

# woman walking

Performed Reading at  
Perth Theatre & Concert Hall  
Friday 4 February 2022

Welcome to the first performed reading of  
the full script of my new play *Woman Walking*.

In her afterword to the current edition of Nan Shepherd's *The Living Mountain* (Canongate 2014), Jeanette Winterson writes 'I do not know if the soul survives physical death – and I do not care – but I know that to lose your soul while you are alive is worse than death. I want to protect my soul'. Nan Shepherd, novelist, teacher and nature writer firmly believed that to protect one's soul one had to be at one with nature.

The story of this play is about a meeting across time between two women out on the Cairngorms. Grief and guilt and a bit of humour feature in the story but the Cairngorms in all their wild immovable constantly changing beauty, and the part they can play in protecting the soul are at the heart of it.

Nan Shepherd was simply a face on the five-pound note to me in the beginning. But when I first read *The Living Mountain* I was struck of course by the beauty of the writing but also by the character of Nan Shepherd which shone through – poetic but pragmatic, intelligent and insightful. I knew right away I'd like to feature her in a play. And here it is.

This script in hand reading comes after a week of development on the play and is a preface to what we hope will be a full production ultimately. We hope you like it and look forward to hearing your views.

Sylvia Dow, writer

## PERTH theatre

Thanks to our partner Horsecross Arts and Artistic Director Lu Kemp for their support of this project with providing rehearsal space and technical and marketing support.



## About Nan Shepherd

Anna (Nan) Shepherd was born in 1893 and died in 1981. Nan grew up in Deeside and graduated from Aberdeen University in 1915 and worked as a lecturer in English for the next forty-five years. She was an enthusiastic gardener and hillwalker and made many visits to the Cairngorms with her students and friends. She did travel further afield but always returned to the house where she grew up and lived almost all of her adult life, in the village of West Cults a few miles from Aberdeen. To honour her legacy, in 2016, Nan Shepherd's face was added to the Royal Bank of Scotland five-pound note.

## THANKS

Thanks for help with this performed reading and development of the work go to:

Canongate Books for permission to quote from *The Living Mountain*  
The Summerton family for use of images in this production.  
Thrawn Craws; Katherine Mendelsohn; Charlotte Peacock; Erlend Clouston;  
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Design by Emma Quinn

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# Meet the Cast and Creatives

## Alexandra Mathie Nan Shepherd

Alexandra Mathie has worked and toured extensively in theatres throughout Britain for many years; most frequently for Stellar Quines and the Royal Lyceum Theatre in Scotland, for The Royal Exchange in Manchester and for Alan Ayckbourn in Scarborough and New York. From May to July, Ayckbourn's latest play *The Girl Next Door* was her first live theatre work with audience present since the pandemic hit. A lifesaver throughout the last 18months has been work in audio drama and programmes for independent and BBC radio recorded from her own home studio. Alexandra's company, Heroica Theatre Company, co-founded with writer, Angie Cairns, embraced Zoom as an opportunity to continue running their Maverick Monologues series. Uncovering stories of 'maverick women with unsung' lives, written and delivered in the first person by the public who champion them, it encourages writing and verbal communication and has seen heroic women's stories shared with a global audience.

## Pauline Lockhart Cath – young woman

Pauline has worked extensively with some of the UK's leading theatre companies including: National Theatre Scotland, Grid Iron, Hampstead Theatre, West Yorkshire Playhouse, Improbable Theatre, Royal Lyceum Edinburgh, Stellar Quines Theatre Co, Suspect Culture, The Tron Theatre, Thickskin, Communicado Theatre, The Traverse Theatre and Manchester Royal Exchange, (with whom she was awarded The TMA Award for Best Supporting Actress and The Manchester Evening News Best Supporting Actress Award or her role in, *An Experiment With An Airpump*).

Just before the pandemic she co-wrote and directed *Strange Tales*, an adaptation of traditional Chinese ghost stories – a co-production between Grid Iron Theatre Co, The Traverse Theatre, The Royal Shakespeare Theatre Co and the Confucius Institute. Pauline is also co-founder of Wildfire Theatre who have just completed a successful Digital New Writing project.

## Sylvia Dow Writer

After a long working life in a variety of roles in the arts, Sylvia embarked on a career as a playwright. Her first play *A Beginning, a Middle, and an End* toured the UK in 2012 with Greyscale Company, and Where is Otto premiered at the Visibility Festival, Turkey, in the same year. She has had short work performed in Scotland, London and Mexico and is a member of playwriting collectives Village Pub Theatre and Thrawn Crows, her work often featuring in their readings events. She was dramaturg/writer on *Rendition* (Tragic Carpet). Full-length plays include *Blinded by the Light* (Traverse), *It's Only Words* (Oran Mor), *Threads* (Stellar Quines) and *STUFF* (SYLVIAN Productions).

SYLVIAN  
PRODUCTIONS

SYLVIA DOW & MURIEL ROMANES

## Muriel Romanes Director

Muriel has had a long and distinguished career as actor and director, which has earned her an outstanding reputation as a force in Scottish theatre. She was Associate Director at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh where she directed several acclaimed productions including *The Deep Blue Sea*, *Listening Heaven*, *Lavender Blue*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, *If Only* and *Anna Karenina*.

She co-founded and was Artistic Director of Stellar Quines Theatre Company. Notable productions include the award winning *The Unconquered* by Torben Betts (2007), Judith Adams' adaptation of Muriel Sparks' *The Girls of Slender Means* (2009) and *Age of Arousal* by Linda Griffiths, which won a CATS Best Director Award (2011). *The List* by Jennifer Tremblay (2012) won a Scotsman Fringe First, a Herald Angel and the CATS Award for Best Production. *The Carousel* and *The Deliverance*, the remaining two plays in Tremblay's trilogy also won Scotsman Fringe Firsts in 2014 and 2015 respectively, making history as the first trilogy of plays to have received this award. *Threads* was the first collaboration between Romanes and Dow for Stellar Quines and in 2018 they collaborated again under SYLVIAN Productions with *STUFF*.

In 2016 Muriel moved on from Stellar Quines to pursue other theatre projects and in June 2016 she was awarded a CATS Award for exceptional contribution to Scottish Theatre and was also awarded an MBE for services to theatre.

## Philip Pinsky Sound/Music Design

Philip Pinsky is a composer and sound designer. Before starting in theatre, he was a founder member of electro-acoustic group Finitribe, releasing five albums and performing around the world. Since 2000 he has provided over 100 scores for theatre companies throughout the UK, as well as site-specific work. This includes 5 years as Associate Artist at the Royal Lyceum, Edinburgh. International work includes several large scale shows for the Juste Pour Rire festival in Montreal and the quirkier end of the TV and art scene in Tokyo. Winner of CATS 2005 (Best Music and Sound). Previous work includes *Pressure* (National tour/West End), SHIFT (NTS), *Kiss of The Spider Woman* (Menier Chocolate Factory), *Dr Stirlingshire's Discovery* (Grid Iron/Lung Ha), *Half Life* (Ustinov, Bath), *Lawrence After Arabia* (Hampstead), *The Jennifer Tremblay Trilogy* (Stellar Quines). Future work includes an interactive art installation for COP26 at National Museum of Scotland.

## Suzie McGowan Company Stage Manager

Providing support services to the Performing Arts has been the driving force behind Suzie McGowan's journey so far. With a love of theatre that started in amateur dramatics, she studied Media and Performing Arts. This paved the way for a varied career in the live entertainment industry where she has enjoyed giving the necessary support to many international touring artists- from the stage to song and even supper. Suzie is delighted with this opportunity to return to her roots in theatre and to be working with this company on this production.

**SYLVIAN Productions** is the collaborative partnership between writer Sylvia Dow and director Muriel Romanes. In 2018 they toured their successful production of *STUFF*, a play by Sylvia Dow, addressing the many issues surrounding hoarding and loss. This followed their first creative partnership *Threads* – a production for Stellar Quines Theatre Company in 2018.

If you would like to hear more about SYLVIAN Productions latest news sign up to the newsletter or follow us on social media

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