

# AVALON ANNOUNCE DEBUT PLAYWRIGHTS INITIATIVE AND EDINBURGH FESTIVAL FRINGE LINE-UP FOR 2018

**Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2018**

Avalon announce BBC Arts DEBUT, a unique new initiative for first-time playwrights, and their full line-up for this year's Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

Working with four writers who have never written for the stage before – **Bim Adewunmi**, **Katherine Parkinson**, **Beryl Richards** and **Frank Skinner** – the joint DEBUT initiative with Avalon aims to encourage writers to step out of their comfort zone and write their debut play, which will then be produced for the Edinburgh Fringe.

DEBUT embraces the Edinburgh Fringe as the platform it was designed for, as a launchpad for new playwrights and their debut plays to be seen and to evolve, ready for whatever might happen beyond the Fringe.

Fringe-goers will also have a chance to see runs from established and award-winning comics including **Russell Howard** and **Jon Culshaw**, *Mock the Week* star **Ed Gamble**, host of Dave's *Unspun* **Matt Forde**, and viral musical-sisterly sensations **Flo & Joan** among many others.

During the last 30 years, Avalon have promoted more *Edinburgh Comedy Award* winners and nominees than any other company including: **Chris Addison**, **Greg Davies**, **Dave Gorman**, **Harry Hill**, **The Mighty Boosh**, **Al Murray**, **Russell Kane**, **Alex Horne**, **Roisin Conaty**, **Kristen Schaal & Kurt Braunohler**, **Garth Marengi**, **Lucy Beaumont** and **Bilal Zafar**, and two of only five female winners of the prestigious *Edinburgh Comedy Award*; **Jenny Eclair** and **Laura Solon**.

Avalon's line-up for 2018 includes:

**Beryl Richards** – Diamond  
**Bim Adewunmi** – Hoard  
**Carl Donnelly** – Strictly Carl Donnelly  
**Ed Gamble** – Blizzard  
**Flo & Joan** – Alive On Stage  
**Frank Skinner** – Nina's Got News  
**Harry & Chris** – Harry & Chris Save the World  
**Iain Stirling + Guests** – Iain (Stirling) Does Jokes (With Pals)  
**Jacob Hawley** – Howl  
**Jon Culshaw and Bill Dare** – The Great British Take Off  
**Katherine Parkinson** – Sitting  
**Matt Forde** – Brexit Through the Gift Shop  
**Pierre Novellie** – See Novellie, Hear Novellie, Speak Novellie  
**Rob Auton** – The Talk Show  
**Russell Howard** – Work in Progress  
**Steve Bugeja** – Almost  
**Tania Edwards** – Not My Dog

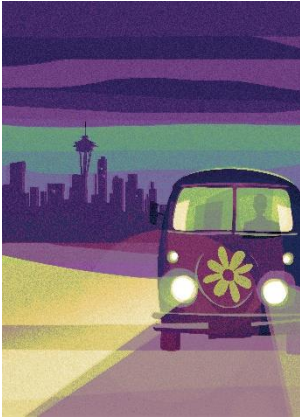
Follow [@livecomedy](https://twitter.com/livecomedy) for news and ticket info. For further information, interview requests or images please contact the Edinburgh press team at [edinburghpress@avalon-entertainment.com](mailto:edinburghpress@avalon-entertainment.com) or phone Victoria Wedderburn or Florrie Sheehan on 0207

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» AVALON «

# THEATRE

## Diamond by Beryl Richards



Beryl Richards is a multi BAFTA award-winning and Emmy-nominated TV and film director best known for *Joe All Alone* (BBC), *The Secret Life of Boys* (BBC/ABC), *Uncle Dad* (ITV), *My Life as a Popat* (ITV) and *The Ward* (ITV). As a specialist in family and children's comedy and drama, Beryl was elected chair of Directors UK in 2015 and won the 2016 Women in Film and TV ITV Achievement of the Year Award. 'Diamond' is her first ever play.

*'I just had to see you. I... just y'know... just once. Once. I needed to.'* When reunited with the mother who abandoned him at birth, successful surgeon Jordan rejects her. Shortly after his mother's death, he realizes that he may never know the truth about his origins. Everything changes when a mysterious young woman arrives unexpectedly, sparking Jordan to embark on a journey of discovery, revelation, and redemption.

## Hoard by Bim Adewunmi



'Hoard' is the debut play by Bim Adewunmi, senior culture writer for BuzzFeed News and columnist with Guardian Weekend. She is a 2018 finalist at the American Society of Magazine Editors (ASME) Ellie Awards, and her work has appeared in *Vogue*, *Mslexia*, *Red*, and *Monocle*, among several others. Bim turns her hand to the stage for her debut play.

*'If I hadn't come here this evening, when would I have met him?'* Rafi and Ami are about to meet their little sister's boyfriend for the first time. Out of the blue, their mother arrives. Wura often shows up unannounced, and it's never been a problem except this time, it is. Why doesn't she know Brian exists? For this close knit family, this secret has explosive consequences, one that forces the three sisters and their mother to face up to old hurts and unspoken tensions.

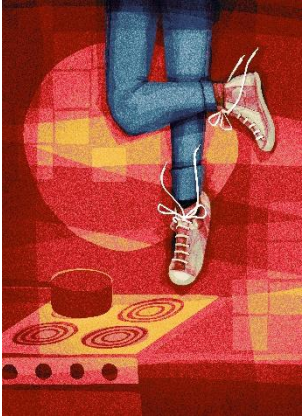
## Sitting by Katherine Parkinson



'Sitting' is the debut play by BAFTA award-winning actress Katherine Parkinson whose credits include *The IT Crowd* (Channel 4), *Doc Martin* (ITV), *The Honourable Woman* (BBC Two) and *Humans* (Channel 4). Sometimes emotional, sometimes poignant, sometimes funny, Parkinson turns her talents to playwriting for the first time in her extensive career.

*'Do you even need me here? I think you do. Actually.'* In an artist's studio, three different people sit for a painting. They find themselves in the same chair for very different reasons and years apart from each other, but they are all searching for a connection. Will they find it.

## Nina's Got News by Frank Skinner



In 1987 Frank Skinner spent £400 of his last £435 in his bank account to book a venue at the Edinburgh Fringe for the first time. Four years later he took home the Perrier Award – now Edinburgh Comedy Award – the most prestigious prize in comedy. His first book spent 46 weeks in the Sunday Times Bestseller List. His first single, *Three Lions*, has gone to number one on three separate occasions.

He's written and fronted television programmes including *Fantasy Football*, *The Frank Skinner Show* and *Room 101*. His radio show has won three gold ARIAs and saw him inducted into the Radio Academy Hall of Fame. He's never written a play, until now. A show about Nina's truly incredible news, how her ex-boyfriend and her best friend react to it, and whether they can possibly believe her.

# STAND-UP

## Carl Donnelly – Strictly Carl Donnelly

*"Observational genius"*  
**The Guardian**



Double *Edinburgh Comedy Award* Nominee Carl Donnelly marks his tenth show at the Fringe with his latest (and hopefully greatest) hour. Join him as he takes a retrospective glance at the last ten years of his life, examining how one develops (or devolves) with time. *"Donnelly can provoke laughter out of almost anything"* ★★★★★ (The Scotsman), *"Unpredictable, hysterical and, quite frankly, inspiring"* ★★★★★ (Edinburgh Festivals Magazine).

## Ed Gamble – Blizzard

*"he is on irresistible form"*  
★★★★★

**Rupert Hawksley, The Telegraph**



After a sell-out national tour in 2017, Ed Gamble is back with another bracing flurry of idiocy. Off of *Mock the Week* (BBC2), *The Russell Howard Hour* (Sky), *Comedy Central at the Comedy Store* (Comedy Central), *Drunk History* (Comedy Central), *The Apprentice You're Fired* (BBC2), *Man Down* (Channel 4), *Conan* (TBS) and a short film he can't remember the name of where he killed a man from *The Bill* (ITV) with a spade. *"...this is a super show from a comic who may be about to become more of a force in the game"* (Chortle).

## Iain Stirling + Guests – Iain (Stirling) Does Jokes (With Pals)

*"At his [Iain's] best the Edinburgh native is an unhinged free-form anecdotist"*  
★★★★★

**Mail On Sunday, Mark Wareham**



3 nights, 30 comedians, 100's of laughs. The voice of ITV's smash hit *Love Island*, Iain Stirling returns to his home town to hosts 3 special shows featuring some of the best comedians at the Fringe Festival. Don't miss it!

## Jacob Hawley – Howl

*"A mature, sharp wit and an undertow of political passion... Clever, and different"*

**Bruce Dessau, Evening Standard**



BBC New Comedy Award Finalist Jacob Hawley (BBC Three) presents his highly-anticipated debut hour following his roots from a working-class Brexit town to his new life in London which boasts an arts degree, a vegetarian girlfriend and an almost convincing concern for climate change. It's not quite Billy Elliot but its something.

*"Mocks blind patriotism in an enjoyably offbeat way. Nicely Wry"* (Chortle) *"He was dry, perceptive and unexpected"* (Voice Magazine).

## Matt Forde – Brexit Through the Gift Shop

*"Possibly the best political comedy show on the Fringe"*

★★★★★

**Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph**



As our own Independence Day approaches, you can almost taste the chlorinated chicken. Join Britain's leading political comedian and host of Dave's *Unspun*, Matt Forde, as he walks you out of the EU and in to whatever comes next. Don't forget your blue passport (made in France). *"a hugely impressive hour of political comedy...it keeps hitting the spot"* ★★★★★ (Chortle), *"Singlehandedly fulfilling comedy's brief of taking our political masters to task. Combining spot-on impressions with up-to-the-minute observations"* (Mail on Sunday).

## Pierre Novellie – See Novellie, Hear Novellie, Speak Novellie

*"the dawn of a major talent"*

**James Kettle, The Guardian**



Last year, Pierre gave you observational comedy for people who think they don't like observational comedy (★★★★★ Metro), this year it's satire for people without a team. Pierre's views don't please anyone 100% of the time, so who exactly is his demographic? Other white South African Manxmen? When you feel alienated by life, mock it vigorously. Pierre was nominated by industry website Chortle for the *Best Club Comedian* award in 2016 and 2017. More propaganda – *"Hilarious"* (The Sunday Times), *"Very funny"* (The Scotsman).



### Rob Auton – The Talk Show

*"A genuine original. Poetical, philosophical, humane, completely charming and funny to boot"*

**Paul Fleckney, Guardian**



This is a comedy/theatre/spoken word show about talking. Following on from previous shows about hair, sleep, water, faces, the sky and yellow, Rob now turns his attention to talking because he is ready to talk. *"His delicate turn of phrase is a delight to hear and he has a truly unique voice, which, among the hundreds of acts at the Fringe, is no mean feat"* (British Comedy Guide). *"One of my absolute favourites"* (Daniel Kitson) *"Just sad"* (Vanessa Feltz).

### Russell Howard – Work in Progress



Russell Howard returns to Edinburgh for two weeks only. New ideas, New routines, Anything could happen! It's gonna be great AND it's only a fiver. Who's in?

### Steve Bugeja – Almost

*"An eye for comic detail that's all his own"*

**James Kettle, The Guardian**



Voted at school most likely to be forgotten. The reunion was in February, apparently. *BBC New Comedy Award* winner returns following three critically-acclaimed shows. As seen/heard on *Stand Up Central* (Comedy Central), *Love Island Aftersun* (ITV2) and Radio 4's *Fresh From The Fringe*. *"Big Laughs"* (The Guardian), *"Truly hilarious"* (Fest), *"A polished hour of plentiful jokes and compelling storytelling"* (The Scotsman), *"Puts gags front and centre of a compelling narrative"* (Chortle), *"An instinctive genuine comic"* (ShortCom), *"You'll like this new stand-up, an out and proud nerd"* (The Independent).

## Tania Edwards – Not My Dog

*"Cuts daggers with sharp one liners"*

**Glamour**



A darkly witty exploration of modern life and our need to (mis)represent it from Glamour Magazine's top female comic; whose one-liners have featured on *Mock The Week*, *Stand Up For The Week*, *The Unbelievable Truth* and have been crowned Top Jokes of the Fringe (The Mirror). "A very punchy stand up" ★★★★★ (Three Weeks), "Fantastically seamy side to the material... also great with audience banter... sublime... brilliant" (Chortle).

# THEATRE, VARIETY, MUSICAL COMEDY & PODCAST PRODUCTIONS

## Flo & Joan – Alive On Stage

*"These intricately crafted, flawlessly performed numbers will have you howling with laughter one minute, wiping away a tear the next."*

★★★★

**Rupert Hawksley, The Telegraph**



Following a sell-out run of their critically acclaimed show *The Kindness of Strangers* at last year's Fringe, musical comedy duo Flo & Joan return to Edinburgh with a new hour of their darkly witty/wittily dark songs. *"Their style is stiletto sharp, their diction perfect as their race through their complex rhymes"* (Evening Standard). Chortle Awards 2018 Best Music & Variety Act Winners and Leicester Comedy Festival 2018 Best Musical Act nominees.

## Harry & Chris – Harry & Chris Save The World

*"The pair are inspiring Instagram posts in human form"*

**Steve Bennett, Chortle**



World Poetry Slam Champ Harry Baker and jazz virtuoso Chris Read return with their third show after preventing an apocalypse and almost getting a panda pregnant. They're hoping to live up to these outrageous claims in their latest hour of spoken word/jazz/comedy synthesis. The pair are regulars on *The Russell Howard Hour* (Sky). *"This Flight of the Conchords-esque duo mix their talents as a poet (Harry) and musician (Chris) into a wonderful blend of infectious songs packed with sharp, clever wordplay"* ★★★★★ (Sunday Post)

## Jon Culshaw and Bill Dare – The Great British Take Off

*"brilliant impersonations"*

**The Guardian**



One of Britain's most celebrated impressionists Jon Culshaw and legendary comedy producer Bill Dare perform an hour of unscripted comedy. The audience direct the course of the show, deciding which politicians and celebrities are up for roasting, as Jon reveals the secrets of mimicry and the two share behind-the-scenes stories from careers at the top of British TV and radio comedy.



## **Matt Forde – The Political Party Podcast**

*'Best Comedy Podcasts' pick*  
**The Telegraph**



Following 5 years of sell-out London shows Matt Forde's Political Party returns to Edinburgh for two live shows! Previous guests include: Tony Blair, Nigel Farage, Michael Portillo, Liz Kendall and Angus Robertson, as well as Alistair Darling in Edinburgh last year. The Political Party Podcast has had over 850,000 downloads and was named one of the Telegraph's 'Best Comedy Podcasts' and The Times' 'Podcast of the Week'.

## SHOW DETAILS

Act/ Talent	Show	Venue	Dates	Time
Beryl Richards	Diamond	Underbelly, The Dairy Room	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	4.15pm
Bim Adewunmi	Hoard	Underbelly, White Belly	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	5.20pm
Carl Donnelly	Strictly Carl Donnelly	Counting House Ballroom	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	6.45pm
Ed Gamble	Blizzard	Pleasance Above	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	7.40pm
Flo & Joan	Alive On Stage	Pleasance Cabaret Bar	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	4.00pm
Frank Skinner	Nina's Got News	Pleasance, Queen Dome	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	2.50pm
Harry & Chris	Harry & Chris Save The World	Just the Tonic, The Cask Room	1 <sup>st</sup> – 25 <sup>th</sup> August	2.25pm
Iain Stirling + Guests	Iain (Stirling) Does Jokes (With Pals)	EICC	22 <sup>nd</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> August	10:00pm
Jacob Hawley	Howl	Just the Tonic, The Attic	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	3.40pm
Jon Culshaw and Bill Dare	The Great British Take Off	Gilded Balloon, Debating Hall	13 <sup>th</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	1.30pm
Katherine Parkinson	Sitting	Gilded Balloon, The Dining Room	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	3.15pm
Matt Forde	Brexit Through the Gift Shop	Pleasance Forth	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	8.30pm
Matt Forde	The Political Party Podcast	Gilded Balloon Debating Hall	9 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> August	1pm and 3pm
Pierre Novellie	See Novellie, Hear Novellie, Speak Novellie	Pleasance Upstairs	1 <sup>st</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	7.15pm
Rob Auton	The Talk Show	Just the Tonic, The Fancy Room	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	6.10pm
Russell Howard	Work in Progress	Assembly Studio 3	1 <sup>st</sup> – 12 <sup>th</sup> August	6.35pm
Steve Bugeja	Almost	Just the Tonic, The Fancy Room	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	3.30pm
Tania Edwards	Not My Dog	Just The Tonic, The Snifter Room	2 <sup>nd</sup> – 26 <sup>th</sup> August	3.15pm

### Notes to the Editor:

Avalon Edinburgh Comedy Award winners include:

1991 – Frank Skinner

1995 – Jenny Eclair

1999 – Al Murray

2001 – Garth Marengi (Matthew Holness, Richard Ayoade)

2005 – Laura Solon

2010 – Russell Kane

Avalon Edinburgh Comedy Award – Best Newcomer winners include:

1992 – Harry Hill

1998 – The Mighty Boosh

2010 – Roisin Conaty