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Brian Cox returns to Scottish stages in James Graham's new play *Make It Happen*

- Brian Cox (*Succession*, *Braveheart*) returns to Scottish stages in a new play by leading British playwright James Graham (*Dear England, Sherwood*)
- The first major artwork to tell the story of Royal Bank of Scotland's role in the 2008 financial crash

PR materials here

WORLD PREMIERE

A National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival and

Dundee Rep Theatre co-production

in association with Playful Productions and Neal Street Productions

Make It Happen

Written by **James Graham**

Directed by **Andrew Panton**

With **Brian Cox**

Opening performance of the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival on Friday 1 August 2025, then running until Saturday 9 August.

Previewing at Dundee Rep Theatre in late July and at the International Festival on Wednesday 30 and Thursday 31 July.

Make It Happen is an epic new satirical play by acclaimed playwright **James Graham**, directed by **Andrew Panton**, Artistic Director of Dundee Rep Theatre. This unique co-production between **National Theatre of Scotland, Edinburgh International Festival** and **Dundee Rep Theatre** marks the return of **Brian Cox** to Scottish stages for the first time in a decade.

The world premiere of ***Make It Happen*** opens the Edinburgh International Festival's 2025 programme of theatre, music, opera, and dance. It runs for a week at the Festival Theatre from 1–9 August, with previews at the International Festival on 30 and 31 July and at Dundee Rep Theatre from late July.

'There is no such thing - as too big.'

Behold the rise, fall and fail of the biggest bank in the world – The Royal Bank of Scotland.

Helmed by Fred ”The Shred” Goodwin, with his fervent belief in the wisdom of the ‘founder of modern capitalism’, Adam Smith, the once prudent RBS soon plummets, placing Scotland at the heart of the global financial crash of 2008.

Set in Edinburgh, ***Make It Happen*** sees legendary actor Brian Cox return to the Scottish stage for the first time in a decade as Adam Smith, the ghost of fiscal past. Written by James Graham (*Sherwood, Dear England*), hailed as one of the most influential and finger-on-the-pulse writers of our time, and directed by the award-winning Andrew Panton, this bitingly funny new satire delves into the unchecked growth, spiralling greed and nail-biting hubris that brought the world’s economy to its knees.

This fictionalised satire features a mixture of characters and incidents inspired by real-life events, with others entirely imagined.

James Graham, writer, said

"*Like many writers, an Edinburgh stage is the first place ever I dared put a full play in front of an audience. To be invited to join the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival programme this summer is an honour and a thrill. And to work with the National Theatre of Scotland, the Dundee Rep, and of course - Brian Cox, whom I’ve been desperate to write for for as long as I can remember.*

We still live in the long shadow of the 2008 financial crash and our inability to reset from that inheritance and its divisive legacies, so it feels right to be interrogating it artistically. But we hope to do so in a show full of music and story, larger-than-life characters, cheeky humour, and some ghosts from Scotland's centuries' long past thrown in as well…"

Andrew Panton, director, said

”*It’s a personal honour and huge responsibility to tell what became a global story that started in the city close to where I grew up. Working with an exceptionally talented cast, creative and production teams, I’m excited to be directing this new play, bringing it to audiences at Dundee Rep Theatre and Edinburgh International Festival stages.*”

Brian Cox, actor, said

“*I'm excited to be doing a play written by James Graham who is such a great writer. It's been a long time since I played in Scotland - it's good to be back.*”

Jackie Wylie, Artistic Director of the National Theatre of Scotland said

“I am thrilled that audiences will get to experience the combined talents of James Graham and Brian Cox, taking on the collapse of Royal Bank of Scotland in this epic new play, directed by the gifted Andrew Panton, produced in partnership with the brilliant institutions, Dundee Rep and Edinburgh International Festival. Dealing with seismic global moments that have shaped our

national psyche, at the world's most significant arts Festival is the perfect project for the National Theatre of Scotland and we are truly proud of this special collaboration"

Nicola Benedetti, Edinburgh International Festival Director, said

"We are extremely proud to present a brand-new play by James Graham, 'Make It Happen', which will open the 2025 International Festival in August. This co-commission with the National Theatre of Scotland and Dundee Rep demonstrates our ongoing commitment to bringing vital Scottish stories to the world stage, and invites us to examine events that took place in Edinburgh but rippled across the globe.

Illuminating this year's festival theme 'The Truth We Seek', 'Make it Happen' exemplifies the level of ambition and thought-provoking work that defines the Edinburgh International Festival. We cannot wait to see you there."

Paisley born Fred Goodwin was the Chief Executive Officer of the Royal Bank of Scotland Group between 2001 and 2009, presiding over RBS's rapid rise to become the world's largest company (by assets) and the fifth-largest bank (by stock market value), and their even more rapid fall in 2008, which coincided with the worldwide economic crisis. ***Make It Happen*** is the first major artwork exploring RBS's role in this tumultuous period in recent history.

'*James Graham is fast becoming the pre-eminent playwright of his generation*.' The Guardian

James Graham is an award-winning screenwriter and playwright, whose recent work includes *Dear England* (National Theatre of GB and West End) which won the Olivier award for Best Play in 2024 and is currently being adapted into a BBC miniseries. Other theatre work includes: *This House* (National Theatre of GB, West End and UK tour), which was chosen by popular vote as the best play of the 2010's for the major theatre publisher Methuen; *Punch* (Nottingham Playhouse and transferring to the Young Vic in spring 2025); *Best of Enemies* (Young Vic, 2022), winner of the Critics' Circle Theatre Award; *Tammy Faye* (The Almeida), and *Ink* (The Almeida), which transferred to Broadway and was nominated for six Tony Awards; *Labour of Love* (Noel Coward Theatre, 2018) which won the Olivier award for Best Comedy.

For television, James is the writer and creator of *Sherwood* which first aired on BBC One in 2022 to five star reviews, winning the Royal Television Society Award for Best Drama and two BAFTAS. Other TV includes *Brexit: An Uncivil War*, broadcast on Channel 4 and HBO, and was nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Television Movie. His Channel 4 drama, *Coalition* won the RTS Award for Best Single Drama (2019), and *Quiz* (ITV and AMC), adapted from his stage play and directed by Stephen Frears, was one of the most watched UK TV dramas of 2020.

Andrew Panton is an award-winning theatre director and currently Artistic Director and Joint CEO of Dundee Rep Theatre. For Dundee Rep, his directorial credits include *August: Osage County, The Children, A Christmas Carol, Oor Wullie, Passing Places* and *Spring Awakening*. He has previously worked with National Theatre of Scotland as director on digital lockdown short *Out of the Woods*

with Alan Cumming and *A Sheep Called Skye*, and as staff director on the original UK & International tours of *Black Watch*. He has also directed productions for the Royal Lyceum Theatre Edinburgh, Citizens Theatre Glasgow, Royal & Derngate, Perth Theatre and The Stephen Joseph Theatre. His recent work includes *A History of Paper*, which won a Scotsman Fringe First, an immersive production of Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife and Her Lover*, and the gig-theatre musical *No Love Songs* which will transfer to Sydney and New York in spring 2025. Andrew's work for television includes: *Children in Need, The Naked Choir* and *The Voice* (BBC) and he was a creative director for the opening ceremony of the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games.

Brian Cox is an award-winning Scottish actor, known for his work on stage and screen. Born in Dundee, he trained at Dundee Rep Theatre before going on to work at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Royal National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company where he first gained recognition for his portrayal of *King Lear*.

His numerous accolades include two Olivier Awards, a Primetime Emmy Award and a Golden Globe Award. Recent entries on his extensive list of theatre credits include *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (Wyndham's Theatre) and *The Score* (Theatre Royal Bath). His screen work includes *Succession* (HBO), *Braveheart* (Paramount Pictures, 20th Century Fox) and *Nuremberg* (TNT).

Brian returns to Scottish stages for the first time in a decade, last appearing on Scottish stages in 2015 in *Waiting For Godot* at the Royal Lyceum Theatre. He previously worked with National Theatre of Scotland in 2020 when he played Inspector Rebus in a special digital short, *John Rebus: The Lockdown Blues* written by Ian Rankin for their lockdown *Scenes for Survival* series, created in partnership with BBC Scotland.

Creative Team: Set Designer: **Anna Fleischle**; Costume Co-Designers: **Anna Fleischle** and **Angelica Rush**; Movement Director: **Emily Jane Boyle**; Musical Supervisor and Arranger: **Martin Lowe**; Lighting Designer: **Lizzie Powell**; Sound Designer: **Tingying Dong**; Video co-designers: **Lewis den Hertog** and **Anna Fleischle**; Associate Designer: **Angelica Rush**; Casting Director: **Stuart Burt CDG**

Supported by Sir Ewan and Lady Brown

***Make It Happen* is also supported by the Scottish Government's Festivals EXPO Fund through Creative Scotland.**

Previewing at **Dundee Rep Theatre** (late July); opening at **Edinburgh International Festival**, at the **Festival Theatre,** (previews Wed 30 & Thurs 31 July) Fri 1 August – Sat 9 August

Full cast to be announced.

More information here.: https://www.eif.co.uk/events/make-it-happen

Tickets will go on sale for performances at Edinburgh International Festival on 27 March, with priority booking available.

The Edinburgh International Festival's full programme will be announced on 13 March 2025.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The **National Theatre of Scotland** is dedicated to playing the great stages, arts centres, village halls, schools and site-specific locations of Scotland, the UK and internationally. As well as creating ground-breaking productions and working with the most talented theatre-makers, the National Theatre of Scotland produces significant community engagement projects, innovates digitally, and works constantly to develop new talent. Central to this is finding pioneering ways to reach current and new audiences and to encourage people's full participation in the Company's work. With no performance building of its own, the Company works with existing and new venues and companies to create and tour theatre of the highest quality. Founded in 2006, the Company, in its short life, has become a globally significant theatrical player, with an extensive repertoire of award-winning work. The National Theatre of Scotland is supported by the Scottish Government. www.nationaltheatrescotland.com

Edinburgh International Festival is the original festival. It's the one that started it all, the igniting spark that established Edinburgh as the world's Festival City.

The next International Festival takes place 1–24 August 2025, under the direction of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti. Benedetti's vision for the Festival is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality art, for the broadest possible audience.

The Edinburgh International Festival was founded in 1947, the inspired idea of Rudolf Bing, a cultural pioneer and Jewish refugee,working with a group of civic and artistic leaders. Together, they created a festival that transcends political boundaries through a global celebration of the performing arts.

Over the following 78 years the International Festival's hand-picked programme of world-leading dance, opera, music and theatre has continued to bring people of different cultures and viewpoints together every August. Meanwhile, the International Festival's sister festivals have grown up

around it – each of them contributing to the atmosphere of unparalleled excitement that transforms the city each summer.

Shining far beyond what you see on stage, the Festival also offers year-round pathways for people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and participate in live performance. Learn more at eif.co.uk/about.

Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre.

Driven by the belief that creative experiences are essential to life, we have been crafting meaningful human connections through the arts for nine decades. Our story is one of people: artists, creatives, staff, participants, and audiences. Our mission is driven by a commitment to being welcoming, collaborative, and always learning from people and experiences.

Nestled in the cultural heart of Dundee, we stand as Dundee's heartbeat of creativity. Together, Dundee Rep Theatre and Scottish Dance Theatre create and present works for local, national, and international audiences, with education at our core. Dundee Rep Theatre, a leading force in Scottish theatre, has produced numerous acclaimed and award-winning productions, including the Scottish premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning August: *Osage County*, the Scotsman Fringe First winner and Musical Theatre Review's Best Musical at Edinburgh Fringe 2024 *A History of Paper*, the world premieres of musicals *No Love Songs* and *Oor Wullie*, and the 80th Anniversary season world premiere of Peter Arnott's *Tay Bridge*.

Scottish Dance Theatre, founded as a grassroots community company in 1986, has evolved into Scotland's flagship contemporary dance company. Rooted in Dundee, a city with a proud industrial heritage and surrounded by nature, farming, and fishing communities, we are dedicated to our art form and the people we share it with. We collaborate with artists worldwide, bringing our work to remote village halls in the Scottish Highlands, opera houses in South America, art festivals in Europe, and local schools, prisons, and shopping centres.

At Dundee Rep and Scottish Dance Theatre, we believe high-quality artistic and creative experiences should be accessible to all. Our dedicated Engage team builds local and national partnerships, fostering learning, creativity and community performance. For 30 years, we have been one of only two UK theatres providing dramatherapy for adults and families, offering therapeutic mental health support in a creative, non-clinical environment.

Our impact is profound and far-reaching, extending locally, nationally, and internationally. Together, we are bringing Dundee to the world, shaping a vibrant cultural landscape that celebrates the power of the arts to transform lives and foster meaningful connections.

Playful Productions

Founded by Matthew Byam Shaw, Nia Janis and Nick Salmon in 2010, Playful Productions is one of the most eminent independent theatre producers and full-service general management companies in the West End.

As Producer productions include *Macbeth* (Harold Pinter); *Dr. Strangelove* (Noël Coward and Bord Gáis, Dublin); *The Artist* (Theatre Royal Plymouth); *The Unfriend* (Criterion and Wyndham's); *The House of Bernarda Alba* (as Producer – National Theatre); *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (Sheffield, Lyric Hammersmith and Theatre Royal Haymarket); *A Little Life* (as Producer – Richmond, Harold Pinter and Savoy); *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory – The Musical* (UK & Ireland Tour); *Good* (Harold Pinter) and *Get Up Stand Up! The Bob Marley Musical* (Lyric).

As General Manager productions include *Wicked* (Apollo Victoria, UK & Ireland Tours and International Tour); *Moulin Rouge! The Musical* (also Executive Producer - Piccadilly); *MJ* (also Executive Producer - Prince Edward); *Wild Rose* (also Executive Producer - Edinburgh Lyceum, March 2025); *Next To Normal* (Wyndham's) and *Come From Away* (Abbey Theatre, Dublin and Phoenix).

www.playfuluk.com

Neal Street Productions

Neal Street is one of the UK's most respected production companies, producing film, television and theatre. Founded 2003 by Sam Mendes, Pippa Harris and Caro Newling, it makes distinctive, popular award-winning projects on both sides of the Atlantic. The theatre slate is overseen by Newling together with producer, Georgia Gatti.

TV includes *Call the Midwife, The Franchise, Britannia, Penny Dreadful, The Hollow Crown*.

Films include Mendes' *Empire of Light, 1917* and *Revolutionary Road*. Upcoming; *The Magic Faraway Tree, Hamnet*, and currently in development; The Beatles project for Sony Pictures - four distinct theatrical feature films about the greatest band in history, conceived and directed by Sam Mendes.

Theatre originated by Neal Street includes *The Lehman Trilogy, The Motive and the Cue, The Hills of California, Hamnet, Local Hero, The Ferryman, Shrek the Musical, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, The Bridge Project 2010 - 2012, Three Days of Rain, The Vertical Hour*.

West End transfers also include *Walking with Ghosts, The Moderate Soprano, This House, The Painkiller, Merrily We Roll Along, South Downs/The Browning Version, Red, Enron, Sunday in the Park with George, Mary Stuart*.

In 2015 Neal Street moved under the umbrella of parent company, All3Media, which is owned by RedBird IMI.

Creative Scotland

Creative Scotland is the public body that supports culture and creativity across all parts of Scotland, distributing funding provided by the Scottish Government and The National Lottery, which, now in its 30th year, has supported over 14,600 projects with more than £501.9 million in

funding through Creative Scotland and its predecessor, the Scottish Arts Council. Further information at creativescotland.com. Follow us on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. Learn more about the value of art and creativity in Scotland and join in at www.ourcreativevoice.scot