

TOGETHER WE ARE

EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

PLEASE RIGHT BACK

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.

The Edinburgh International Festival's theme this year is "Rituals That Unite Us", so our guests will be sharing their own rituals around the creative process that help to bring the performance you're about to witness to life. These can be habits or routines that they always touch on in the months and weeks leading up to this show, on the day of the performance, or maybe just that moment when they're about to step onto the stage. Join me and Nicola Benedetti as we guide you into the world of The Warm Up.

This time, we focus on the always innovating, always charming company 1927, and Please write back. It's their new show on at The Studio from 2-11 August. Before we hear from the writer and director Suzanne Andrade and the animator Paul Barritt, here is Nicola Benedetti.

NICOLA BENEDETTI: Please Right Back will take place in the Festival Studio. It'll be a Scottish premiere, and because of the nature of that venue, it's a very intimate experience. This particular tale is a source of such fascination for me because it is around the childhood difficulties and heartbreak that can happen when there is separation. But also, and most importantly, the immense power of imagination, and what that can do to sort of recreate your scenario. That subject matter is so front and centre to us generally at the festival. It's something we consider all the time. To what intensity can we inspire another's imagination?

PAUL BARRITT: My name is Paul Barritt, and I am co-Artistic Director of 1927, and I do all of the visual stuff, the animation and everything like that.

SUZANNE ANDRADE: And I'm Suzanne Andrade, I'm the other co-Artistic Director of 1927, and I do the sort of writing, directing stuff, alongside Esme Appleton. She co-directs everything with us, and really the three of us...

PAUL BARRITT: We come up with it all together basically

SUZANNE ANDRADE: So the idea came really just from discovering these letters that I had written to my dad when I was 12, when he was put in prison, and that my brother had written to him, who'd just turned 10. And returning to these letters, I was struck by how many stories he told in the letters, to make this pretty grim experience palatable, accessible, playful for children. Looking at these as an adult, that's what stuck out to me, was like, wow, he's sat there in a cell in Preston Prison, but he's making up stories about the characters who are in the cell next door. About how they eat, the food is gourmet, they're going to Alton Towers on Friday. He was making it all really playful. And I thought, I wonder if there's a story there between a dad and his daughter as the protagonists, and their relationship. And how the imagination, and stories, and play can be used to sort of even find the lightness and the play within even a situation as kind of grim as a parent going to prison.

You know, I was reading this quote the other day from *Where the Wild Things Are*, 'And the walls became the world all around'. And I thought, wow, that just really applies to someone who's physically sat within these walls of a prison cell, and then creating a story, delving into the imagination, and how you can create this world, as difficult as I imagine it is, from within these walls.

The stories were for us, but in some ways they're like for him as well. To sit and write a story, it does allow you to leave that place where you are.

PAUL BARRITT: Yeah, absolutely. It's equally a way of him dealing with the situation.

SUZANNE ANDRADE: The audience should expect a lot of humour. Yeah, there's lots of like little jokes within it, so it's quite funny. The characters are quite stylised at times. But then there's also a lot of heart in this show. So, laugh and cry, hopefully.

PAUL BARRITT: Just now, this morning, we've just been doing spikes, which is like making sure everybody's standing in the right place. Which is a big thing, big part of the whole thing. And so there's this kind of technical level to it, which is, you've got to stand in the right place, otherwise it doesn't look very good.

SUZANNE ANDRADE: We talk about meat and two veg a lot, or I do. There's this meat and two veg level to the scenes. This is the music. This is where you need to stand or you're not in the light. You know, at this point the bird will land on your

hand. And you've got to get that technical stuff down. But then equally, you have to step away from the screen, work on characters, work on delivery, work on perhaps more typical rehearsal room aspects. And then you go into this 1927 world too. Quite often the lights are off. They've just got the projector on. It's quite sensory overload for the performers, which we really need to be mindful of, because they're also being very vulnerable and trying to find characters and trying to find humour. So it's at times, yeah, it's a tricky process.

Always, the day of the performance, we always check the spikes. There's always a certain amount of time checking the spikes. Has anything moved? Even though the projector physically cannot move, everyone gets slightly superstitious just in case it's moved.

PAUL BARRITT: You used to go through every single spike in the show, prior to a performance, when you were performing.

SUZANNA ANDRADE: Yeah, I'm a bit anal though, but yeah, I would...

PAUL BARRITT: Suze would go 'do-do-do-do', through every single spike. The spikes are actually something that is ritualistic. There is something ritualistic, it's like...

SUZANNA ANDRADE: If you know that they're on, you can focus on the rest. Like, you know you're in the right position. You don't need to worry about that. And you can do your job.

PAUL BARRITT: It's like a little map on the ground. It is the map of the show, really.

SUZANNA ANDRADE: And the energy is excited but contained, you know, like molecules fizzing. Because there's so much calm and concentration before, as well. To let it burst we'll always play a game together. So they kind of get some of that energy, excitement out. And then you can kind of take that energy and just calm it. We play a game called Big Booty. You have Big Booty, and then everyone else is given a number, or a name, sometimes a name from the show. And you all say, 'Ah, shit, Big Booty, Big Booty, Big Booty.' And then Big Booty says, 'Big Booty, Number Two.' 'Number Two, Number One.' 'Number One, Big Booty.' 'Big Booty, Number Four.' 'Number Four, Big Booty.' On it goes. And then when you get it wrong, you go to the bottom of the pile. Everyone wants to be Big Booty.

PAUL BARRITT: I'm sure there'll be other performing people out there who've played Big Booty, it's...

SUZANNA ANDRADE: It's a well-known thesp game.

PAUL BARRITT: It's a well-known thesp game.

SUZANNA ANDRADE: It's a sort of elimination game and a memory game, and it's also quite energetic. You kind of stamp your feet and you've got to keep on rhythm.

PAUL BARRITT: That was funny though, because Rolin, I seem to remember Rolin, when we were playing Big Booty, thought it was some sort of cult activity that was going on.

SUZANNA ANDRADE: It does look quite cultish from the outside.

KATE MOLLESON: Suzanne Andrade and Paul Barritt there, with a bit more insight into *Please Right Back*. It's on at The Studio from 2–11 August. The duration is one hour 45 minutes with one interval. There are loads and loads of dates for this one, so go to eif.co.uk for more details. *Please Right Back* is supported by the University of Edinburgh.