

FINBOROUGH | THEATRE

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

October 2019-January 2020 season

The world premiere

SCROUNGER

by Athena Stevens.

Directed by Lily McLeish.

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

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

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

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

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

That is, until an airline destroys her wheelchair.

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

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

Playwright **Athena Stevens** returns to the Finborough Theatre where she is a Playwright in Residence, and wrote and performed in the Olivier nominated world premiere of Schism. She is an associate artist at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre. She is currently writing the book for a new musical, and is under commission for the National Youth Theatre. She was the first actor in a wheelchair nominated for an OffWestEnd Award for her performance in Schism, as well as appearing at the Barbican Theatre as Juliet last year. Her radio plays include Reluctant Spirit (BBC Radio 3). Stevens is also a spokesperson for the UK's Women's Equality Party.

Director **Lily McLeish** is a creative fellow of the Royal Shakespeare Company, long-term Associate Director to Katie Mitchell on productions across Europe, and director of Fizzy Sherbet, a new writing initiative for women playwrights. She is currently opening While You Are Here by Eve Leigh, a new play for dance with choreographer Jonathan Goddard for DanceEast and The Place. Direction includes Schism by Athena Stevens (Park Theatre), The White Bike (The Space), Unlocked (Glenside Hospital Museum and alldaybreakfast, Bristol), A Colder Water Than Here, awarded the Origins Award for Outstanding New Work (The Vaults), Three Lives (Fringe Arts Bath), Housekeeping (Southwark Playhouse), Absence (The Young Vic), This Despised Love (Royal Shakespeare Company Fringe), Old Times (Artheater Cologne), Footfalls (Severins-Burg-Theater, Cologne). Recent work as Associate Director include Orlando (Schaubühne Berlin), Norma Jeane Baker of Troy (The Shed, New York), Bluets (Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg), La Maladie de la Mort (Théâtre des

118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED Telephone 020 7244 7439 e-mail admin@finboroughtheatre.co.uk
www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk Artistic Director Neil McPherson

Press Information

Bouffes du Nord, Paris), Anatomy of a Suicide (Royal Court Theatre), Ophelias Zimmer (Schaubühne Berlin and Royal Court Theatre). Based now in the UK and Germany, Lily graduated from the University in Cologne with a first class honours degree in English Literature and Art History, where she also trained with theatre company Port in Air.

The press on Schism at the Finborough Theatre

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Finborough Theatre, 118 Finborough Road, London SW10 9ED

Book online at www.finboroughtheatre.co.uk

No booking fees on online, personal or postal bookings

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

Tuesday, 7 January – Saturday, 1 February 2020

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

Prices until 19 January 2020– Tickets £18, £16 concessions, except Tuesday evenings £16 all seats, and Friday and Saturday evenings £18 all seats. Previews (7 and 8 January) £14 all seats.

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

£14 tickets for residents of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea on Saturday, 11 January 2020 at 7.30pm when booked online only.

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

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

For more information, interviews and images, please contact

Livvy Perrett on e-mail press@finboroughtheatre.co.uk or **07889 794858**

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