

# PENTABUS

The Nation's Rural Theatre Company

Press Release  
Date: Thu 23 June 2022

## Pentabus Launch 2022 Season Plus Announce their New Associate Artist

Today Pentabus announce their 2022 Season which features a new commission touring in the autumn, the return of Pentabus Young Writers live production and three new digital projects including full length pieces written by their two most recent Clive Richards Foundation Writers-in-Residence.

- ***Back to the Light*** by Pentabus Young Writers, nine new short plays which will be showcased at the Courtyard Hereford on 12 and 13 July 2022.
- ***Little Bits of Ruined Beauty*** a new play by **Tom Wentworth**, commissioned with **Unlimited** and touring the West Midlands this autumn.
- Two new digital theatre pieces written by the most recent Pentabus Writers-in-Residence – ***DESTINY*** by **Florence Espeut-Nickless** and ***The Silence & the Noise*** by **Tom Powell**, a co-production with **Rural Media**.
- ***I'm Here***, five new short digital commissions including the winner of the inaugural Pentabus Young Writers Alumni award.
- For two weeks only, from Friday 24 June, free access to watch the live capture of **Matt Hartley's *Idyll*** which toured outdoor venues across the West Midlands and the Marches to critical and audience acclaim in summer 2021.
- Ten professionally produced new audio dramas written by Pentabus Young Writers National Group, to be released in September 2022.

In addition to this smorgasbord of new work, **Melina Barnett** joins **Karishma Balani**, **Izzy Rabey**, **Sophie Stone**, **Anoushka Warden**, **Ross Willis**, and Young Associates **Callum Beardmore** and **Ruth Cowell**, as a Pentabus Associate Artist.

**Elle While**, Pentabus Artistic Director said:

*'This season is full of hope and conversation and celebration as we step forward together in these challenging times. We are championing some of the UK's most exciting playwrights to tell stories that will reach across generations and cultures to bring people together.'*

For more information on each project please see the following pages.

For press enquiries please contact **Catrin John** – [catrin@pentabus.co.uk](mailto:catrin@pentabus.co.uk) or **Verity Overs Morrell** – [verity@pentabus.co.uk](mailto:verity@pentabus.co.uk)

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Facebook: PentabusTheatre | Twitter: @pentabustheatre

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## BACK TO THE LIGHT

by Pentabus Young Writers

Tue 12 & Wed 13 July 2022  
The Courtyard, Hereford

A thrilling showcase of 9 short plays written by local young writers. *Back to the Light* is a celebration of youth and the diverse world we live in, performed by an ensemble of professional actors.

Take a bus to the bra shop, via slimming world... Pop to the corner shop and summon the devil, before never-ending first dates... These wonderful plays explore snapshots of the world we know and those we don't. Join us as we head *Back to the Light*.

The Young Writers Group is a free playwriting programme for young people aged 16-30 from rural areas. Led by professional playwrights, actors, directors, producers and designers, the course provides an invaluable creative outlet and a springboard into the arts industry.

Elle While, Pentabus Artistic Director said:

*'I am inspired and excited by the energy, passion and hope that this cohort of Young Writers have brought to Pentabus. It is a privilege to be producing their work in both a live production which will offer an evening of laughs, reflection and insight and an eclectic collection of audio plays which will be available to explore on our website this autumn.'*

*Back to the Light* Young Writers are: Liam Alexandru, Victor Barratt, Chris Davies, Aled Gomer, Ella Mapes, Chloe Moore, Izzy Searle, Mackenzie Steed and Bethan Walters.

A Pentabus Production

Directors: Ant Stones & Elle While  
Designer: Bethany Seddon  
Lighting: Jenny Roxburgh

Further Casting and Creative team to be announced.

Box Office: 01432 340555  
Book online: [www.courtyard.org.uk](http://www.courtyard.org.uk)

Tickets: £10 / Concs: £8 / Under-25: £5 [limited number free, for more information [pentabus.co.uk/back-light](http://pentabus.co.uk/back-light)]

# Little Bits of Ruined Beauty

by Tom Wentworth

Touring 29 September – 23 October 2022

What happens when a disabled child becomes a carer? When Eddie returns to Shropshire, he hopes to be looked after by his father. But Terry, his fiercely independent dad, is struggling to accept he is becoming increasingly disabled himself. Now Eddie must step into his new role of carer.

This darkly comic play examines the subtle shift from cared-for to carer and how dignity and independence are maintained in isolated rural areas.

This new play by Shropshire raised playwright Tom Wentworth is about guilt, masculinity but most of all love. Tom took part in Pentabus' inaugural Young Writers programme in 2013/14 and since then has forged a career as a professional playwright.

A Pentabus Production. Commissioned and supported by Unlimited, celebrating the work of disabled artists, with funding from Arts Council England.

Writer: Tom Wentworth  
Director: Nickie Miles-Wildin

Thu 29 & Fri 30 Sept 2022 at 7.30pm – Pentabus HQ, Bromfield - [Book Now](#)

Further Creative Team, Cast and tour dates to be announced.

## Tom Wentworth - Writer

Tom Wentworth is a writer for theatre, television and audio. He is currently writing an episode of *Ralph and Katie* (BBC/ITV Studios) and his play *Burke and Hare* ran at New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich in May 2022, after productions at Watermill Theatre, Newbury and Jermyn Street Theatre, London. Other recent credits include: *CripTales: The Real Deal* (BBC), *Pen Pals* (Rural Arts) and *Bully* (recipient of an MGCFutures Bursary, performed at Wales Millennium Centre). His play *Windy Old Fossils* was part of the 2014 Pentabus Young Writers Festival. He currently has projects in development with several production companies including Erebus Pictures, Quay Street Productions and Silverprint Productions. Tom was recently part of BBC Writers' Room's Writers' Access Group and London Voices. His plays *Windy Old Fossils* and *Burke and Hare* are published by Fair Acre Press.

Tom is proud to be a trustee of Disability Arts Cymru, The Watermill Theatre and a member of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain's Equality and Diversity Committee.

### **Nickie Miles-Wildin - Director**

Nickie Miles-Wildin is a theatre director who loves telling stories that are full of hope, connection and community that challenge the structures of ordinary storytelling, reaching audiences that are sometimes excluded from theatre spaces and even stories. Her work challenges the preconceptions around disability and Nickie aims to put those narratives centre stage through her passion in new writing and devising. Nickie was previously Joint Artistic Director and CEO of DaDa and Associate Director at Graeae where she was Head of New Writing. In 2014 Nickie co-founded TwoCan, Gloucestershire's first disabled led theatre company.

Recent theatre credits include: *Leave The Light On For Me* (Mind The Gap); *Kerbs* (Graeae / Belgrade Theatre); *When This Is Over, Cuttin' It*, *The Tempest @Abraham Moss* (Royal Exchange Theatre); *The Iron Man* (Graeae /Spark Arts); *The Forest of Forgotten Discos* (Contact Theatre).

Online work: *Crips Without Constraints Parts One & Two* (Graeae); *MMXX & ConnectFest* (Royal Exchange Theatre).

Audio: *The Night Of The Living Flatpacks* (Naked Productions); *Ghost Pine* (Audible x Lamda).

## DESTINY

by Florence Espeut-Nickless

## The Silence & the Noise

by Tom Powell

Two new digital plays exploring where film and theatre meet, which open the door to teenage experiences of growing up in rural towns in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

*DESTINY*, is a monologue written and performed by Florence Espeut-Nickless, which takes us on a journey of a teenage girl's experience and response to abuses of power in many guises.

*The Silence & the Noise* by Tom Powell, shares the lives of two teenagers embroiled in the fall-out of adult heroin addiction.

Both plays tell these urgent, relevant stories with warmth and humour, speaking to audiences about the universal issues of love, betrayal and hope.

The digital plays will be released in autumn 2022, more information to follow.

A Pentabus & Rural Media Co-production

### Florence Espeut-Nickless

Florence is a writer and actor from Chippenham in Wiltshire, a town with no theatre and limited access to it. She writes for both stage and screen about and with working class communities in the South-West in the hope of making the arts more accessible to everyone, regardless of background and geographical location. She is the Clive Richards' Foundation Writer-in-Residence at Pentabus; an Open Session Writer at Bristol Old Vic and an associate artist at Strike a Light, as part of their Let Artists Be Artists programme.

Her debut play *DESTINY* which toured the South West in 2021-22, will be at [Underbelly](#) over the Edinburgh Fringe 2022. Florence was commissioned to write *Miracle on 34 Seymour Street* for Trowbridge Town Hall for Christmas 2021. She is developing another play, *Blinded by Your Grace*, with support from MAYK, Strike a Light, Wiltshire Creative and Wild Child. Florence is also one of five writers working on the re-telling of *The Odyssey* for the National Theatre. She is developing a TV pilot *South West Side* with support from Wild Child and Oliver Lansley.

### Tom Powell

Tom's play *The Silence and the Noise* was a 2021 [Papatango Prize](#) Winner, and toured the UK in 21/22 to venues including Bristol Old Vic, Bush Theatre, Lyric Theatre Belfast, Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse, Stephen Joseph Theatre and Leeds Playhouse in audio form. Tom was the 2019-21 Clive Richards Foundation Writer-in-Residence at Pentabus and was part of the 2019/20 BBC Studios Writers' Academy.

He was selected for the BBC Words First spoken word programme, is an Arts Council England/BBC New Creative and his original audio drama *Love Beyond the Zoo* was broadcast on BBC Radio 4 Extra in September 2021, available [here](#). As a student Tom's writing won the OTR National Radio Drama Award and the Footlights' Harry Porter Prize. He was part of the Soho Writers Alumni Group for five years and was shortlisted for the Soho Young Writers' Award.

He has had short work performed at The Bunker, Southwark Playhouse, Theatre503, Ovalhouse, The Arcola, Tristan Bates, Live Theatre Newcastle, The VAULTS, Peckham Pelican, The Pleasance (Edinburgh and London), ACT Wolverhampton, Greenwich Theatre, The Bookshop, The Proud Archivist, the White Bear, TheatreN16, Clapham Omnibus and Soho Theatre. And he has written libretto for The Opera Story's *Beauty and the Seven Beasts*. As part of the BBC Studios Writers' Academy, he has written broadcast episodes of *Holby City* and *EastEnders*. He is developing an original TV idea with Clerkenwell Films. He is published by Methuen/Bloomsbury (*Little Echoes*) and Nick Hern Books (*The Silence and the Noise*).

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## I'm Here

Five new digital shorts inspired by the idea of isolation.

Bringing together some of the freshest playwrighting talent in the UK we asked writers to explore the idea of isolation. To tell a story from one characters' perspective, that would pull us into their world. You can watch their extraordinary responses here – [pentabus.co.uk/im-here](https://pentabus.co.uk/im-here)

As part of the process we ran a competition open to all alumni of our Young Writer's Programme to win the chance of having their script made in to a professionally produced digital short. Caitlin Magnall-Kearns was the inaugural winner with her piece, *The Amazing Invisible Woman*.

*Birds n Dem* by babirye bukilwa  
Director: Elle While  
Actor: Sumāh Ebelé

Phase Four by Tabby Lamb  
Director: Elle While  
Actor: Allie Daniel

*The Amazing Invisible Woman* by Caitlin Magnall-Kearns  
Director: Alessandra Davison  
Actor: Charlotte Mills

*Green Thumb* by Mika Onyx Johnson  
Director: Elle While  
Actor: Michelle Tiwo

*Toed* by Anoushka Warden  
Director: Elle While  
Actor: Liv Hill

Film-maker: Sam Halmarack, Helm Films

### Creative Team

#### **babirye bukilwa - Writer**

babirye bukilwa is an actor, singer, model, poet and writer born and raised in pre-gentrified Bethnal Green. They are currently based in London. babirye's debut play *...black bird hour* was shortlisted for the Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting in 2019, the inaugural Women's Prize for Playwriting 2020 and the Alfred Fagon award 2020.

#### **Tabby Lamb - Writer**

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Tabby Lamb is a non-binary writer and performer based in East London. She is equally inspired by Carly Rae Jepsen and Tennessee Williams and strives to tell stories that explore the intersections between popular culture and politics.

Their debut solo show *Since U Been Gone*, which Tabby wrote and performed, premiered at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2019, after previewing at the Gate Theatre.

They were part of the Soho Theatre Writers Lab and the LGBTQ Arts Review #RaisingOurVoices scheme for queer and trans writers, Oxford Playhouse Playmakers scheme, and Oli Lansley's Writing for Stage and TV course. She is also an associate artist for Middle Child and Theatre Royal Stratford East. They are currently under commission at The Unicorn Theatre, The Place and Kilter, Pentabus and 45North. Alongside their passion for writing, Tabby is a facilitator and runs creative arts projects for people from the LGBTQ+ community. They also founded Theatre Queens & can often be seen advocating for Trans Rights across their social media platforms and beyond.

## **Caitlin Magnall-Kearns – Writer**

Caitlin is a writer from Belfast who was an inaugural member of Pentabus Young Writers National Group. She was one of four writers chosen to be on the New Playwright Programme at the Lyric Theatre, Belfast in 2021 where they developed their debut play *Wee Buns*. Their queer rom-com audio drama *Orangefield* recently aired on BBC Radio 4, who they're currently under commission to write a short story for too. Last year they took part in X-Pollinator's Elevator Scheme where they developed a comedy-drama for TV. They have recently written and directed their first short *Dear Body* which was produced by BBC Northern Ireland and will air in Spring 2022.

## **Mika Onyx Johnson – Writer**

Mika Onyx Johnson is an actor, writer and performance artist from Nottingham, now based in London. They recently performed in *Cyrano de Bergerac* in the West End and have been featured as a writer for *My White Best Friend* (The Bunker).

Mika's debut show, *Pink Lemonade*, previewed at the Gate Theatre before premiering at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2019, where it was included in The Stage's 18 best shows of the Fringe. In 2021 *Pink Lemonade* was revived at the Bush Theatre. The show is currently being developed for TV with Balloon Entertainment.

Mika recently wrote *CAP: A Medicinal Love Story* for the Queer House and Royal Court's *Queer Upstairs* series of script-in-hand performances. They were also part of the writers' room for *Tantra*, a new series by Ron Leshem.

## **Anoushka Warden – Writer**

Anoushka studied BA Theatre Studies at Kingston University and undertook a Masters in Acting for Screen at Central School of Speech and Drama. Following her studies Anoushka acted on stage and screen and wrote and acted with a comedy sketch group. For the last 10 years Anoushka has worked in PR at the Theatre Royal Haymarket and the Royal Court Theatre.

Anoushka had her first play, *My Mum's A Twat*, staged at the Royal Court Jerwood Theatre Upstairs in January 2018. She was picked as one of 12 writers for the 2018 Channel 4 Screenwriting course. *My Mum's A Twat* has been optioned for TV by Lookout Point. Anoushka also performed in a new version of *My Mum's A Twat* at the



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Edinburgh Festival Fringe throughout August 2019. In 2020, *My Mum's A Twat* was released as an Audible play. Anoushka won the Platform Presents Playwright's Prize for her second play, *My Dad's A C\*\*t* in 2020 and is currently developing Jessica Hepburn's two books, *The Pursuit of Motherhood* and *21 Miles*, into a feature film with Erebus Pictures. In 2019 Anoushka was an Associate Artist at The Bunker Theatre. Currently she is an Associate Artist at Pentabus.

## Alessandra Davison – Director

Alessandra is a director, dramaturg and photographer. She is currently directing two pieces as part of *Living Archive Vol.1* at the Royal Court: *Living Archive: New* and *Living Archive: Investigate*. She is a director in the Jamie Lloyd EMERGE company, a reader for Park Theatre and a committee member of Stage Sight. She recently underwent dramaturgy training on the Paines Plough Re:Assemble professional development programme. Her professional photography specialises in theatre rehearsal and production imagery.

Assistant and Associate Director credits include: *Two Palestinians Go Dogging* (Royal Court Theatre); *A Number* (The Old Vic); *Idyll* (Pentabus); *Torch Song* (Turbine Theatre); *Me for the World* (Young Vic); *CARE* (The Pappy Show).

Director credits include: *Three Sisters* (Lyric Hammersmith); *Call me Maybe* (Arcola Theatre); *Moving in/on* (The Bunker); *Hatch* (Baron's Court Theatre); *By Way of Kensal Green* (Theatre 503); *Drylands* (Tramshed); *SWAY* - a live action audio play (Virtual Collaborators); *Hot Off Da Press*, *Three Wishes* (Lyric Hammersmith's START Company).

## Elle While – Director

Elle is the Artistic Director at Pentabus and an Associate Artist at Shakespeare's Globe, where she directed *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*. Her most recent directing work includes *Idyll* for Pentabus, *Private Peaceful* for Nottingham Playhouse and *Blue Stockings* at Storyhouse Chester. She developed and directed the award-winning production of *Glory Dazed* which played at Edinburgh and Adelaide festivals before transferring to the Soho Theatre. She was also the revival director for the West End production (Gielgud 2015-17), UK and international tour of the award-winning production, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. She has worked prolifically as an associate and assistant director with directors including Lucy Bailey, Marianne Elliott, Nancy Meckler, Ian Rickson, Thea Sharrock and Alex Timbers in the West End and at the RSC, The Old Vic, the National Theatre and the Young Vic.

## Cast

### Allie Daniel

Allie trained at Mountview Academy. Her recent credits include: *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (UK Tour); *Millennials* (Turbine Theatre); *RENT* (Hope Mill Theatre); *Disenchanted* (West End Musical Productions) and *Thursford Christmas Spectacular*.

Concert credits include: *Peter And The Wolf* (Cadogan Hall & Triorca); *Roles We'll Never Play* (Lyric Theatre); *Always Starting Over* (True Voices Cabaret); *Secret Society Of Leading Ladies* (The Barn Theatre Cirencester) and *Break Free* (Thespie).

### Sumāh Ebelé

Sumāh Ebelé is an actor, singer and writer from East London. She is currently training at Bristol Old Vic Theatre school where she will graduate with a BA Acting in the summer of 2023. As a writer Sumāh has taken part in the introduction to playwriting

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group and Hackney Empires young writers' group. Her musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* called *Nightshade* was performed at Hackney Empire for their artist development programme. She will write an original musical for the same programme to be performed in August 2022.

## Liv Hill

Liv's film & TV credits include: *The Serpent Queen* (Starz); *Elizabeth is Missing*; *The Great*; *The Fight*; *The Little Stranger*; *Snatches: Moments from Women's Lives* (BBC 4); *Jellyfish* (nominated for a British Independent Film Award, Most Promising Newcomer & Best Performance at the Edinburgh International Film Festival); *Three Girls* (BAFTA nomination for Best Supporting Actress).

Theatre credits include: *Top Girls* (National Theatre)

## Charlotte Mills

Charlotte trained at The Oxford School of Drama.

Charlotte's credits include: *Jerusalem* (Royal Court/Apollo Theatre, West End/The Music Box Theatre, Broadway); *Love's Labour's Lost* (Shakespeare's Globe); *Wendy & Peter Pan* (RSC); *The Country Wife* (Chichester Festival Theatre); *Abigail's Party* (Theatre Royal Bath); *The Moorside, Dodger* (BBC); Kurt Sutter's *The Bastard Executioner* (FX) and *Behind Her Eyes* (Netflix).

## Michelle Tiwo

Michelle Tiwo is a multi-disciplinary artist with work spanning across radio, poetry, theatre, film and music.

Writing credits include: *Rights for whom, exactly?* (Young Vic)

Acting credits include: *Parakeet* (Boundless/Roundabout); *Little Miss Burden* (Bunker); *Parakeet* (Boundless/Boom Shakalaka Productions); *And The Rest of Me Floats* (Bush Theatre); *Ackee and Saltfish* (BBC3); *Faces, We Love Moses, The Ting* (Channel 4 Random Acts).

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## Live Capture of *Idyll* A New Play by Matt Hartley

Available to watch for FREE from Friday 24 June to Saturday 9 July

For two weeks only Pentabus invite audiences to re-immense themselves in the magic of Matt Hartley's *Idyll*, filmed as part of its successful 2021 outdoor summer tour.

*Hot days have been frequent of late.*

*At first it was a welcome relief, a distraction, but these scorching days have brought a pattern. One that many in the village are tired of. Noise.... Cars.... Day trippers.*

*Take a journey in to this rural idyll – you know it is beautiful, but scratch under the surface and tempers fray and danger bubbles...*

Running time approximately 60mins

A Pentabus Production

Writer: Matt Hartley  
Director: Elle While  
Designer: Lucy Sierra  
Sound Designer: Daniel Balfour  
Lighting Designer: James Mackenzie  
Assistant Director: Alessandra Davison

Cast: Harry Egan

### **Matt Hartley - Writer**

Matt Hartley wrote *Here I Belong*, which Pentabus toured in 2016 and 2018. His first play *Sixty Five Miles* won a Bruntwood Award and since then he has forged a career writing for theatre, television and radio. His theatre work has been performed at venues including Shakespeare's Globe (*Eyam*), Royal Shakespeare Company (*Myth* co-written with Kirsty Housley), Hampstead Theatre (*Deposit*) and is regularly produced and revived internationally.

**To Watch - [pentabus.co.uk/Idyll-live-capture](https://pentabus.co.uk/Idyll-live-capture)**

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## Notes to Editors

### About Pentabus

**Pentabus** is the nation's rural theatre company. We are the only professional theatre company in the UK whose vision is singularly rural. We tour new plays about the contemporary rural world to new audiences in village halls, fields, festivals and theatres, telling stories with local relevance, plus national and international impact. We believe that every person living in an isolated rural community has a right to exceptional theatre. We are based in a Victorian school in rural Shropshire, and to date all of our work has been made here. It then tours village halls and theatres locally and nationally. Over four and a half decades we've produced 174 new plays, reached over half a million audience members, won a prestigious South Bank Show award, a Fringe First and were the first to live stream from a village hall. We have hosted a writer in residence since 2014 and they have gone on to be commissioned by the Birmingham Rep, the Bush, HighTide, Nottingham Playhouse, the National Theatre, Royal Court and Royal Welsh College.

We are a champion for rural young people aged 16 to 25 and Pentabus Young Company is our programme offering workshops, masterclasses, work experience and mentorships, as well as the opportunity to join our Young Writers' Group, which has been running for nine years. Previous participants of the Young Writers' Group have had their work presented at Ludlow Fringe, Latitude Festival and Hereford Courtyard. It is a springboard into further study and the arts industry.

### About Rural Media

**Rural Media Charity** is a Hereford-based production company and charity producing award-winning films and digital arts projects. Founded almost 30 years ago we have a reputation, locally and nationally, for telling powerful stories from unheard voices, nurturing creative talent and creating digital arts projects that raise awareness, influence change and celebrate rural life.

### About Unlimited

**Unlimited** is an arts commissioning body that supports, funds and promotes new work by disabled artists for UK and international audiences. Our mission is to commission extraordinary work from disabled artists that will change and challenge the world. Funded by Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Wales, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and British Council, since 2013, Unlimited has supported over 460 artists with over £4.9 million reaching audiences of over 5 million making it the largest supporter of disabled artists world-wide.

Connect with us [www.weareunlimited.org.uk](http://www.weareunlimited.org.uk)

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**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**



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