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Patron **Her Grace The Duchess of Northumberland**
Artistic Director **Eliot Smith**

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PRESS RELEASE

(for immediate release)

NEW DOCUMENTARY FROM ELIOT SMITH DANCE CELEBRATES THE NHS

Eliot Smith Dance (ESD) is to celebrate the NHS in a new documentary, prompted by the current Covid-19 pandemic and centred around the nursing legacy left by Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale.

Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale are centre stage in this new documentary, directed by British contemporary choreographer Eliot Smith, taking inspiration from, and shining a light on today's NHS medical staff serving on the front line in tackling Covid-19.

This interdisciplinary documentary, with newly-released music by multi award winning composer Adam Johnson, features original artwork by Bernadette Koranteng, a new poem written by children from Seaton Sluice Primary School, and real-life interviews with NHS medical personnel from Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, all intertwined with contemporary dance performances.

Created around some of Britain's most beautiful forests at a time when nature has flourished during isolation, this documentary reveals the similarities between the missions of Seacole and Nightingale and those of today's medical staff, all caring selflessly for humanity, with courage, passion and devotion.

Choreographer Eliot Smith explains:

"Since creating PITMAN for ESD in 2016 around the legacy of Ashington's Pitmen Painters, it has been a continued passion of mine to look at historical contexts with fresh eyes, to show their relevancy today, and allow the characters involved to speak through the medium of dance. Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale came from two different backgrounds and both faced different challenges, but they both had one thing in common: a desire to care for humanity. I believe their stories are extremely relevant today, both in response to the current coronavirus outbreak and to the challenges that are still faced involving gender and colour. Working with an incredibly creative team, ESD is proud and excited to be able to bring something special, relevant, and inspiring to our audiences, and the fact that this has been made possible at all is due to Arts Council England emergency response funding, for which the Company is extremely grateful."

Guest speakers in the documentary include Trevor Sterling, Chair of The Mary Seacole Trust, and David Green, Director of the Florence Nightingale Museum.

Trevor Sterling said:

“On behalf of the Mary Seacole Trust, I was delighted to contribute to this deeply insightful and creative documentary. As we emerge from these troubling times, this documentary will ensure that the tremendous effort of those on the frontline during this pandemic, particularly nurses, will continue to be gratefully acknowledged and that Mary Seacole and Florence Nightingale will continue to inspire.”

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust is delighted to be the only NHS partner in this documentary, showcasing the staff who are caring for patients during these unprecedented times. One of the staff interviewed is Dr Lily Lamb, a GP at Ponteland Medical Group, which is part of the Trust’s Northumbria Primary Care.

Dr Lamb said:

“As a lover of dance, I was honoured to contribute to this documentary. As one of the first people in the North East to contract coronavirus, the pandemic has had a major impact on me and my family. My husband and three children were ill too, and, while thankfully we have all recovered, it has taken weeks to get back to full fitness. Like millions of families across the country we have also had to juggle changes to schooling as well as manage the challenges of delivering GP-led care in Northumberland during COVID-19. While today’s NHS would be largely unrecognisable to Florence Nightingale and Mary Seacole, their determination, innovative thinking, and leadership continues to inspire me and many others working in healthcare, and the values they embodied of compassion and kindness remain the cornerstone of our work today. It’s fantastic that we are remembering these inspiring women who have left such an important legacy at a time when the modern-day NHS is in the spotlight.”

The documentary will be available to watch free of charge on ESD's website via www.eliotsmithdance.com/seacoleandnightingale from 13 August 2020 at 7.30pm (BST), the evening of the 110th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's death.

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**For interviews Eliot Smith can be contacted direct:
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5 Images:-



Bisola Bello as Mary Seacole and Victoria Winter as Florence Nightingale
(Photo credit: Eliot Smith Dance)



Bisola Bella as Mary Seacole
(Photo credit: Eliot Smith Dance)



Victoria Winter as Florence Nightingale
(Photo credit: Eliot Smith Dance)



Eliot Smith
(Photo credit: Darren Irwin)



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(Photo credit: Darren Irwin)