

## Punchdrunk comes to Scottish schools for Edinburgh Children's Festival

By [Nan Spowart](#) Journalist



Liz Watts-Legg in *Small Wonders* Photograph: Stephen Dobbie

**AN internationally renowned company pioneering groundbreaking ways for people to experience theatre is to work in six Scottish schools in areas of high deprivation.**

Punchdrunk is following productions in New York and Shanghai with a show for children in a Leith warehouse as part of this year's [Edinburgh](#) International Children's Festival.

It will be the first time Punchdrunk has worked in [Scotland](#) and it is staging its first children's show to celebrate the festival's 30th anniversary.

Like most of the company's work, *Small Wonders* is immersive and it will take an entire week to transform the warehouse into a replica of a council flat for the interactive show about an elderly miniaturist.

"We are hugely excited to be working with Imagine over the next three years, both to bring our transformative projects to schools most in need and also to share our production, *Small Wonders* with Edinburgh audiences," said Punchdrunk's director of enrichment Peter Higgin.

"At Punchdrunk we believe access to creativity can transform a child's prospects. We are proud to be part of Imagine's programme for our first time in Scotland."

The festival is now hoping to raise £10,000 to spend over the next five years to ensure that more children can access its shows, regardless of their background and circumstances.

The Inspiring Futures Appeal will help make the festival more accessible than ever before through transport subsidies, free tickets for those who need it most and adapted performances for children with additional support needs.

It has also launched a three-year Creative Europe-funded project aimed at forging stronger links with four European countries as the UK faces leaving the European Union.

In addition, to celebrate the 30th anniversary, there are two new commissions which will tour Scotland in the lead up to the festival's first night on May 25.

Stellar Quines, the award-winning Scottish theatre company that celebrates women in theatre, are staging a new production of the internationally acclaimed play *This Girl Laughs, This Girl Cries, This Girl Does Nothing*, while the Letter J's *Super Human Heroes* is "a comical and musical dance with darkness", exploring the ways people try to be super heroes and fail.

Both commissions are supported by the Scottish **Government's** Festivals Expo Fund.

"Our 30th anniversary is the perfect opportunity to launch new programmes that will deepen our relationships with schools in Edinburgh and across Scotland, encourage artists to make new works for young audiences and create stronger international relationships," said Paul Fitzpatrick, CEO of Imagine. "What's exciting is that these new programmes will be in place for the next three years, making a real change to what we are providing for theatre and dance for young people in Scotland."

From its early beginning in a tented village in Inverleith Park, the Children's Festival has become one of the most celebrated festivals for young audiences in the world, attracting over 11,000 children every year, as well as hundreds of industry professionals from over 23 countries.

The 30th edition will take place from May 25 to June 2, showcasing 15 productions from eight different countries as well as holding a free family day at the National Museum of Scotland.

"The festival contributes to promoting and exporting Scottish artists abroad by giving them a world-class platform and access to highly respected international programmers and producers who attend the festival every year," said director Noel Jordan. "Thanks in part to Imagine, Scotland is recognised as a hotbed of innovative, highly visual children's theatre and dance, with seasons of work appearing in Japan, New York, Australia and elsewhere."