Pioneering artist and musician Laurie Anderson announced as Guest Director for 50th Brighton Festival

Brighton Festival is delighted to announce that the Guest Director for 2016 is the pioneering artist and musician Laurie Anderson. Anderson will take the helm as Brighton Festival marks its milestone 50th year, celebrates its unique, energetic and creative city, and reflects on the nature of home.

Renowned for her inventive use of technology - from her 1981 hit O Superman to her appointment as NASA’s first artist-in-residence - Laurie Anderson is one of America’s most daring creative pioneers. Her eclectically multidisciplinary career has spanned the worlds of art, theatre and experimental music and has seen her create works as a writer, director, visual artist and vocalist. Most recently Anderson has garnered acclaim for her first feature film in almost 30 years - Heart of a Dog - which reflects on the deaths of her husband Lou Reed, her mother, her beloved dog, and such diverse subjects as family memories, surveillance and Buddhist teachings.

A longtime supporter of Brighton Festival, Anderson is well-known and well-loved by the city following successful appearances such as Delusion (BF2011) and All the Animals (BF2015). An inspiration to audiences and artists alike, she has been described by Brighton Festival 2015 Guest Director Ali Smith as: “the performance artist, singer, musician, artist of our lifetime I think - a great, great figure of liberty and liberation of the arts”.

Laurie Anderson says: "I’m so happy to be serving as Guest Director of Brighton Festival in its historic 50th year. Our theme of home and place is especially relevant with so many people in the world on the move now looking, like all of us, for a place we can belong. I’ve been part of the Festival several times and it was exciting to watch the city become the heart of so much art. I’m looking forward to being part of it this year."

The 50th Brighton Festival - which will take place from 7-29 May 2016 - will feature new works from Laurie Anderson alongside exclusives, world and UK premieres from a wide range of international, national and local artists and companies. Full programme details will be announced on Wednesday 17 February but some of the key commissions that can be revealed now include The Complete Deaths, a partnership between two Brighton-based artistic powerhouses - Tim Crouch and Spymonkey - to reenact every onstage death from the works of William Shakespeare in a sublimely funny tribute to mark the 400th anniversary of the Bard’s death; Memory is a Minefield, a new work from Argentinian artist Lola Arias developed with and performed by Argentinian and British veterans of the Falklands conflict; Stella, a theatrical love letter to one half of the infamous Victorian cross-dressing duo
Fanny and Stella by **Neil Bartlett**; and *Until the Lions*, a brand new full-length production from award-winning choreographer and dancer **Akram Khan**.

Alongside the pieces announced at this stage, Brighton Festival 2016 will feature a major new commission in partnership with **14-18 NOW** - whose nationwide programme of arts experiences seeks to connect people with the First World War - as part of the UK’s official centenary commemorations (full details of which will be announced on 20 January 2016). Brighton Festival 2016 will also see a Books and Debate programme delivered in a special partnership with **Guardian Live**, as well as the return of **caravan** (15-17 May 2016), a threeday biennial curated industry showcase of the best new theatre from across England, which this year features eight performances which will be open to the public.

**Andrew Comben, Chief Executive of Brighton Festival** says: “We are thrilled and honoured to announce such a major international figure as Guest Director for Brighton Festival 2016. In our 50th year, it feels right to reflect on the original intentions of the Festival which from the start were about celebrating international culture, the new and the avantgarde. Laurie Anderson has been experimenting, creating and challenging audiences all over the world for as long as Brighton Festival has existed – indeed, she’s been a part of the Festival’s journey in past years with some very special commissions and appearances in the city. She continues to break new ground in her own work and through collaborations with some of the most promising artists of the future, and we are looking forward to celebrating all this in what we hope will be a very special 50th Brighton Festival in May.”


Established in 1967, Brighton Festival has become one of the city’s most enduring symbols of inventiveness and celebration over the past half century. Renowned for its pioneering spirit and experimental reputation, Brighton Festival’s inaugural programme controversially included the first ever exhibition of **Concrete Poetry in the UK**, alongside performances by **Laurence Olivier, Anthony Hopkins** and **Yehudi Menuhin**. Now one of Europe’s leading arts festivals, Brighton Festival is known for its ambitious and daring programme that aims to make the most of the city’s distinctive cultural atmosphere, drawing some of the most innovative artists and companies and adventurous audiences from the UK and around the world.

Full programme details will be announced on **17 February 2016**. Events for 2016 which can be revealed now are:

**Memory is a Minefield by Lola Arias**
**Brighton Festival co-commission, World Premiere**
Argentinian writer, director and song-writer Lola Arias returns to Brighton Festival following her acclaimed Brighton Festival 2013 UK premiere of *My Life After* with a new work about the Falklands Islands /Islas Malvinas, developed with and performed by Argentinian and British veterans of the conflict. In a production that is political, playful and highly personal, Arias brings together soldiers who fought on opposite sides, giving them an opportunity to share with us and each other their first hand experiences on a battlefield 8000 miles from London. Merging film, reenactment and documentary theatre *Memory is a Minefield* blurs the lines between truth and fiction to give a fascinating insight into how and what people remember, and how war continues to cast a long shadow over the lives of its protagonists. *Memory is a Minefield* will premiere at Brighton Festival and is coproduced by LIFT Festival, Royal Court Theatre, Brighton Festival, Le Quai Angers and Künstlerhaus Mousonturm.

**The Complete Deaths, performed by Spymonkey & directed by Tim Crouch**
**Brighton Festival commission, World premiere**
There are 74 onstage deaths in the works of William Shakespeare - 75 if you count the black ill-favoured fly killed in *Titus Andronicus* - ranging from the Roman suicides in *Julius Caesar* to the carnage at the end of *Hamlet* to snakes in a basket in *Antony & Cleopatra*. There are countless stabbings, plenty of severed heads, some poisonings, two mobbings and a smothering. Leading Brighton based physical theatre company Spymonkey will perform them all - sometimes lingeringly, sometimes messily, sometimes movingly, sometimes musically, always hysterically. Directed by
Brighton-based multi-award winning playwright and performer Tim Crouch (I, Malvolio, An Oak Tree, Adler & Gibb) - The Complete Deaths will be a solemn, sombre and sublimely funny tribute to the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare’s death. Presented by Spymonkey in a co-production with Brighton Festival and Royal & Derngate Northampton.

Until The Lions by Akram Khan Company
Brighton Festival co-commission
A brand new, fulllength production from award-winning choreographer and dancer Akram Khan. In this partial adaptation of poet Karthika Nair’s book Until the Lions, an original reworking of the epic Mahabharata, Khan uses kathak and contemporary dance to tell the tale of Amba, a princess abducted on her wedding day and stripped of her honour, who invokes the gods to seek revenge. Bringing together some of the original team from his acclaimed solo DESH, Khan will explore the notion and the physical expression of gender. Until the Lions is set to be one of Khan’s most startling and spectacular works to date, in which he will perform alongside two of his company dancers and four musicians.

Stella by Neil Bartlett
Brighton Festival co-commission. World premiere
A new work written and directed by one of Britain’s most individual theatre makers. Inspired by the strange life and lonely death of Ernest Boulton – also known as one half of the now-infamous Victorian cross-dressing duo Fanny and Stella – Stella is an intense and deeply personal meditation on what it means to keep your nerve as the lights go out. It’s about being old, about being young, and about what it means to really be yourself. A theatrical loveletter to a truly remarkable person, Stella is a co-commission by LIFT, Brighton Festival and Holland Festival.

-ENDS-

For further enquiries, please contact our press team:

Emma Robertson, Head of Press and PR - emma.robertson@brightonfestival.org | 01273 260 803
Chris Challis, Senior Press Officer – chris.challis@brightonfestival.org | 01273 260838
Anna Whelan, Digital Marketing Officer – anna.whelan@brightonfestival.org | 01273 260825

Ticket Office - 01273 709709 | brightonfestival.org
Follow us on Twitter - www.twitter.com/brightfestival (@brightfest)
Join our Facebook fan site - www.facebook.com/brightonfestival

NOTES TO EDITORS:

About Brighton Festival:
• Brighton Festival is England’s largest and most established annual curated multi-arts festival which takes place across three weeks in the city each May. It is a major milestone in the international cultural calendar and 2016 marks a landmark in its history with the 50th Brighton Festival.
• Full programme details will be announced on Wednesday 17 February 2016.
• Brighton Festival attracts inspiring and internationally significant Guest Directors who bring cohesion to the artistic programme.
• Since 1985 Brighton Festival has opened with the Children’s Parade, which includes participants from schools and community groups and bands across the city. One of the most spectacular community events in the UK with up to 4,000 participants and an audience of around 10,000, this year the Children’s Parade, devised and delivered by Same Sky, will be themed around Brighton Celebrates in response to Brighton Festival’s milestone year.
• Brighton Festival is an innovative commissioning and producing arts festival, offering an ambitious programme that makes the most of the city’s distinctive atmosphere.
• Brighton Festival includes visual art, theatre, music, dance, circus, books and debates, family friendly events and outdoor performances throughout the city including sitespecific and unusual locations.
• Brighton Dome & Brighton Festival produces the annual Brighton Festival and also manages the three venues of Brighton Dome year round

About Laurie Anderson:
Laurie Anderson is one of America’s most renowned – and daring – creative pioneers. Known primarily for her multimedia presentations, she has cast herself in roles as varied as visual artist, composer, poet, photographer, filmmaker, electronics whiz, vocalist, and instrumentalist.

O Superman launched Anderson’s recording career in 1980, rising to number two on the British pop charts and subsequently appearing on Big Science, the first of her seven albums on the Warner Brothers label. Other record releases include Mister Heartbreak, United States Live, Strange Angels, Bright Red, and the soundtrack to her feature film Home of the Brave. A deluxe box set of her Warner Brothers output, Talk Normal, was released in the autumn of 2000 on Rhino/Warner Archives. In 2001, Anderson released her first record for Nonesuch Records, entitled Life on a String, which was followed by Live in New York, recorded at Town Hall in New York City in September 2001, and released in May 2002.

Anderson has toured the United States and internationally numerous times with shows ranging from simple spoken word performances to elaborate multimedia events. Major works include United States IV (1983), Empty Places (1990), The Nerve Bible (1995), and Songs and Stories for Moby Dick, a multimedia stage performance based on the novel by Herman Melville. Songs and Stories for Moby Dick toured internationally throughout 1999 and 2000. In the autumn of 2001, Anderson toured the United States and Europe with a band, performing music from Life on a String. She has also presented many solo works, including Happiness, which premiered in 2001 and toured internationally through Spring 2003.


Laurie Anderson’s visual work has been presented in major museums throughout the United States and Europe. In 2003, The Musée Art Contemporain of Lyon in France produced a touring retrospective of her work, entitled The Record of the Time: Sound in the Work of Laurie Anderson. This retrospective included installation, audio, instruments, video and art objects and spans Anderson’s career from the 1970’s to her most current works. It continued to tour internationally from 2003 to 2005. As a visual artist, Anderson is represented by the Sean Kelly Gallery in New York where her exhibition, The Waters Reglitterized, opened in September 2005. In 2008, the Museum of Modern Art acquired her “Self-Playing Violin” which was featured in the Making Music exhibition in autumn 2008.

As a composer, Anderson has contributed music to films by Wim Wenders and Jonathan Demme; dance pieces by Bill T. Jones, Trisha Brown, Melissa Fenley, and a score for Robert LePage’s theater production, Far Side of the Moon. She has created pieces for National Public Radio, The BBC, and Expo ’92 in Seville. In 1997 she curated the two-week Meltdown Festival at Royal Festival Hall in London. Her most recent orchestra work Songs for Amelia Earhart premiered at Carnegie Hall in February 2000 performed by the American Composers Orchestra and later toured Europe with the Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra conducted by Dennis Russell Davies. The piece was performed as part of the Groningen Festival honoring Laurie Anderson in autumn 2008 with the Noord Nederlands Orkest.

Recognized worldwide as a groundbreaking leader in the use of technology in the arts, Anderson collaborated with Interval Research Corporation, a research and development laboratory founded by Paul Allen and David Liddle, in the exploration of new creative tools, including the Talking Stick. She created the introduction sequence for the first segment of the PBS special Art 21, a series about Art in the 21st century. Her awards include the 2001 Tencio Prize for Songwriting in San Remo, Italy and the 2001 Deutsche Schallplatten prize for Life On A String as well as grants from the Guggenheim Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts. She recently collaborated with Bran Ferren of Applied Minds, Inc to create an artwork that was displayed in “The Third Mind” exhibition at the Guggenheim Museum in New York in Winter 2009.

In 2002, Anderson was appointed the first artist-in-residence of NASA which culminated in her 2004 touring solo performance “The End of the Moon”. Recent projects include a series of audiovisual installations and a high definition film, Hidden Inside Mountains, created for World Expo 2005 in Aichi, Japan.

In 2007 she received the prestigious Dorothy and Lillian Gish Prize for her outstanding contribution to the arts. In 2008 she completed a two-year worldwide tour of her performance piece, Homeland, which was released as an album on Nonesuch Records in June, 2010.

Anderson’s solo performance Delusion debuted at the Vancouver Cultural Olympiad in February, 2010 and toured internationally throughout 2011. In 2010 a retrospective of her visual and installation work opened in Sao Paulo, Brazil and later traveled to Rio de Janeiro.

In 2011 her exhibition of all new work titled FortyNine Days In the Bardo opened at the Fabric Workshop and Museum in Philadelphia. That same year she was awarded with the Pratt Institute’s Honorary Legends Award.

In January of 2012 Anderson was the artist-in-residence at the High Performance Rodeo in Calgary, Alberta where she developed her latest solo performance titled Dirtday! Her exhibition Boat” curated by Vito Schnabel opened in May of 2012.

She has recently finished residencies at both CAP in UCLA in Los Angeles and EMPAC in Troy New York.

In 2015 her film Heart of a Dog was chosen as an official selection of the 2015 Venice and Toronto Film Festivals and her exhibition Habees Corpus opened at the Park Avenue Armory to wide critical acclaim. Anderson lives in New York City.

About Guardian Live
Guardian Live is the Guardian's programme of events that offer readers the chance to hear firsthand from people in the news and from those who create the arts and culture we admire. Readers can meet the people behind the Guardian - journalists, columnists and editors - as well as watch and join the debates that shape stories. For more information on the programme, visit theguardian.com/guardianlive

About caravan
- caravan is a three-day biennial curated showcase of the best new theatre from across England to an international audience of festival organisers and programmers.
- caravan 2016 will take place from 15-17 May 2016 as part of Brighton Festival.
- The showcase offers opportunities for England based artists and companies and international commissioners, presenters, festival programmers and potential collaborators to explore new ways of working, share ambitions, reach new audiences and develop new ideas.
- In 2016, caravan will be offering opportunities for twelve artists and companies to showcase full performances of their work, while another six will have the chance to pitch to delegates.
- caravan is delivered by Farnham Maltings and Brighton Festival. It is funded by Arts Council England and British Council. www.caravanshowcase.org.uk