



**SCOTTISH MENTAL HEALTH ARTS AND FILM FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES 2015 PROGRAMME**  
**With Matt Haig, Kathryn Joseph (SAY Award winner 2015), Cora Bissett and RM Hubbert**  
**Includes one European, three UK and five Scottish film premieres**

Passion is for theme of this year's Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival (SMHAFF), it was announced today [Wed 9<sup>th</sup> Sep]. The Festival opens on World Mental Health Day, taking place across Scotland from 10<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup> October.

One of the world's largest social justice festivals, with annual attendances of over 20,000, this year's SMHAFF will see over 300 events staged throughout the country – across film, performing arts, literature, music and visual arts.

The festival will explore how we learn to live with our passions and make them work positively for us, as well as the passion and dispassion associated with mental ill-health.

Highlights of the performing arts programme include national tours of *In Her Shadows*, a unique visual performance presented by **A Blank Canvas & Jabuti Theatre** with acclaimed director **Cora Bissett**; and **Rapture Theatre's** new production of Arthur Miller's *The Last Yankee*, commissioned to celebrate the legendary writer's centenary. In Glasgow and Edinburgh **Linda Duncan McLaughlin's** *Descent*, presented in partnership with Luminare and A Play, A Pie and a Pint, takes an unflinching piece about a couple's struggle to keep their love alive in the face of dementia.

This year's film programme boasts more premieres than ever before, including UK debuts for *Dancing with Maria*, an impassioned documentary about a 90-year-old dance teacher in Buenos Aires, and *The Silence of the Flies*, which explores a mysterious suicide epidemic in the Venezuelan Andes. *Dead When I Got Here*, set in a mental asylum run by its own patients, receives its European premiere.

Also screening are Scottish director **Karen Guthrie's** exquisite autobiographical documentary *The Closer We Get*; the Scottish premiere of **9999**, presented in collaboration with Document International Human Rights Festival; and **Signe Baumane's** surreal animated feature *Rocks in My Pockets*. Our annual **International Film Awards** also return, culminating in a ceremony at Edinburgh's **Filmhouse**, showcasing up-and-coming filmmakers from across the globe.

2015 Scottish Album of the Year Award winner **Kathryn Joseph** will perform at the Festival, headlining Edinburgh Carers Council's **Music Matters** event, while acclaimed Glasgow-based singer-songwriter **RM Hubbert** plays as part of **Headspace** in Glasgow. The Festival is also supporting Michael John McCarthy's **Turntable** project, a series of events taking place throughout October aiming to reclaim music as a communal experience.

Author **Matt Haig** discusses his inspirational bestselling memoir *Reasons to Be Alive*, focusing on his own experiences with depression, while the inimitable **Rally & Broad** host an eclectic evening of spoken word, literature and music. Multi-venue visual art exhibition **Out of Sight, Out of Mind** also returns, showcasing diverse artworks from people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

Lee Knifton, Head of the Mental Health Foundation, Scotland, said: "For the last nine years, our Festival has given artists and communities the opportunity to passionately and creatively challenge social injustice and instigate change. This year's theme, passion, reflects their vital commitment in helping us make Scotland a better place."

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To arrange interviews, images and media tickets for the launch or any other Festival event, please contact Sophie Crabb [SMHAFFMedia@mentalhealth.org.uk](mailto:SMHAFFMedia@mentalhealth.org.uk), 0141 226 9846 or 07912 977 658. For more information, please visit [www.mhfestival.com](http://www.mhfestival.com).

### More Information on Festival Events:

The Festival kicks off with **Moving Minds**, an all-day family event at Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, celebrating diversity and wellbeing in our communities. Throughout October, **Michael John McCarthy's Turntable** will pop up in various locations across Scotland, seeking to reclaim music as a communal experience. **Des and Liz Mahagow**, known for running around the country with their homemade Olympic torch and Commonwealth Games People's Baton, are hitting the road again, this time to champion positive mental health, in tribute to Mischief Las Bas co-founder Ian Smith, who died in 2014. Look out for them as they embark on their **Take the Black Dog Out on a Walk Tour**.

### Performing Arts Programme

From national tours to local productions, passions are running high in this year's performing arts programme. Highlights include **In Her Shadows**, a unique visual performance directed by **Cora Bissett** (*Glasgow Girls, Roadkill and Grit*), fusing aerial and physical theatre, stunning projections and an original musical score. **Rapture Theatre** celebrate Arthur Miller's centenary with a new production of **The Last Yankee**, exploring a couple's battle with depression and their failure to live up to the American Dream. Both productions are touring throughout Scotland.

In collaboration with Luminare and A Play, A Pie and A Pint, **Descent** is an unflinching piece about a couple's struggle to keep their love alive in the face of dementia, with runs at Glasgow's **Óran Mór** and Edinburgh's **Traverse Theatre**. **Cultured Mongrel Dance Theatre** return with innovative shows **#Trans** and **#TheSoloFilter**, both playing in Aberdeen, while **Al Seed's Oog**, an intense dance-theatre production about the trauma of conflict, is another regional highlight, this time from Forth Valley. Touring in the Highlands, **Fable** is a quirky production combining storytelling, spoken word and music, while performer **Donna Rutherford** explores ageing through soup-making and storytelling traditions with **Broth** in Inverclyde.

### Film Programme

This year's film programme focuses on valiant documentaries, featuring individuals who are willing to openly explore what mental health means to them. Curated principally from submissions to our International Film Competition, this year's programme boasts more premieres than ever before. **Dead When I Got Here**, set in a mental asylum run by its own patients, gets its European premiere at the Festival, while screening in the UK for the first time, we have: **Dancing with Maria**, an impassioned documentary about a 90-year-old Argentinian dance teacher; **The Silence of the Flies**, exploring a mysterious suicide epidemic in the Venezuelan Andes; and **Juanicas**, **Karen Garcia Casanova's** impressive debut about her brother's relapse into depression.

We are proud that half the features showcased are directed by women, a gender balance rarely found in a notoriously male-dominated industry. These include Scottish filmmaker **Karen Guthrie's** exquisite autobiographical documentary **The Closer We Get**, which sees her return home after her mother's devastating stroke and take one last opportunity to delve into her family's past. **Signe Baumane's** surreal animation **Rocks in My Pockets** and the daring Norwegian documentaries **Good Girl** and **Ida's Diary** also show female directors at the forefront of deeply personal filmmaking. The film programme culminates with the annual **International Film Competition Awards** at Edinburgh's **Filmhouse** and screenings of some of the winners at **Glasgow School of Art**.

### Literature

Literature events at this year's Festival include **Matt Haig** discussing his inspirational bestselling memoir **Reasons to Stay Alive**, focusing on his own experiences with depression. This talk is presented in partnership with the **Dundee Literary Festival**, as is **Heard It. Seen It. Done It.**, a unique cultural

showcase exploring internal and external voices in art, curated and performed by voice hearers from The HaVeN. The **SMHAFF Writing Awards** return for another year, in an afternoon dedicated to exploring passion, mental health and the written word at St George's Tron Church in Glasgow.

The inimitable **Rally & Broad** host an eclectic showcase of literature, spoken word and music, while **In the Shadow of the Castle** is an evening of poetry taking place in the magnificent setting of **Edinburgh Castle's** Great Hall. **Matthew Green** also discusses his new book **Aftershock**, which seeks to get to the heart of today's post-conflict experience, and poet **Jo McFarlane** and psychiatrist **Dr Allan Beveridge** team up for **Shrunk in the Wash / Madness in Modern Scottish Literature** at Edinburgh's **Summerhall**.

## Music

2015 Scottish Album of the Year Award-winner **Kathryn Joseph** headlines Edinburgh Carers Council's **Music Matters** concert, with support from **Yusuf Azak** and **The Son(s)**. In Glasgow, **Platform's** annual celebration **Headspace** features another SAY Award winner, Glasgow-based singer-songwriter **RM Hubbert**, as well as Burkina Faso's **Baba Commandant**. Folk musician **Sarah Jones** performs with her collection of guitars and shares stories from her life as a vicar and transwoman, while **Edward Reid** and the **SoundSational Community Choir** present workshops and a free concert on using singing to help with stress and depression.

## Visual Arts

Now in its third year, **Out of Sight, Out of Mind** is a series of ambitious visual arts exhibitions, taking place in **Summerhall** and other venues across Edinburgh. Organised by **CAPS Independent Advocacy**, in collaboration with a host of other local organisations, this compelling event features diverse artworks from people with lived experience of mental ill-health.

Also in Edinburgh, **Postcards From...** at **The Gallery on the Corner** is a unique installation of over 200 original postcard sized pieces, created by different artists on the theme of passion. Paying tribute to his mother's life, Glasgow-based artist **Richard Blass** has created a moving series of paintings, depicting the onset of Alzheimer's disease, while, in Perth, the WW1 centenary exhibition '**Heroes or Rajhantle?**' commemorates the contribution made by the Gypsy/Traveller community and explores the local impact of shell shock.

## Notes to editors:

1) **ABOUT SMHAFF:** Now in its ninth year, the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival is one of Scotland's most striking and provocative cultural events, encompassing music, film, visual art, performing arts, dance, and literature. The annual Festival takes place in venues across Scotland throughout October, aiming to support the arts and challenge preconceived ideas about mental health. By engaging artists, connecting with communities and forming collaborations, the Festival celebrates the artistic achievements of people with experience of mental health issues, explores the relationship between creativity and the mind, and promotes positive mental health and wellbeing.

2) **PARTNERS:** The Festival is led by The Mental Health Foundation in association with the following national partners: See Me, Scotland's programme to end mental health stigma, NHS Health Scotland, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, NHS Lothian, The Royal College of Psychiatrists, Lanarkshire Recovery Network, Voices of Experience, Healthier Scotland Scottish Government, University of Strathclyde and Bipolar Scotland. The Festival is also supported by hundreds of arts, community and public organisations across Scotland. These groups programme events in their own towns and cities on behalf of the festival, in partnership with local artists and activists.

3) **THE MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION** is a leading UK mental health charity that conducts robust research, provides practical solutions to help everyone lead mentally healthier lives, and works to raise public awareness and improve mental health services for the entire population. The Foundation is proud of the vital role it plays in hosting, developing and managing the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)