

A ZEST THEATRE & HALF MOON
CO-PRODUCTION



WHAT ONCE

AN IMMERSIVE NEW SHOW
ABOUT IDENTITY AND
BELONGING

WAS OURS

EDUCATION PACK

SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDING FROM THE NATIONAL LOTTERY THROUGH ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

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ZEST THEATRE COMPANY REG NO: 07747048. ZEST THEATRE REG CHARITY NO: 1144299

ABOUT ZEST THEATRE

Established in 2007, Zest is a national touring theatre company creating eye-opening work for young people. We tour to theatres, outdoor spaces and schools with a variety of interactive, immersive, site specific or promenade productions. We place this target audience right at the centre of the performance and our creative process, with work described as “unpretentious” (The Stage) and “invigorating” (The British Theatre

Guide). Annually we deliver around 100 performances and reach around 12,000 people across the country. We have eclectic tastes and love creating bold new ideas – this means that there is no such thing as a ‘Zest Style’; each of our shows are very different. However; innovation, humour, empowerment and accessibility will always be threaded through every show we produce, creating a DNA that is unmistakably Zest’s.

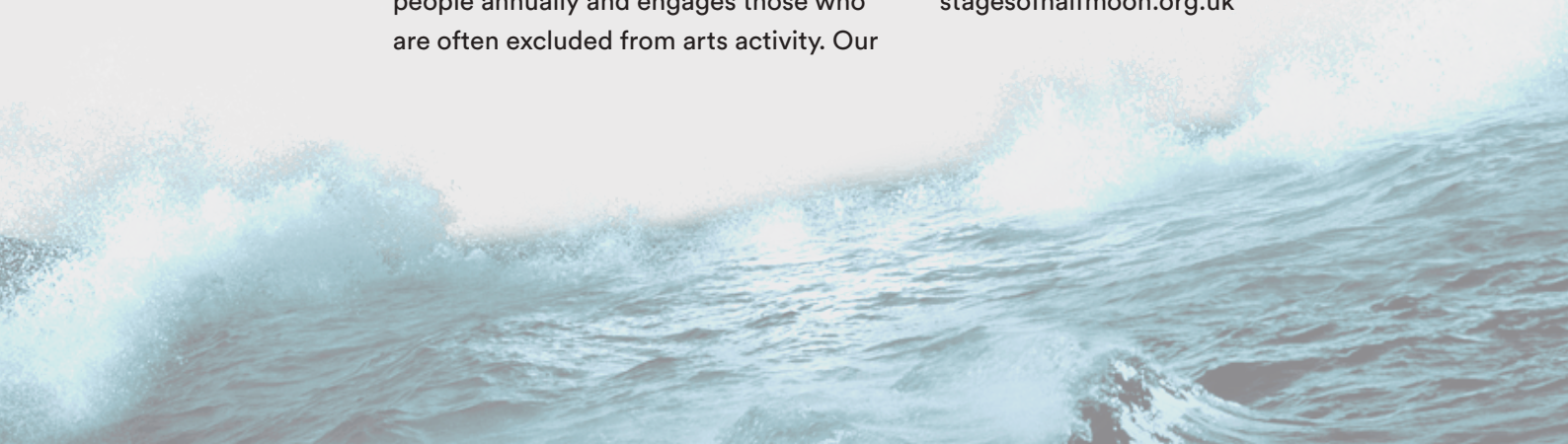
ABOUT HALF MOON THEATRE

Half Moon is the UK’s leading small-scale young people’s venue and touring company. We are a local organisation with a national remit, committed to supporting artists and young people at every stage of their creative development. Working from our base in East London, we specialise in new writing and art form development, acting as a gateway organisation that provides pathways for progression and experimentation. Our wide-ranging programme reaches 50,000 people annually and engages those who are often excluded from arts activity. Our

activity includes a season of professional plays for young audiences, national touring productions and an extensive creative learning programme, including seven youth theatres.

Half Moon is a National Portfolio Organisation of Arts Council England and receives regular funding from the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

Half Moon’s digital archive is available at stagesofhalfmoon.org.uk



ABOUT WHAT ONCE WAS OURS

Katie and Callum couldn't be any more distant and disconnected: different heritage, different cities, different opportunities. Except there is one thing they'll always have in common: Dad. What happens when Callum suddenly turns up in desperate need of help?

Created against the background of Brexit, *What Once Was Ours* has been developed

through direct contact with young people across the country and uses their words and opinions to explore how politics and national values impact on the complex lives of one family. Beautiful imagery, striking original music and immersive design combine to create this powerful new production for young people, which asks why we've become so fearful of anyone who is different from us.

HOW TO USE THIS PACK

This pack is primarily designed as a learning resource for groups who have recently watched a performance of Zest Theatre and Half Moon's production, *What Once Was Ours*, however for some of the activities this is not essential. There are a variety of discussion points and exercises that can be explored in isolation or as

part of a longer module. The exercises can be done in a mixture of groups, pairs, and individually. The pack covers the themes, content, and characters as well as practicalities of putting on a show like *What Once Was Ours*. This makes it suitable for PSHE, Drama and even Citizenship/Religious Education lessons.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on how the show was made see the director's interview on page 14.

ESTABLISHING GROUND RULES

Before starting, it is important to set some ground rules for the session. This will help students to feel safer and more comfortable airing their views. It might be useful for the students to come up with these themselves, but some that work well are:

- Only one person speaking at a time
- Listen to each other's opinions, even if you don't agree
- Include everyone in the group
- Try your best

Bear in mind that the themes in *What Once Was Ours* may provoke some strong responses and differences of opinion. This is fine and can be really interesting, as

long as everyone gets a chance to have a say and people's views and feelings are respected. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions; they are designed to get students thinking more about the show's content and the wider themes around it.

Also consider that not everyone will feel comfortable participating in group discussion. It doesn't mean they aren't engaging, they may just be processing the information in a different way. Our pack is designed with open-ended questions that encourage everyone to share their thoughts, but you may need to prompt or give extra help to some.



EXPLORING THE THEMES OF THE PLAY

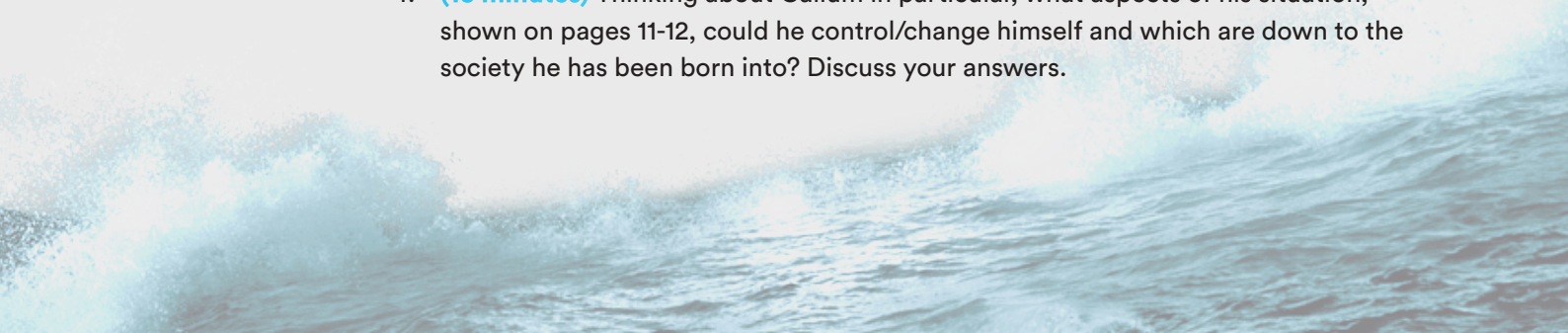
INTRODUCTION EXERCISES

These exercises are designed to get you chatting about *What Once Was Ours*. You may want to spend a couple of minutes sharing your initial thoughts on the show.

1. **(10 Minutes)** Working in small groups, list all the themes/topics which are explored, however briefly, in the play. For each theme, refer to how it is covered in *What Once Was Ours* and what it might tell us about the characters. Share and discuss your answers with other groups.
2. **(10 minutes)** Do you think *What Once Was Ours* reflects life in your communities today? Discuss what is the same/different and how this influences the characters.
3. **(10 minutes)** Think about the voices you heard at the beginning and end of the play. These have come from real people. How did it make you feel hearing some of this? Would you feel differently if this was a friend/family member speaking? Discuss as a class.

IDENTITY AND ATTITUDE

1. **(20 minutes)** Both Katie and Callum have a strong sense of identity throughout the play. This is often played out in the things they say, both positive and negative. Use the Iceberg Sheet provided on page 13 to explore the feelings that might be behind some of the characters' behaviour. Write their behaviour above the waterline and the underlying feelings below. i.e. Callum is angry on the surface, though underneath he may feel let down. Then repeat this exercise exploring aspects of your own personality.
2. **(10 minutes)** Using the fact sheet provided on page 8, decide which of the statements you feel are true, and which you think are false. Discuss your answers.
3. **(15 minutes)** During Katie's party speech (page 10) is the only time we see her doubting her prejudiced beliefs. What do you think her defending Wojciech tells us about her personality? How could she approach a discussion with her mum about this?
4. **(15 minutes)** Thinking about Callum in particular, what aspects of his situation, shown on pages 11-12, could he control/change himself and which are down to the society he has been born into? Discuss your answers.



EXPLORING THE THEMES OF THE PLAY

BRITISH VALUES

1. **(15 minutes)** Write a list of all the good and bad things about living in your local community. What do you think causes these things and what can we do to make them better?
2. **(10 minutes)** What does the phrase 'British Values' make you think of? Write all the words or phrases that come into your mind.
3. **(15 minutes)** Katie frequently refers to Callum as someone who has 'come over', or as 'one of them'. In fact he was born here. Does that make him British? What other things make someone belong to a particular culture? Think about heritage, dress, family, traditions, beliefs and values. Discuss any different cultures that you may have in your group.
4. **(30 minutes)** Mind Map the following words and discuss how they feature in *What Once Was Ours*:

Fear

Hate

Xenophobia

Racism

Diversity

What are the links between these words? Look at the scene below. Does Katie embody any of the above words? How could she have still gotten her point across without being offensive? Rewrite the scene and get two people in your group to perform it.



MAKING THE PLAY

INTRODUCTION EXERCISES

1. **(15 minutes)** In your groups, discuss the format and structure of the play (how the play has been put together rather than what the story is). Some things to think about could include:
 - Did anything about the play surprise you?
 - Does the way the space is used enhance the story? If so, why?
 - How does your experience compare to previous theatre visits?
 - What do you think the advantages and disadvantages to staging a play this way are?
2. **(15 minutes)** Imagine you are pitching (a bit like *Dragons' Den*) *What Once Was Ours* to a group of teachers/parents etc. Is it an important piece of theatre for teenagers to see? If so, why? What can be learned from it? Present your pitch to the rest of the class.

(15 minutes) Using what you know of Katie's mum, dad or granny Mary from other characters, fill in the Character Sheet provided on page 9. Pick one person to be the character and 'hot seat' them.
3. **(20 minutes)** Devise a scene with either Katie or Callum and Dad that we don't see during the play. This could be based on a real situation or something from one of the characters' imaginations. Some ideas could include:
 - Dad coming home and being confronted with Callum.
 - Dad and Katie rowing about her going out before finishing her homework.
 - Dad and Callum having a drink in the pub.
 - Dad, Katie and Callum out for a meal for the first time.

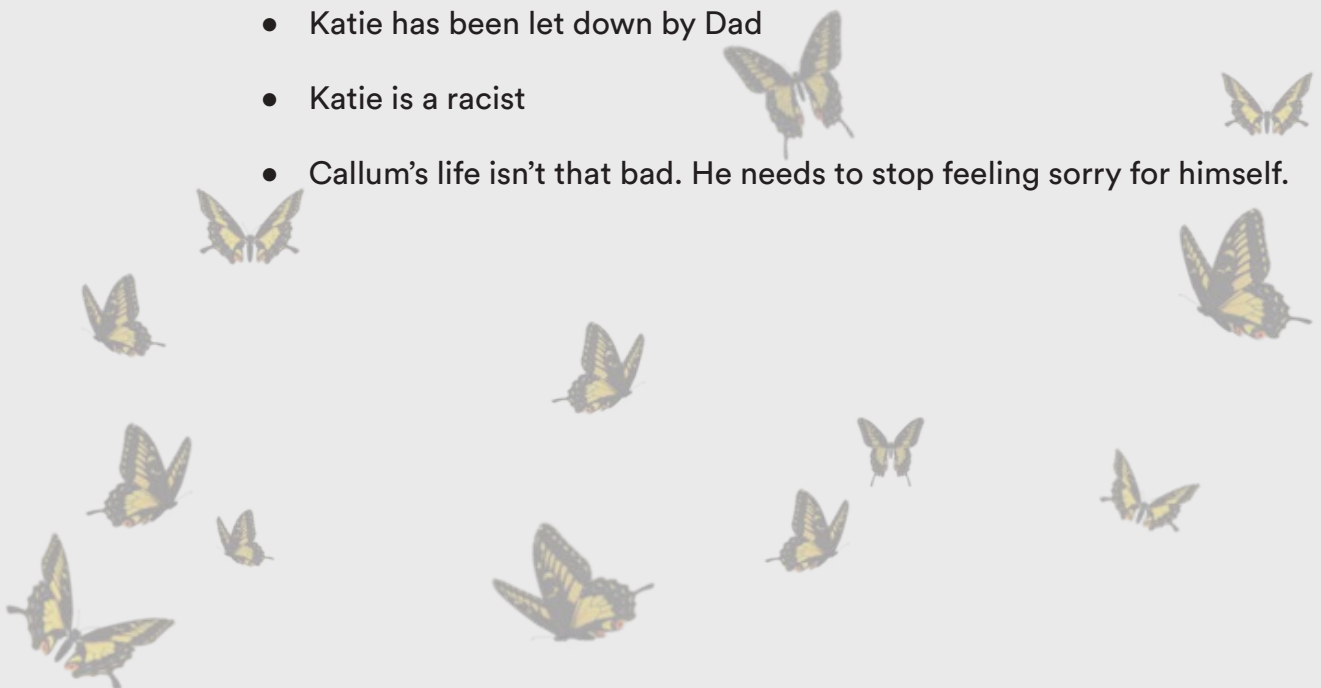
HOMEWORK TASK

Between now and the next session, write a review of *What Once Was Ours*. Things to comment on could include:

- The Set, lighting and sound
- What you thought of the topics and themes
- What you thought of the characters
- Any critique or improvements you think could be made

STATEMENTS

- Katie shouldn't use the language she does to describe people of other nationalities
- Callum is wrong to expect money from his dad
- It was really brave of Callum to go in search of his dad
- A lot of Katie's behaviour is understandable
- Callum doesn't need a relationship with Katie or Dad. He should just take some money and go
- Katie is scared
- Callum needs to take some responsibility for his situation
- Callum has been let down by the political system
- Katie has been let down by the political system
- A lot of Katie's opinions aren't really hers
- Callum is angry at the world and needs to change his temper if he wants things to get better
- Katie has a better life than Callum
- Callum has been let down by Dad
- Katie has been let down by Dad
- Katie is a racist
- Callum's life isn't that bad. He needs to stop feeling sorry for himself.



CHARACTER PROFILE WORKSHEET

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Characteristics (What are they like/how do people view them?)

1)

2)

3)

Likes:

1)

2)

3)

Dislikes:

1)

2)

3)

Best Friend:

Worst Enemy:

Favourite Food:

Do they give to charity?:

Favourite Country:

Do they vote?

Who for:

Favourite Celebrity:

KATIE PARTY SPEECH

KATIE

I look around and nothing is familiar. Wojciech's house party - nice Polish guy from Business Studies. A room of bodies and sweat and potential. Cheap leather couches and beer in cups. The thud of the music tingles my skin. Occasional light pierces through the haze of darkened voices and private moments.
Just breathe, Katie.

I see a face I know, a friend. My only friend, Jess. She isn't kind, but she's better than nothing. Our eyes meet, and I signal for a lifeline. "See me. Save me. I'm drowning." She nods, but behind her eyes there's nothing. She looks right through me and I sink.

I need a drink.

One after the other after the other. Katie, you just need to make it to the bottom of this glass. Let it wash over you. Wash away the silence. The room blurs and brightens and the water comes up to my ankles. I feel their eyes on me. They look but they don't see. It's pity, or familiarity.

Opportunity.

Hey, Katie! Have another one, Katie.

And another.

This girl can hold her booze.

I'm swimming now, waist deep.

I'm talking to this guy from the year above, John, or Tom, I think. Can't understand what he's saying.

His hand floats across the surface and finds its way to me.

You're really pretty. You look pretty.

Something like that.

Have another one, Katie. He puts it in my hand.

I end up in the corner, the wall helps me stand. And then it's a hand.

Thanks. I think I need to be sick, where's the toilet?

My eyes look to Jess, she gestures, go, you should go.

He helps me upstairs. I thought it was this way?

I feel the waves in my stomach, they crash across my brow.

I'm on the floor.

Silly Katie. I must've fell. Where's Jess? I need Jess.

I find my corner. Where did everyone go?

There's the floor. There's his hand.

The floor is hard on my back, and it's cold and unfriendly.

There's my breath. I can hear it. It's sharp, fast, and so loud. Can't you hear it? It's screaming.

I don't want to be seen anymore.

The current takes me under.

I choke, I can't breath.

Then light. I'm up.

Air fills my lungs again.

Wojciech. My arm over his shoulder.

'It's ok', he says, I think. 'You're ok now'.

He talks funny, he sounds funny.

My top, ripped.

We walk, I stumble.

Street lights, pass.

My feet.

My street.

My door.

My mum.

I don't know. I can't remember, I say.

Cheap Polish booze, it wouldn't have happened before. She says.

Why would he lie?

That's what they're like. It's changed around here, first the Pakis, then the Poles.

He's just one of them.

I don't see Wojciech anymore. Why would he lie? I don't know.

KATIE /CALLUM SCENE

KATIE

Oh my god! It's people like you that don't get it, Callum. Acting like the world owes you something, that you're entitled to everything that's ours when you don't deserve it. No wonder the country's screwed over: like those immigrants undercutting Dad at work, reducing the prices, taking his job. He's been replaced by people that come to this country, expect the world, take what's ours but can't even be bothered to learn English properly.

CALLUM

(Almost laughing at the comparison) I can speak English.

KATIE

But you're the same, / you just don't realise it.

CALLUM

(Almost laughing at the comparison) I can speak English.

KATIE

Taking, sponging, rinsing benefits.

CALLUM

You actually sound like Granny Mary!

KATIE

Look, I'm just saying it how it is.

CALLUM

Except it's not like that. Benefits don't benefit when you get sanctioned all the time. People like you think you've had it hard when your WiFi goes down or your data runs out. The odds are stacked against people like me from the moment we're born, that's how it really is.

KATIE

Well, all I know is it just doesn't feel the same anymore.

CALLUM

And that's everyone else's fault?

KATIE

It's like we've been invaded, everywhere we go. Like, I was at the shops with Mum the other day and she went off to the fruit and veg aisle. And there were these biscuits on offer on the top shelf.

CALLUM

Jammie Dodgers?



KATIE /CALLUM SCENE

KATIE

Yep, and there was only one pack left. There was this older woman next to me, in a veil, hijab thing, you know, the full one, with the slit where you could only see their eyes. Her kid looked up at these biscuits, like she wanted them. So, me and the woman both went for them at the same time, but then she just, like, took it and didn't even say anything. Didn't even look me in the eye and say 'sorry'. She probably couldn't see through that veil thing anyway. She just took the biscuits and put it in her back-pack. Slipped it in next to her bomb probably.

She laughs at her joke. Callum isn't amused.

CALLUM

Well, maybe she was skint, maybe she was desperate?

KATIE

(Still laughing) She stole my Jammie Dodgers.

CALLUM

Have you heard yourself?

Silence.

KATIE

Maybe it's different in the big city. But not here. All I know is that I used to feel safe. I knew the order of things; everything had its place.

CALLUM

Like in the 'good old days'.

KATIE

Yeah, and what's wrong with that? Terrorists everywhere. (Beat) Did you know my Grandad died in hospital last year?

CALLUM

I'm sorry.

KATIE

A seventy-four year old man left to die on a trolley in the A&E corridor because there weren't enough beds. That never would have happened before. Sometimes it's like I can't breathe. It's like we're drowning; not enough beds, not enough jobs, not enough biscuits even! Good British people just managing because of them.

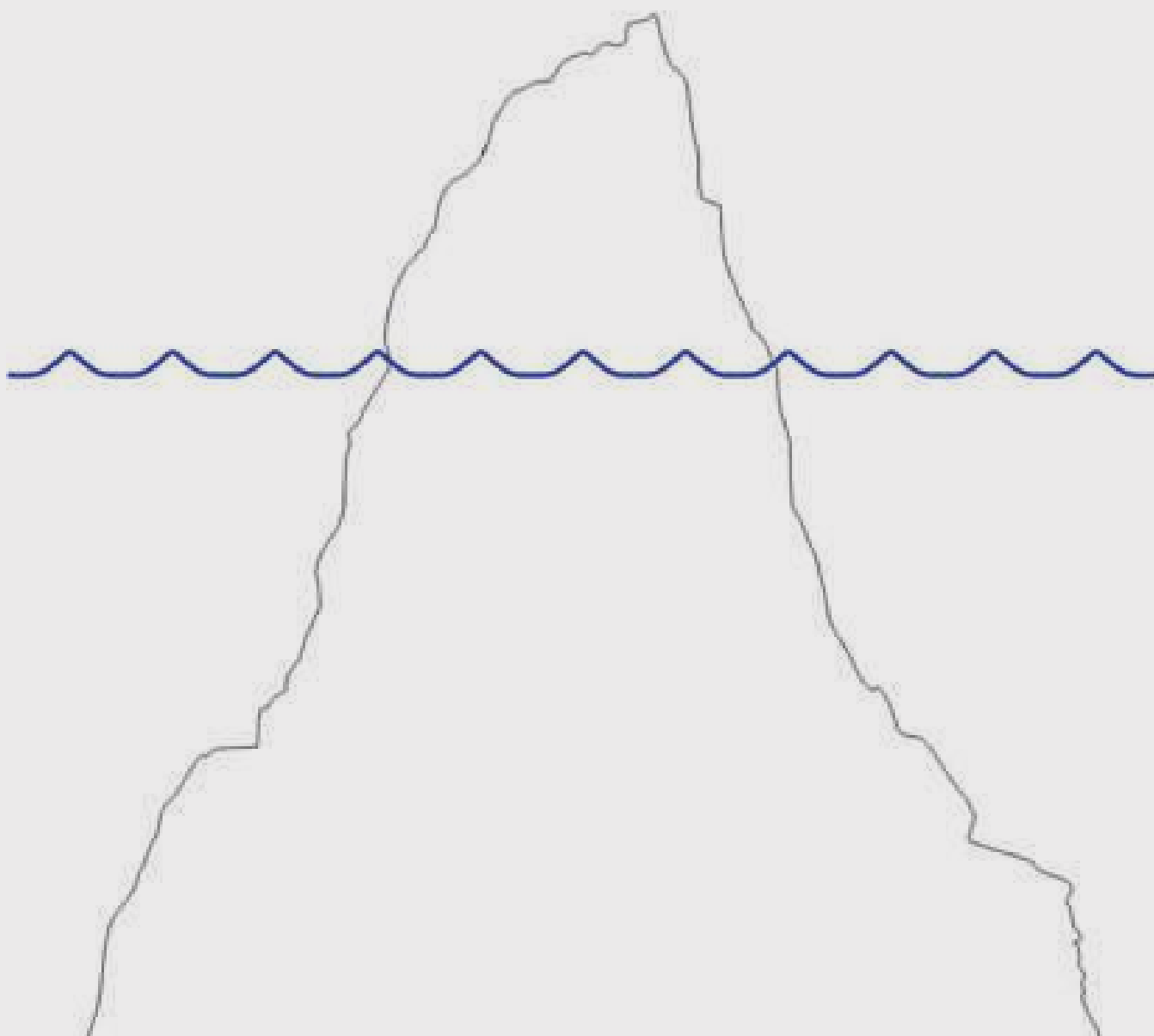
CALLUM

But other people are struggling too! Do you know how many boxes you have to tick? The criteria you have to fill just for government help to scrape by?

KATIE

That's just taking, never giving back, expecting us to carry you.

ICEBERG EXERCISE



MEET THE DIRECTOR

APPENDIX ONE

Director Toby Ealden has been making theatre for young audiences for over ten years including youth theatres, school tours and national touring. His past work includes working as the youth theatre director for Nacro, the national crime reduction charity. During his time there, Nacro toured with young people across the country, including to the National Theatre.

What inspired you to make *What Once Was Ours*?

The impetus for this new production came the day of the EU referendum result. Like many people, we'd felt concerned about the divisive nature of the campaign and the divisions it had created in communities. But on the day of the result we just felt frustrated. Not because our side didn't win, but because we spent the day hearing



so many of the towns we tour to portrayed in the media as somehow less intelligent, racist and small-minded. Whilst there was undoubtedly a nationalistic element to that vote, this portrayal didn't do these communities justice. These are places that, as a company, we really care about; towns where we know the community and love the people. Places that have faced challenge and hadn't been heard. For many that's what the Referendum was about: A chance to get themselves listened to. So against the backdrop of Brexit, we set out to unearth the voices and give them a platform to be heard.

MEET THE DIRECTOR

APPENDIX ONE

How do you develop your ideas into a fully formed show?

The process of making a Zest show is a really collaborative one. I usually have an idea or premise to explore, then we set out to find the right cast and creatives. All our shows are also developed alongside young people, so that their voices and experiences are at the forefront of our work. We then start to develop material, experiment and play and see what comes up. There's usually a lot of talking at first whilst we work out what our focus is and strip away anything unnecessary, always making sure we are staying true to the heart of the piece.

After about four weeks, we will have a rough script in place, that will be honed and edited during rehearsals. Lots of things will influence which direction a show takes, including input from cast, set design, young people and what is relevant in the news/society at that time. For more information on the process of making this show, check out our blog <https://zesttheatre.com/blog/10/12/2016/learning-to-listen>

Why did you decide to make theatre for young people?

Having always worked with young people, we've seen first hand the struggles, passions and issues facing them every day. What's more, access to the arts is increasingly becoming something that is for a privileged few. We want to change that. We want to use the Arts to help facilitate important conversations, to provoke action and to help young people realise that theatre can be exciting, innovative and relevant to them.

What do you hope people will get from *What Once Was Ours*?

When we were making the show, we wanted to give young people a voice, regardless of which way their beliefs lie. We aren't trying to demonise or say that one opinion is more valid, but are trying to shed light on current politics and how it can sometimes leave young people behind. We hope that the show can help audiences break down barriers and realise that it's ok to have different beliefs, as long as those beliefs don't make us prejudiced, and that, at the heart of things, there is not that much difference between us at all.





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