

Easter spectacle to be staged in the heart of the city

On Easter weekend, a team of more than 100 people will stage a large-scale traditional Passion Play below the backdrop of Edinburgh Castle.

The Edinburgh Easter Play will be performed at 2pm on Saturday 8 April (Easter Saturday) in Princes Street Gardens West.

This year, for the first time in six years, the play will be a large-scale Passion Play in traditional costume.

Over 100 people are involved in creating the play, including actors, costume-makers, stewards and technicians, making the Edinburgh Easter Play one of the largest community theatre productions in Scotland.

The Easter Play has staged a new version of the story in Princes Street Gardens every year since 2005, attracting audiences of up to 3,000 people.

Director Suzanne Lofthus said: "Increasingly people don't really know the story. This year, we are producing a large-scale traditional Passion Play because we wanted to go back and tell the story with a really clear narrative.

"We're not there to preach or say one way is better than another, but this is one of the greatest stories in the world, and it has relevance in whatever time we're living in.

"Creating a traditional Passion Play is a major undertaking,

with a big cast and lots of costumes and props, but it's also a real spectacle – it's something people won't forget."

And, Lofthus adds, there is a twist in the tale: the traditionally male narrator's role is being taken by Mary Magdalene. She said: "The narrator in a Passion Play is usually male, but I wanted to underline the fact that Jesus had lots of women followers too. We are seeing the story through her eyes, seeing how it affected her life."

The first Easter Play was performed in Princes Street Gardens in 2005. Past productions have included a series of monologues by characters on the fringes of the story and a hard-hitting contemporary production set in a near-future Scotland.

In 2021, when covid-19 restrictions prevented a live performance, the play was redeveloped as an audio play and a series of short films, Scenes from the Passion, were made under lockdown conditions. These were enjoyed by some 5,000 people online.

The 2022 play, Hope Rises, which imagined the story being told by a group of refugees, was one of the first outdoor performances in Edinburgh city centre as restrictions lifted.

The Edinburgh Easter Play is a production of Cutting Edge Theatre. Cutting Edge, which offers training in performing arts for disabled people through its INSPIRE programme, is making this year's production the most inclusive to date with integrated BSL interpretation and audio description.



All photos Colin Hattersley



Colin Rennie as Jesus with Mary Magdalene, 2017



Colin Rennie as Jesus, crowd behind



David McBeath (with sword) and Colin Rennie as Jesus, 2017



Members of Easter Play cast 2017