

A large bonfire made of logs is the central focus, with bright orange and yellow flames and a massive spray of sparks rising into the air. The scene is set in a dark, open landscape under a deep blue night sky filled with stars. In the distance, three smaller fires are visible on the horizon, creating a sense of a festival or gathering. The overall mood is magical and atmospheric.

NORTHERN GIRLS

a Pilot Theatre and ARCADE production
as part of the Signal Fires Festival

NORTHERN GIRLS

Welcome to Northern Girls, a special outdoor evening of storytelling in Scarborough.

In collaboration with ARCADE, Pilot is setting free the stories of girls and women from Yorkshire and the North East, encouraging them to write and present tales that matter most to them in 2020. Each short piece addresses the barriers that women face and each story is an act of liberation.

Presented as part of the Signal Fires Festival, our fire-lit event has been conceived by our Artistic Director, Esther Richardson, co-curated by Esther, Oliver O'Shea and Rach Drew and will feature the work of established writers Asma Elbadawi, Zoe Cooper, Maureen Lennon, and Charley Miles alongside new writing from Shannon Barker, Claire Edwards, Ariel Hebditch and Amy-Kay Pell. The new writing has been developed by a group of Scarborough-based women who have been working with playwright, theatre-maker and spoken word artist Hannah Davies.

The team also brings together some of the best directing and performing talent in the North of England, and marks the professional acting debut of Laura Boughen and Holly Surtees-Smith.

SIGNAL FIRES FESTIVAL

Signal Fire (n): a fire or light set up in a prominent position as a warning, signal, or celebration.

In October and November, fires will light up across the UK with storytellers and audiences sharing in one of the original forms of theatre. The fires will signal the vibrancy of touring theatre, and the threat our industry continues to face.

From spectacular bonfires to digital blazes; the nation's leading touring theatre companies will present a series of theatrical events at locations across the UK in celebration of our fundamental need to tell stories.

The companies will be working with hundreds of UK freelancers. Each fire will span different disciplines reflecting the breadth and diversity of the touring circuit. All fires will be presented outdoors in front of socially distanced live audiences, or digitally for those who are shielding or currently unable to travel.

Special thanks to

Ali Watt, English Touring Theatre, Headlong, Slung Low, St Augustine's School, YMCA Scarborough and York Theatre Royal.



“We hope what we have made h

Come hell, high water or COVID 19, Pilot's mission is to try to give underrepresented groups the stage. We make theatre with and for younger audiences and it matters to us deeply that we aim always to reflect back the world as it truly is. A job that we take seriously as a company is to enable people from different backgrounds to see that they belong in funded cultural spaces too, and we are proud to play a role in opening the door for new people into the arts workforce.

Having made work for over four decades, we know there are still lots of younger people with a passion for something like theatre, who may feel that they aren't good enough or 'well-to-do' enough, or confident enough to fit the established and perhaps quite oppressive narratives of what is 'excellent' art, culture or literature in this country. What is really hard to remember (or even be led to think about in the first place) is how the deep bias inherent in, as just one example, something like the schools' syllabus, might leave its lasting imprint on all of us about our value and status in the world, and by extension, our perception of the potential for our lives.

If you're a woman or a girl in this country, you are part of the majority of the population (at 51%!) so to say we're an underrepresented group is a bewildering sentence to write. Yet regrettably we are still underrepresented in many areas of senior and executive leadership across so many sectors and spheres of public life, and as I know only too well, in the most visible creative leadership roles in theatre. To go back to the syllabus at school, which is a place where all children will encounter stories that will help them first make sense of who they are: at secondary level the number of female authors you might encounter, or even female protagonists you might meet as part of your education, is pretty woeful. Is there a connection here? I believe so.

Northern Girls for me is a deeply personal project as well as a political one. I spent a large part of my childhood a little further North than here on the coast in a town that didn't have a theatre or cultural centre, and which at the time was going through a major industrial decline. A lot of things happened to me and in particular my female friends during those challenging years that I suspect I am still working through over thirty years later. When my family moved further North to Durham, I discovered theatre as a teenager through a Mum's friend's youth project, and then when I left home, eventually I was lucky enough to make this my job.

ere burns bright in the memory”

Always I carry with me, the question of what my journey in my life would have been had we not moved house, and had I not had those encounters with putting on plays from age 16.

Another woman in theatre said to me recently on zoom: “Esther, whatever you do, don’t waste a good crisis”. We all know what a tough year it has been but when things go wrong it presents opportunities too. Northern Girls is the start of something new, and an approach that brings together amazing Northern women who are working as theatre writers and earning at least some of their living at that, and young women who have never had the chance to work with a professional company of actors and directors before to have that chance. Working together and in solidarity we aim to foster and sweep others into a powerful sisterhood that can affect the change that many of us want to see in the theatre and cultural sectors, starting here in Yorkshire and the North of England.

The whole project has already been very special, very moving, and very fun. We are hugely grateful to Rach and Sophie at Arcade for facilitating so many aspects of the project here in Scarborough, to the wonderful YMCA for having us, and to every extraordinary woman and man who has rapidly wrapped their head around this concept and produced such heartfelt, hilarious and powerful work in such a short timescale. It has been thrilling to be a part of the Signal Fires Festival and among the first to hold this torch. We hope that what we have made here burns bright in the memory, sets imaginations ablaze, and kindles the next great ideas and aspirations for everyone who has gathered and been part of this.

Esther Richardson
Artistic Director, Pilot Theatre





Credit: [Matthew Cooper, MSC1 Photography](#)









Running Order

Erosion

Written by Charley Miles, performed by Holly Surtees-Smith
Directed by Oliver O'Shea

First Date

Written by Shannon Barker, performed by Siu-See Hung
Directed by Gitika Buttoo

The Girl Next Door

Written and performed by Asma Elbadawi

Kat / Cassie

Written by Zoe Cooper, performed by Laura Elsworthy
Directed by Esther Richardson

Rant

By Amy-Kay, performed by Holly Surtees-Smith
Directed by Oliver O'Shea

Yin and Yang

Written by Ariel Hebditch (inspired by and based on the experiences of her best friend, Guen Taigan Li), performed by Siu-See Hung
Directed by Gitika Buttoo

Waves

By Claire Edwards, performed by Laura Elsworthy
Directed by Maria Crocker

The Scarborough Porpoise

By Maureen Lennon, performed by Laura Boughen
Directed by Maria Crocker

WRITERS



Shannon Barker

I was born in Scarborough and have lived here most of my life. Creativity is a huge passion of mine! I have been involved in theatre as a performer from a young age and is something I still maintain doing through a local theatre company. My main experience in writing has been through music, so writing for Northern Girls has been a new and exciting challenge that I've loved being a part of. It really has inspired me to want to continue writing theatre pieces in the future!

[Interview with Shannon \(audio and transcript\)](#)



Zoe Cooper

I have lived in Newcastle for the past six years and worked in the region for much longer - the north east really feels like home to me. I often write plays which respond to landscapes, whether that is the seabird colonies at Marsden Bay in South Shields or the great big skies of the Norfolk fenland. What excited me about this project is that it is an opportunity to write into a really specific landscape and setting. A bonfire is a chance to gather round, listen to a story, to conjure things from the flames. This is also at the heart of what I think theatre is about.



Claire Edwards

I'm born and raised in Scarborough. I have performed at the local theatre, the YMCA, from a young age and since then have written the past five pantomimes. I studied writing at university whilst doing my Theatre Degree and I enjoyed bringing out that creativity. Northern Girls has been a wonderful outreach and bringing me back to that creativity in a new way. The girls, women, I have worked with are all incredibly talented and I feel privileged to have written alongside them.

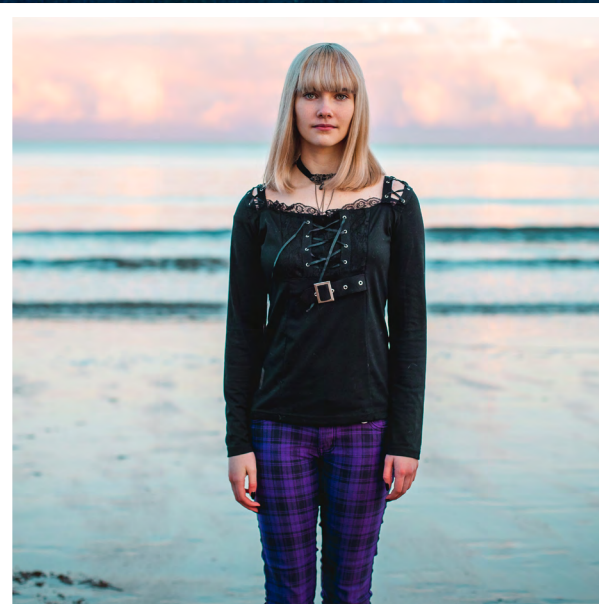
[Interview with Claire \(audio and transcript\)](#)



Asma Elbadawi

Asma will also be performing her piece.

Asma is a British Sudanese (born in Sudan and raised in England) Sport Inclusivity Consultant, Basketball Player and Spoken Word Poet. Elbadawi holds a BA Hons in Photography, Video and Digital Imaging and a Masters in Visual Arts. Her dual cultural heritage deeply influences her creativity with her main focus being female empowerment. Asma's achievements include her involvement in the globally successful FIBA ALLOW HIJAB Campaign, receiving the Women Of The Future judges high commendation Sport category Award and The British Muslim Rising Star in Sports Award. She has also featured in major media outlets such as Vogue Arabia, Cosmopolitan, BBC, Channel 4 and more.



Ariel Hebditch

I am currently an A-Level student at York College, and though my writing experience is limited - I've written a few short scripts, including one that was performed by the Stephen Joseph's youth theatre -, writing and the arts have always been a huge part of my life. I am hoping to study English at university next year, which could possibly pave the way for a career in this sector.

[Interview with Ariel \(audio and transcript\)](#)



Maureen Lennon

I'm a writer and director from Hull. I'm an Associate Artist of Middle Child Theatre and a co-founder of new-writing & storytelling company Bellow Theatre. My last play, *Us Against Whatever*, was produced in 2019 by Middle Child Theatre in assoc. with Hull Truck Theatre and Liverpool Everyman & Playhouse.

Signal Fires feels like it's connecting to our need for stories in a way that's simple and urgent. I can't wait to delve into a project that makes space for all the richness and complexity of Northern womanhood.



Charley Miles

I'm a playwright and TV writer, from North Yorkshire originally, now living in Leeds. I've written plays for Leeds Playhouse, Paines Plough and the Royal Court, and I'm currently developing a TV show for HBO Max.

I'm excited to work on a project that feels so empowering for female writers in the North; to write alongside young playwrights to make work about what it means to be Northern, female, and creative.



Amy-Kay Pell

I'm 21 years old and I graduated from college in 2018. Since then I have been working in retail and continuing to work towards my dream of acting professionally by performing in numerous musicals at the YMCA, and directing and choreographing my own production at the Whitby Pavilion. I have had an interest in writing since studying English Literature at college; with plays and poetry being my particular love. My time working on signal fires with the other northern girls has been amazing, it has not only provided me with such an incredible opportunity but also the chance to meet some incredibly talented northern ladies support and be supported by them.

[Interview with Amy \(audio and transcript\)](#)

PERFORMERS



Laura Boughen

I am an actor/theatre technician from Hull who used lockdown to continue training via Zoom with the Meisner based actor training company Both Feet; make the odd banana based baked goods; and read A LOT. Currently working a muggle job in a bakery while I wait for this to all blow over. Hoping 2021 will be my year, but I did say the same thing last year about 2020, so...

Currently applying to do an MA at drama school and seeking representation.



Laura Elsworthy

Theatre includes: *The Taming of the Shrew*, *As You Like It*, *Miss Littlewood*, *The Fantastic Follies of Mrs Rich* (RSC); *The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca* (Hull 2017); *The Hypocrite* (RSC/Hull Truck); *Villette* (Leeds Playhouse); *The Skriker* (Manchester Royal Exchange/MIF); *Our Town* (Almeida Theatre); *Macbeth* (MIF/The Armoury, New York); *The Only Way is Chelsea's* (York Theatre Royal/Soho Theatre); *Cooking with Elvis* (Derby Theatre); *The Accrington Pals* (Manchester Royal Exchange); *The Kitchen Sink*, *The Flint Street Nativity*, *Spacewang* (Hull Truck)
TV includes: *The Last Testament of Lillian Bilocca*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Plebs*
Film includes: *Testament of Youth*, *Cinderella*



Siu-See Hung

Theatre includes: *4000 Miles* (Old Vic), *Sometimes Thinking* (Frantic Assembly), *Mountains* (Manchester Royal Exchange), *Ghost Girl* (Camden People's Theatre), *O Deptford* (Albany), *Chinglish* (Park Theatre), *Romeo & Juliet* with the London Symphony Orchestra (Barbican), *DiaoChan - The Rise of the Concubine* (Arts Theatre London), *I Wish To Die Singing* (Finborough Theatre).

Film credits include: *Cursed* (Netflix)

Receptionist, *Adult Content* and *Jade Dragon* (Web Series), *Unexpected Reunion*, *Upstage* (Web Series), *Sketchpack* (Web Series), *The Fighting Room*, *Terminal*.

Voice credits include: An-an in *Thomas and Friends*, Mrs. Chen and Lily in *Foreman Sam*, Payce in *Chuggington*, and Joy in *Payday 2* and Zheng Jiang in *Total War Three Kingdoms*.



Holly Surtees-Smith

Holly has recently graduated from Mountview Academy after spending 3 years training on the BA (Hons) Acting course.

Theatre (whilst training): Alex in *A Clockwork Orange*, Susan Bertie in *Emilia*, Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, and Marty in *Circle Mirror Transformation*.

Holly would like to thank Pilot Theatre for giving her the opportunity to be part of such an incredible show and is extremely honoured to be a Northern Girl!

DIRECTORS



Gitika Buttoo

Gitika is a British Indian Theatre Director from Yorkshire. She graduated from Liverpool in 2016 with a BA Hons in Drama & English. Winner of the JMK Trust Bursary 2017, she became resident Assistant Director to James Brining at Leeds Playhouse. She worked at The Octagon Theatre in Bolton as their Participations Director where she was Assistant Director on main house productions and directed all their youth theatre productions. She became the Artistic Associate of Birmingham Opera Company in Summer 2018. She worked with the National Theatre & CAST, Doncaster on Public Acts 2020. Gitika has recently been appointed as Associate Director & Engagement Manager of LUNG Theatre.



Maria Crocker

I'm a director based in Newcastle, associate artist at Headlong and co-founder of The Letter Room. I'm particularly interested in marginalised voices and stories that celebrate moments of magic in ordinary life, often using live music.

I'm also passionate about opportunities for directors outside of London, and work as the regional director for JMK at Northern Stage and The Traverse, programming and delivering training and networking opportunities for emerging directors through-out the year.



Oliver O'Shea

Oliver is Creative Associate of Pilot Theatre. Directing credits include: A Christmas Carol (Derby Theatre); The Merchant of Venice (Stafford Shakespeare); Borderline (Young Vic Directors Program); Advice to Iraqi Women (Wimbledon College of Arts); The Railway King (Pilot Theatre); and Spacewang (York Theatre Royal Young Actors Company).

For Pilot Theatre, he has also supported the productions of: Crongton Knights; Noughts and Crosses; Brighton Rock; Outsiders; and Ghost Town.



Esther Richardson

Esther is the Artistic Director of Pilot Theatre. She leads the vision for the organisation and has directed its acclaimed productions: Crongton Knights (2020), Noughts and Crosses (2019), Brighton Rock (2018), and Traitor (2017 - co-conceived and co-directed with Cecilie Lundsholt).

Before joining Pilot, Esther directed work for UK theatre companies including Soho Theatre, London, Cast in Doncaster, Tamasha Theatre, Royal and Derngate, Northampton, Derby LIVE, Nottingham Playhouse, Bolton Octagon, Theatre Writing Partnership and New Perspectives.

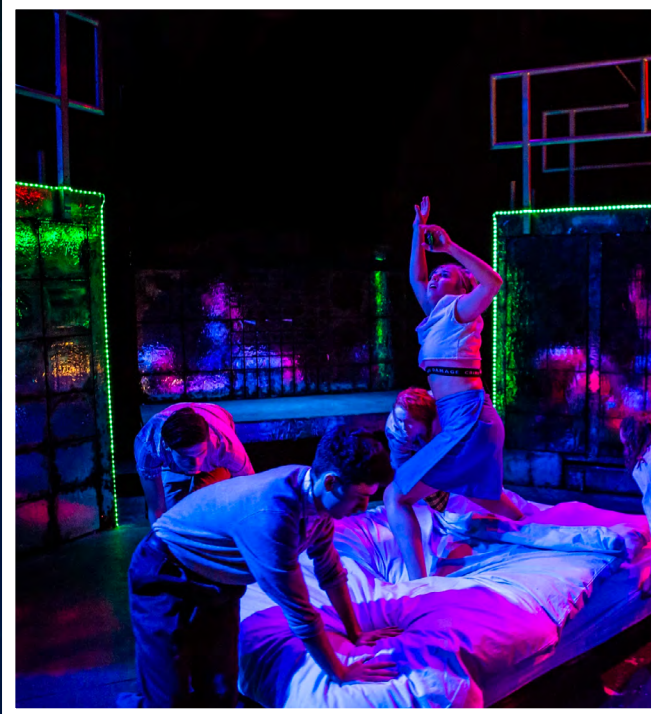
PRODUCTION TEAM



Charlotte Bickley | Sound Design

Charlotte has been working as a composer and sound designer for installations, theatre and radio since late 2017, alongside playing live electronic sets, producing and DJing under the alias CARLOS.

As CARLOS she has released a tape with Manchester-based record label, Cong Burn, and featured on compilations for Reel Long Overdub, Bathtime Sessions and Easy Does It, amongst others.



Ben Cowens | Lighting Design

Ben trained at The Academy of Live & Recorded Arts in stage management and technical theatre specialising in lighting design for theatre, events & dance between 2011-2013.

Since graduating he has designed productions internationally and re-lit productions around the United Kingdom. He has also been nominated for best lighting designer 2016 in the off west end awards.

Lighting design work includes: *Mold Riots* (Theatr Clwyd); *Romeo & Juliet* (Aiglon College); *The Witches* (Watford Palace Theatre); *Moonfleet* (ALRA Theatre); *Thunder Road* (UK Tour); *Build a Rocket* (Stephen Joseph Theatre); *Even the Stones* (Jacksons Lane).



Hannah Davies | Creative Associate

Hannah is a playwright, theatre-maker and multi-slam winning spoken word artist based in York. She trained as an actor at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts, and have worked across theatre, radio and TV. I studied playwriting at the Royal Court Theatre, London. She has an MA in Theatre and a PhD by Creative Practice in Playwriting from the University of York where she teaches as an Associate Lecturer.

Hannah is the the Artistic Director of Common Ground Theatre and an Associate Artist at Say Owt, York's leading spoken word organisation.



Luke James | Production Manager

Luke has worked within stage and technical management for several years, on a variety of shows and a number of small and large scale, site-specific and outdoor performances, such as *Zara* (Mind the Gap/Walk the Plank), *Everything is Possible* (York Theatre Royal/Pilot Theatre) and *Blood and Chocolate* (Slung Low/Pilot theatre/York Theatre Royal).

He regularly works with Pilot Theatre on their national tours of *Crongton Knights*, *Noughts and Crosses* and *Brighton Rock*, Tribeca Film Festival 2019 nominated *Traitor*.

PILOT THEATRE

Pilot Theatre are an international touring theatre company based in York. We're committed to creating high quality mid-scale theatre for younger audiences, and will be many people's very first encounter with this form.

We also make work outside of traditional theatre buildings, where our projects pursue a relationship with our audience that is often playful, interactive and participatory.

We are always curious about our ongoing and changing relationship with technology, and often explore this theme.

Across all our projects we seek to create a cultural space where young adults can encounter, express and interrogate big ideas, powerfully relevant to our lives right now.

Pilot's most recent productions were *Crongton Knights* by Alex Wheatle adapted by Emteaz Hussain and *Noughts & Crosses* by Malorie Blackman, adapted by Sabrina Mahfouz.

Winners of the Excellence in touring award at the UK Theatre Awards 2019.

Esther Richardson | Artistic Director and Joint Chief Executive

Mandy Smith | Executive Producer and Joint Chief Executive

Sarah Rorke | Company Administrator

Lucy Hammond | Marketing and Projects Producer

Sam Johnson | Digital Officer

Oliver O'Shea | Creative Associate

Helen Nakhwal | Finance Director

Jackie Raper | Accounts Assistant

Pilot Livestream Team

Ed Sunman

David Grant

Melanie Paris

[**pilot-theatre.com**](http://pilot-theatre.com)



ARCADE



ARCADE is a community producing company based in Scarborough, led by Rach Drew and Sophie Drury-Bradey. We think everyone is creative and we believe culture belongs to everyone.

Our mission is to make incredible cultural experiences happen with artists and communities, supporting them to develop their creativity and make change happen.

We make creative projects, workshops, shows, festivals and events happen in Scarborough and across the UK. We have been so excited to work with Pilot on Northern Girls and can't wait to do more work with women and girls based in the area.

ARCADE is an Associate Company of the Stephen Joseph Theatre.

Rach Drew | Co Director

Sophie Drury-Bradey | Co Director

Aidan Hardy | Digital Comms Assistant

hello-arcade.com



ARCADE

PILOT CONNECTS

We provide a range of educational resources and workshops to accompany all of our productions. Our Pilot Connects programme has been developed in response to the restrictions and uncertainties brought about by Covid-19 to provide different programmes of work suitable for English and Drama students in KS3 and KS4.

Resources

- 1. Crongton Knights:** A comprehensive teaching resources around Crongton Knights, Alex's Wheatle's award winning novel which Pilot presented as a stage production in Spring 2020, adapted by Emteaz Hussain.

These packs, tailored for KS3 English and Drama, and GCSE Drama, include exclusive access to the webcast of *Crongton Knights* as part of this teaching package for you and your class to view as many times as you wish over the academic year.

- 2. Noughts and Crosses:** These teaching resources are focussed on our award-winning 2019 production of Malorie Blackman's Noughts and Crosses, adapted by Sabrina Mahfouz. This pack is for students studying Drama and Performing Arts and can be used as a text to perform or a devising stimulus for KS3, GCSE, BTEC or A Level. It contains comprehensive lesson plans, handouts, access to filmed scenes of the production, and includes the newly published playtext of the adaptation by the playwright Sabrina Mahfouz

Booking Information

Workshops

Pilot also offer the opportunity to book a workshops (either via Zoom or in school if possible) with a range of creatives – covering areas such as character development, design, beatboxing, directing and writing.

Workshop Offers

CONSIDER A DONATION

If you have enjoyed this evening and are able to help support us continuing to make work at this difficult time please consider making a donation.

Pilot Theatre is a registered charity and your donations allow us to continue telling stories and working with young people and emerging artists*.



To donate £3, text NORTHG to 70331
To donate £10, text NORTHG to 70191

*Fundraising, payments and donations will be processed and administered by the National Funding Scheme (Charity No: 1149800), operating as DONATE. Texts will be charged at your standard network rate.

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