

TOGETHER WE ARE

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

OPENING EVENT

AUDIO INTRODUCTION TRANSCRIPTION

KATE MOLLESON: Hello and welcome to The Warm Up, the all-you-need-to-know guide to this year's Edinburgh International Festival. I'm Kate Molleson. Along with the Festival Director Nicola Benedetti and special guests who were involved in the creation of the performance you're about to experience, I'm here to give you extra insights and context to help you enjoy it all the more.

This time, we zoom in on the Edinburgh International Festival's Opening Event, Where to Begin. It runs from 2-4 August. To tell us all about it, here are Katy Fuller, the director of Pinwheel, the production company behind the event, and Jaume Ferràs, the creative director at The Macallan, the festival's principal partner. But first, our Festival Director, Nicola Benedetti.

NICOLA BENEDETTI: So this year we're unbelievably excited to have this opening event moment that's in collaboration with The Macallan. We're two organisations that have long, long histories in sort of legacy building and storytelling in Scotland. And the concept behind the collaboration really is around us being better than the sum of our parts, and working together to create what is, I hope, a long relationship into the future of deepening what is the telling of our traditions, the telling of our Scottish stories, our Edinburgh stories. But what kind of world do we want to see in the future? And when you look at an opening event that is outdoors, that brings in a lot of different aspects that are perhaps less traditional in terms of their art form, but really meld a lot of different art forms, that allows you to create a fantasy world that you can't create in the same way elsewhere. So it'll be a really huge and important moment for us.

KATY FULLER: My name is Katy Fuller, I'm director of the company called Pinwheel, and I am creative director of this year's Opening Event, which is taking place at George Heriot's. I'm feeling super excited, it's always really interesting creating something completely new, in a new setting, with a new team and a new story. So I'm as excited as hopefully the audience are to see how this plays out.

I really wanted to find somewhere that was unmistakably Edinburgh, that had a real quality to it. I mean, Edinburgh is blessed with beautiful architecture, amazing vistas, and we wanted to be able to be somewhere where the audience felt very much in that space, and it's an astonishing space. It's obviously got beautiful architecture. It's got very interesting history. When you get into that space, and the backdrop is so unmistakably Edinburgh, you feel bang in the middle of the city and really in the heart of it, and yet it's sort of an oddly tranquil and protected space. It has got quite a magical quality to it.

What we were looking to do with this production was to celebrate both Edinburgh International Festival and The Macallan. And as people enter into this space, we are performing some rituals, things that are probably quite familiar to people in Scotland, in a different context. So the idea of raising a toast, taking a sip, having a dram, and the idea of lighting a fire. So those things that we play with as well. And it was a nice way to bring in references to both of those brands, both of the partners on this project, as well as to tell the story that we're telling.

JAUME FERRAS: Our collaboration celebrates the spirit of Scotland through time. It's a blend of respect for nature and human creativity. It is all about merging the festival's artistic excellence with Macallan's innovative spirit. So, our source of inspiration and beauty is nature, and when we look at nature, we see how nature is evolving. We have a mix of ingredients to create the opening ceremony in a very unique way.

KATY FULLER: What's really important about this event, and the story that we're putting across in it, is that the audience are an absolutely essential part of the festival. There is no festival without an audience. There's no virtuosic playing without somebody to witness it and appreciate it. There is no sense in putting all of this effort into putting things on if people don't come and be part of it. And so it's about the alchemy between the audience and the artists, and the idea that that is the power which sets alight the festival every year, and hopefully brings it back every year as well. Because to me that's what rituals are all about. They're igniting something into happening. And they're also about perpetuating them and allowing them to return year on year.

KATE MOLLESON: Katy Fuller, Jaume Ferràs and Nicola Benedetti speaking about the Opening Event, *Where To Begin*. It runs from 2-4 August. Go to eif.co.uk for more details. The Opening Event, *Where To Begin* is presented in collaboration with the International Festival's principle partner, The Macallan, and it's supported by EventScotland. The partnership draws upon the collective capacity for storytelling and creativity, as well as the height of Scottish achievement.