

PRESS RELEASE : LIFE A play with drawing

A tale of the unexpected, or the inevitable?

LIFE is an exciting new theatre piece from actor and writer MARIA MACDONELL which has gathered four and five star reviews at Edinburgh Fringe 2024. LIFE is set in a drawing class. The audience is given paper and pencils and gently invited to draw, or doodle if they wish. Four on-stage tickets are available seated at easels. **LIFE is written and performed by Maria MacDonell (Estelle) with Leo MacNeill (The Artist)**

Maria's play Miss Lindsay's Secret gathered four and five star reviews in Fringe 2021/2022 and is still touring.

LIFE is inspired by MacDonell's experience as a portrait model. *'My mind wanders when I am sitting for a class, being looked at so intently. I wonder what would happen if I was naughty. I wonder about the tutor and students. Why have we all come together now and by being here, concentrating together, will we make something momentous happen? It feels a lot like theatre.'*

MacDonell has been working in the performing and creative arts for forty years. *'We need to see older actors on stage'* she says *'and to hear dynamic stories about their lives. Leo, of acclaimed comedy duo Them is Brothers, brings an intriguing young energy to the enigmatic onstage relationship. There are forty years and ten inches between us.'*

LIFE is about all of us, sharing one difficult certainty. It deals with this through memory, humour, storytelling and art. LIFE is about abuse and how we hide it; female ageing, the male gaze; women as objects; humanity's need to frame experience as folk tale; our legacy through art, our faces and the stories they tell; our personal truth and whether we hide or show it; LIFE is about love and respect. It is about the act of making theatre. Some venues may wish to offer a trigger warning for potentially distressing themes.

'Don't we all tell stories to make sense of nasty things, like working stuff out in our dreams?' (Estelle in LIFE)

LIFE Creative team is Maria MacDonell -writer, actor playing Estelle; Leo MacNeill- actor playing The Artist; Ben Harrison – Director, Roddy Simpson- Lighting design; Macfin - Molly MacDonell Finlayson, Costume; Georgina MacDonell Finlayson - Sound; Laurence Cook - Dramaturg; Ian Cameron - Movement Consultant; Jana Robert- Producer; Eva Mckenzie - Community Co-ordinator

LIFE is set in a drawing class taught by The Artist. Audience is gently invited to draw or doodle during the performance. *'There is no pressure to draw'* explained MacDonell *'we won't ask to see pictures. People absorb information in different ways. We are discovering this is really borne out in LIFE. Some people find drawing really immerses them in the story. Others prefer not to draw, or to stop drawing. We are really interested in what happens when we all come together to experience a life story as it is revealed'*. LIFE has been made with support from Keep it Fringe and Edinburgh Performing Arts Development through their Supportive Conversations scheme.

Images and video (credit Roddy Simpson) :

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1RUZBp5lMr-4c2FS2UspE8jNE16gYcgpw?usp=sharing>

Pre Fringe video <https://youtu.be/jW999P0EeGo> (NB Leo MacNeill replaces Mark Coleman)