating in one another stories, they still need exist so thematically I suppose it's there the whole way through it, and also the other thing as well is that that thing I'm staying in is also that they bear witness to everybody's stories even if it doesn't look like they're listening they're all there to sort of hear one another's monologues and speeches and stuff so that's yeah that felt like an important directorial choice, it just a bit like the blackout thing I didn't want that thing where actors disappear and there's two people at bus stop and then another three came on I just that didn't feel like that type of show it didn't feel like yeah it didn't feel that type of storytelling in this instance, and then off that there's loads of different themes about race, gender, sexuality, motherhood. I think there's loads of themes that shoot off from that but for me I felt the backbone was always like what is Team how do we exist in the same space.

What I also love about when you work in theatre and you work with set designer is they bring stuff to the table that you haven't thought of.

The only thing I sort of discovered in the development is it was really nice and I think it was maybe the second last or the last development we did I really liked the be audience on all three sides because it felt like a different type of storytelling, it felt a bit poorer theatre, like a less constructed image and much more about how perspective was also another thing I quite liked that as an audience you would

have a different perspective depending where you sat and actually as an audience member the text gives you different perspectives the whole way through it I like that.

One of the things I had is and actually I'll be really honest and three times I kept three times I said I didn't want to direct it because I felt it should be directed by a female when every time I went into development with it and I was really honest with Nat and I said I feel that should be directed by a female and I feel it should probably be a female of colour, a director of colour because of the material that's in it and Natalie was quite adamant that she was going well I'm a female of colour, so I'm bringing that to the table I want the right person to tell the story and I don't think that needs to be gendered and I don't think it needs to be based on race and I would I feel that there'll be enough people in the room and how we make up the team we'll dictate that to make sure we still have a diverse team across the board and so one of the things I was very aware of is I didn't want to direct a piece that had an end on image that I could make my gaze and what I felt was how I wanted it to look to an audience would be really fixed and set, whereas if I put it three sides it would have a bit more fluidity and I wouldn't be able to control it in the same way it wouldn't be a fixed static image it would sort of live and breathe in a different way ,so I took that idea of three sides potentially four to Karen who was I've worked with in quite a few projects before Karen Tenant who set designer and Karen came back where you know there's massive challenges putting it in three sides in terms of audience capacity, technically, sightlines, which I never really thought about at the time but I had to think about quite a lot in rehearsals and it was Karen that came back with the idea of the gym hall cuz it made her think of what do the gym halls look like and kind of obstacles and a kind of nostalgic feel and and I just loved it cause it really framed it beautifully, yeah and it just sort of developed for there and then of course we go how where do we where the props live how do we store props we had to find that in the room we were like there's nowhere to put anything oh no where do we put it and so we had to find wee duckets and spaces and stuff where things could live and all that so that it didn't become go off and get prop cuz I was like nobody can leave the space, it doesn't look right.

Well first of all I'd like us to have done what Natalie always set out to do which was this is not a boring and play that's the main takeaway. Thou shalt not bore.

What I would love an audience to take away is that they felt exhilarated in a sense of fun and a sense of really been made to think. I love nothing better when you make a piece of theatre and an audience goes away still thinking about it, whether it's trying to grasp with it intellectually or emotionally or even comedically I just I like the feeling that when you leave a seat in the theatre, you take a bit of that theatre still way you into the world that's the only reason I work in theatre cause I think that's the most magical thing about it is the you leave your seat and you take a little bit of that with you and you keep it with you so I'd love that.

THROWN | KAREN TENANT

I got asked to do it by the director Johnny McKnight and I know Johnny, I've worked with him before which is always an advantage when you're doing new work, because you're a kind of team already, you can have a little bit- a few shortcuts and I was given a script, and again it's new work but the script was quite developed sometimes it's not, but this had a lot of work been done on it so it was in a good place and that's how the start of the process begins.

So I read the play - always read the play ,more than once is often useful and just get a feel of the style of it and often I get an idea quite quickly and if I don't, then then I have to really think about why that is and what I'm not been able to visualise about it and then I would have a meeting with the director, which is Johnny and we discussed and he came with quite firm ideas of the style of it again a very useful thing, I wasn't searching for that .

It's quite a fast moving play, it goes to lots of places lots of things happen in it like ice baths, how do you do that but because it moves fast you don't want to slow that down at all by moving pieces of scenery or trying to transform the space into a completely different thing so the style of it was fast moving so what you're trying to create is a kind of playground for the actors and the director to work on.

I've actually been to Highland Games and I haven't seen it and I had no idea I maybe did see it, and didn't understand where it was now you think start going back but so I had a whole when they said wrestling I immediately went for this kind of wrestling you see on TV because of the start of the show starts like that I was looking at these amazing, how you construct a boxing ring or a wrestling ring which is a feat in itself because if you think about the construction of that and how people bounce off the the ropes and things, how does that stand up how does it just not fall over so I learned a lot about wrestling rings but I didn't use that at all, but so you end up discovering things that you never think you'll do in my job which I I really enjoy and research and things so I looked at backhold wrestling found out it was in a field in the mud, in the grass, and the rain, in the Highland Games and just to understand the the metaphor of the wrestling and what that meant to the rest of the play so that was an interesting way of thinking about it. I tried to think of ways that I could get the outside inside and went through a whole stage of thinking we could do it on real grass, to tour real grass which you could do you need to look after it don't think the crew would appreciate me much but you, we could have done that there's also very good fake grass you get, we went through a stage of thinking it could be done in a pile of mud but that started to be a bit a bit impractical.

So I went back and looked at it and I started to look at I found a flooring which was my kind of initial start hit off point that I think I really like this it works well and it's a it's rubber, reconstructed rubber tires so it's used in playgrounds and things like that, it is a soft fall thing for play areas and it was taking a little while to arrive, so meanwhile while the casts were practicing the wrestling and they had to fall to the floor they had to do rolls, they were given, well first of all they were given big crash mats and then we got them down to small crash mat like a judo mat but they got very used to it so when I then introduced the rubber matting, they were hurting themselves on it and they were wanting to keep a hold of their Judo mats so Alice the production manager had a search and found on gumtree a Judo place that was wanting rid of all these old Judo mats and we couldn't have been more lucky so we had were and they were the right colour, they were kind of khaki green, even better so we got all these Judo mats that were able to cut up and make the size that we wanted them to be, so I changed the flooring so that made sense as some of the plays set in a gym but it made me think it's not a gym maybe that you get in the central belt of Scotland, it's maybe a gym you'd get in a more rural setting or a village hall that had the facility to have these wall bars that pull out, which I remember from when I was at school.

So I then start to think about wall bars climbing and it what that does to the space it makes it the playing area then goes from just a flat kind of playing area to an up and down playing area as well so

it makes a three-dimensional area that the actors can work in.

So I started to investigate that and I came up with the idea of the each person having their own little wall bar which gave them an area to be on their own with to use it to hang things up in, but also an area that they could all use at any time.

I think that's important to make a model so that everybody understands the three-dimensional space and the model is to scale, so scale to 1 to 25 which is what was commonly used in the theatre that means like 1 cm is 25 times bigger than it is in the model, and it's important to do it to scale because you have to understand the proportions of a person within the space and also has to fit in all the venues because it's a touring production which puts a whole other different side to it because it's not just one space that it fits in, it has to fit in them all and you try not to make it that it's too different in any spaces and that in fact this one was exactly the same in every single space, apart from the in the rural touring venues it was off the ground it was on a raised platform and that's because, so everybody can see really so we made we own little stage but that became part of the design and it made sure that everybody no matter what kind of hall we were in had a good view of their of the play but in some venues like in the Traverse, in the Traverse at the end you the seating bank is looking down on the floor so we didn't need the raised area in that but it worked in both spaces equally as well.

The key relationships with your director because you you've got to be working together to make something work you all want to be heading in the same direction so that's a really important relationship, also the lighting designer is really important because you talk about colours together, you talk about where things happen, where atmospheres change in the mood of a piece within the whole show, how the mood changes so that's that's important to discuss with the lighting designer and the sound designer but your key to all that is the the director and if you're lucky the writer as well. Well I was able to ask her what she meant by some of it sometimes and what was important to her to see and what she felt about it and she was she was showing drawings and development bits at different stages just to make sure that she was still she was happy and it was it within the world that she was had in her head as well, and luckily it was so was it fine but the person who's directing it is your key person.

The green book they do the middle level of that which is I can't remember all the numbers and everything to do with it but it's actually quite hard to achieve, because you sometimes when you source things you don't know where they come from and how they're made and although you think it's recycled, there's maybe a process that it goes through that is it's not very green at all and luckily there's there's a team of people at NTS that have quite a lot of knowledge about all that and have time to look into into the process making things so there's an advantage there.

I think for me to be honest you feel like you do it a lot of the time anyway because of the lack of funding to put shows on sometimes and different companies, maybe not got any money, any money at all so you can be very resourceful so you tend to recycle without thinking about it but it's not just about recycling it's about how things are made and where the component parts of things come from and again luckily in the National Theatre they've got a big stock of equipment, material, furniture so yeah, so you it's starting at an advantage there but we also got the set built by a a new company called Marmoset, who are based in Glasgow and they, their basis of their work is using the starting point is recycled materials, so they'll source wood and metal and basic materials from things that have been used before.

Rural touring which is means you go into spaces that are not theatres, that are varying sizes you need to know all the sizes of all the venues and then you either make it in component parts where it can get bigger and smaller, or you do it to size that will work in every space. Luckily this one would work in every space so we didn't need to take it apart and change the size of it apart from the platform and also for the lighting designing of it which is a really important part of this design because the whole

back wall Lizzie Powell, the Lighting Designer designed a a wall panel of a pixel wall really that she got made especially to fit in a tiny space, a thin space behind the set and it meant that you could create things like numbers you can you can make patterns with all the dots on the with light and which takes a lot of programming, but it was so effective and and I think really conveys the idea of the the characters, imagine it that this is a star wrestling match but actually the reality of it is in a muddy field somewhere but it gives you that kind of double thing and also helped edit from one scene to the other and helps you look , it directs your focus to look at certain areas of the stage when certain scenes that are happening the lighting.

The final design was a a raised area, it was kind of based on a wrestling ring boxing ring without the the ropes around it. I used flooring which changed during the process to a thicker Judo style mat in a kind of khaki green colour because I wanted to keep the green to keep the nature in it somewhere and a bit of rubber flooring at the back each character had their own wall mounted climbing bar they had a section at the top you can climb up it and you could sit on the top of it behind that there was a a framework that held a projection screen and behind the projection screen is a pixel wall that Lizzie the lighting designer, designed so it I up and did all sorts of different things and it had five red chairs, five red plastic bucket chairs which were a good colour that NTS had in the store, perfect!