

NOTTINGHAM PLAYHOUSE THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS

KINDERTRANSPORT

BY DIANE SAMUELS
DIRECTED BY FIONA BUFFINI

INSIGHT
PACK



FRI 5 -
SAT 20 OCT 2018

Nottingham
Playhouse



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ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND



Nottingham
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INTRODUCTION

This pack supports Nottingham Playhouse's 2018 production of *Kindertransport* by Diane Samuels, directed by Associate Director Fiona Buffini. The activities provided are specifically designed to support KS3-5 students, who are attending the performance at Nottingham Playhouse, or studying the play in school.

KINDERTRANSPORTS JOURNEYS TO SAFETY

Before exploring what the Kindertransport (German for "children's transport") rescue programme was about, it's important to consider the key events that led to its inception. Hitler was appointed Reichskanzler on 30 January 1933. The German Reichstag then passed the Enabling Act on 23 March the same year. These are iconic dates, as the Enabling Act gave Hitler dictatorial power to pass laws without running them past the Reichstag or presidency first. Then came the three fateful stages of antisemitism in Germany that ultimately led to genocide.

1933 BOYCOTT AND 'LAW FOR THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROFESSIONAL CIVIL SERVICE'

Non-Aryans, particularly Jewish people, and political opponents were banned from undertaking civil servant posts (including teachers, professors or judges). Nazis then passed more laws excluding Jewish people from society in general.

1938 NOVEMBER POGROM – NIGHT OF VIOLENCE, DEPRIVATION OF RIGHTS AND FORCED IMPRISONMENT

Nazis arrested over 25,000 Jewish men and imprisoned them in concentration camps. Nazi official records registered at least 91 killed - hundreds die in the ensuing weeks from torture and harassment. Nazi SA, abbreviation of Sturmabteilung (German: "Assault Division"), and Hitler Youth robbed and defiled over 1,400 synagogues. Some ordinary citizens also joined in. The public lacked outrage in the face of murder and destruction. This lack of opposition meant that the Nazi regime came one step closer to genocide.

1935 NUREMBERG LAWS- 'LAW FOR THE PROTECTION OF GERMAN BLOOD' AND 'GERMAN HONOUR'

Jewish people were stripped of Reich citizenship and prohibited from marrying or having intercourse with those of German or related blood.

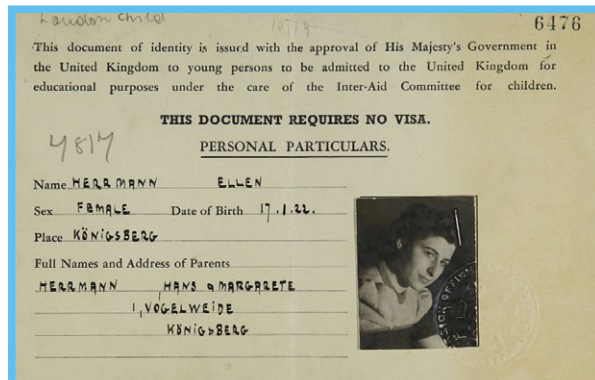
'Jews' were so defined if three or four of their grandparents were Jewish – even if they had converted to another religion and didn't identify as Jewish themselves.

Kindertransport is launched

In the aftermath of the November Pogrom, Kindertransport was a rescue effort organised by the British government and arranged by individuals in different countries and from various secular and religious groups that saved 10,000 children. The majority of children rescued were Jewish. They relocated to the UK from Nazi Germany, the free city of Danzig, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

- Children and teenagers up to the age of 17 were eligible.
- They were separated from their parents, uncertain about their future and feared they may never see their families again.
- With only a small suitcase permitted for their possessions, many headed to the UK without being able to speak the language.

Artefacts from the collection held at The National Holocaust Centre and Museum



Ellen Rawson's entry paper to England



Doll belonging to Ellen



Suitcase belonging to Sigmar Berenzweig Rawson

Kindertransport missions ran for nine months before the outbreak of the Second World War. Other similar rescue missions were running around this time.

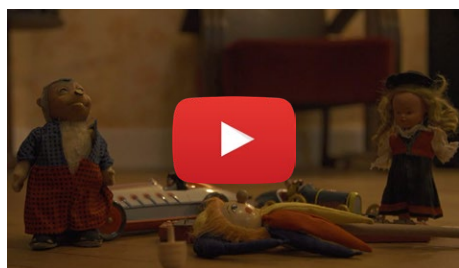
Although thousands of children were saved via Kindertransport, we must not forget that many never saw their families again. It is also important to remember that over a million Jewish children, Roma and disabled children in their thousands were murdered by the Nazis. See Resources on page 16 for more information.

Article by:



Digital Resource on the context and setting of the play

We interviewed Louise, Learning Director, and Claudia, Lead Researcher, at The National Holocaust Centre and Museum to paint a picture of the setting of the play.



Where did the kindertransport children come from?



At what point was the Kindertransport put into place?



What was the journey like and what was life like for the children once they reached their destination?

INTERVIEWS WITH THE DESIGNER

Madeleine Girling – Designer

Q What were you hoping to achieve with your design?

A For this particular production, Fiona and I knew the main visual demand was going to be in the need for a very specific and detailed attic space that we could, at times, completely escape from. The required antithesis was a malleable, abstract environment that could speak of station platforms; boats; train carriage interiors, and hotel lobbies - an environment that could evoke the terror and trauma of travelling alone from Germany to Berlin as a nine-year old child to begin a new life. The script interweaves these real life memories of Evelyn's past with a fictional, storybook character called 'The Ratcatcher'. The imagery of the Ratcatcher and the descriptions of the fictional story in the play were influential on the look and design of the environment that surrounds the attic, and helped us to paint a heightened, nightmarish picture of those experiences seen through the eyes of a terrified child.

Anchoring this permeable attic space in the centre of the stage, with the naturalistic clutter and boxed up memories bleeding out into the surrounding monochrome world, allowed for smooth and seamless transitions between the past and the present whilst maintaining a very clearly defined language between the two.

Q What techniques have you used to communicate the different time periods through the set?

A It was important that these two worlds (the safe, contemporary attic space, and the harsh 1930s/40s memory world) were starkly contrasted, the domestic and the epic. Exploring a more theatrical, filmic aesthetic for the 1940s felt very appropriate to Fiona and I, so we drew on the monochrome colour palette and lighting of 1930s/40s Film Noir,



Photo taken of model box

the sharp angular lines and shadows of German expressionism, and echoes of the holocaust memorial in our multi-level platform structure. By contrast, the sparsity of the monochrome world gave licence for a much richer, highly detailed attic space – spilling over colourfully with furniture, photos, and relics that speak of this complex family history

Q What was the biggest challenge you faced designing this production?

A On a practical level, it has been quite a challenge to source all of the 1940s costumes and props within our monochrome palate. If it were a matter of finding items in black and white it would be easy, but making sure we have an interesting and varied palate that covers the whole spectrum of greys that you find in black and white photography is quite a challenge. We also have one character in the play, Lil, who exists in both the past and the present simultaneously, often speaking between the two from sentence to sentence. Making sure Lil's costume can read to an audience legitimately as living in either world – reading as something more youthful in the 40s and more mature in the contemporary - is quite particular.

An example of Madeleine's mood board



Costume designs by Madeleine Girling



THE REHEARSAL ROOM

See our cast and creatives in the rehearsal room in our rehearsals trailer.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooliXZKvTuM>

We've asked Fiona the following questions about the play:



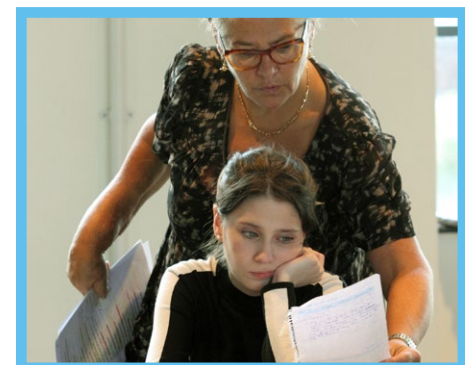
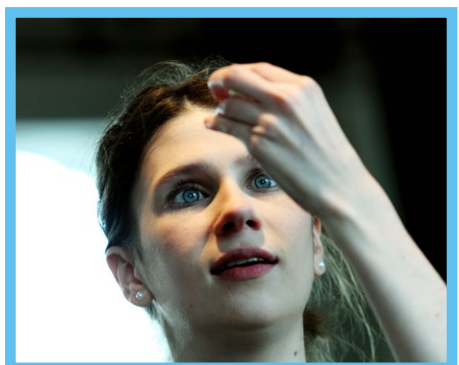
What are the messages you are aiming to communicate to the audience?
In what ways can the play connect with a young audience?



How have you chosen to depict the relationships between the different roles?



How are you using performance skills and design elements to communicate the changes in time period?



Photography by Catherine Ashmore

Daniel, a student at Nottingham University has been in the rehearsal room for Kindertransport as he is writing his dissertation on the process. He shares the following on his experience of the first week of rehearsals:

Watching the process it dawned on me just how epic and expansive a play it is; it may be predominantly set in an attic but it is by no means restricted by that, travelling in the space of a few lines across both decades and the continent. One thing I think that this production has really managed to convey, and something it appears that Fiona, the director, is eager to impress is the way that the past (the early 1940s) and the present (the lates 1980s) of the play keep crashing into each other, building up to the climatic ends of each of the acts.

The way the actors are naturally drawn to move around the set really manages to place the focus of the play onto present-day mother daughter relationships. It is very easy to overlook this aspect of the play when simply reading it. Given the cultural scale and impact of the holocaust, watching it really shows how this play is about a family. That is not to say however, that this production shies away from the hugeness of the history it is about. Watching it performed shows the complexity and tenderness of the effects of such a horrific time in history. The actors are managing to bring out these torrents of emotions in a way that is only implied in sections of the text, even watching the rehearsal process is making the characters' torment feel so much more real.



ACTIVITIES SECTION

Navigating the train station

Invite everyone to walk around the room, make sure they are walking into all of the space in the room. Now ask them to freeze. Tell the group they are in a busy train station and they are about to embark on a journey. Ask them to imagine they are 9 years old and they are about to be left therefore they have to remember exactly where they are in the room. Tell them that when you say go you want them to do the following.

- Touch two different walls.
- Find somewhere else to sit down, make your body small and scrunched up.
- Touch something made from paper or card.
- Say goodbye and shake hands with three different people.
- Return to where they started.

Record their time on a stopwatch and only stop when the last person has returned to where they started. When everyone returns to their spot give them their time. At this point ask the group if they think that as a group they could do it faster? Imagine they are in a real rush. How can they journey quicker? Continue to repeat the journey and encourage them to share ideas to make the journey quicker. Continue the exercise until the group feel they can no longer improve on their time.

DISCUSS:

How did it feel? What did they notice?

What I'd miss from home

Ask the group to think about what they would miss most from home if they had to leave. Each participant has a sheet of A4 paper and stands in a line across the room.

Invite participants to hold a piece of A4 paper and rip a small piece of paper off to signify one thing they will miss if they had to leave their home. The first participant says out loud what they would miss and places a small piece of paper to represent the item or person and must then take a step backwards. Then the next person in the line shares their item and so on. Participants can work individually to continue to bring to mind all that they would miss by ripping small pieces of paper and stepping backwards so making a line of small pieces of paper until they have no more paper left.

DISCUSS:

How did it feel? What did they notice?
Did anything surprise you?



Suitcase belonging to Sigmar Berenzweig

WARM UP
ACTIVITY!

Walking in someone else's shoes

**WARM UP
ACTIVITY!**

- Ask participants to walk around the room as a group. Choose another participant and begin to take on their characteristics and their way of moving, without mocking or exaggerating their movements. Then, imagine doing an activity that this other person might have done at the weekend, stop where they are and mime this activity.
- Now ask them to imagine they have gone back in time its 1980's, which is the same time period that Faith is trying to uncover the truth about her mum in the attic. Ask them to continue to walk around the room- now imagine that they are the mum or dad of the person they had originally chosen, but the same age as they are now. Encourage them to move like they think this character might, then stop and mime an activity that this character might have done in their spare time
- Now ask them to imagine they have gone further back in time to post war Britain in the early 1950s, which is roughly the same time period when Helga tries to reclaim her daughter Eva. Go back to walking around the room, imagining that they are the grandparent of the person they'd originally chosen, but the same age as they are now. Ask them to move like they think their character might and again, mime a leisure activity that they might have done.

DISCUSS:

How easy or challenging was it to create an historical character from scratch? What information do you need to make a character, especially one from another time, believable?

Creating Character Lifespans

Resources for this activity can be found on page 14

- Character Lifespan Table, 'Accompanying Resources' print one (A1 size if possible) for each group.
- Character Fact Files under 'Accompanying Resources'. Print one for each group (groups of 4 or 5 – ensure the groups each have different characters where possible).
- Pens for each group.

This exercise takes 30 minutes.

Split the group into smaller groups of 4 or 5. Hand each group one of the character fact files.

EXPLORE:

An actor's work re-rehearsal.

Ask the participants to work in small groups and read the character fact file. Now as a group they can begin to complete the Character Lifespan Table. Fill in each box of the table with a want and a fear for the character at that time in their life.

Depending of the character they may need to imagine their back story based on what they know about them, or imagine what might happen to them and how they might feel in the future.

In their groups, invite the participants to create a still image for each of the boxes; so creating 2 images per age. They should have 6 still images in total. They must ensure that all the group have a place in the image, not only the person selected to play the character. Perhaps they might be friends, or family of the character.

Now ask each group to select the age they found the most interesting for their character. Then ask them to work on this age by creating a short 2 – 3 minute Improvisation, which encapsulates their character's wants and fears at that point of their life. Invite participants to add dialogue to this, and again, they must ensure all the group have a part. If time, ask each group to share their short scenes with the rest of the group.

Who said it?

DISCUSSION STARTER, ON PAGE XX:

Using the character profiles can you cut out and match the lines below with the character you think might have said it.

“How can I pretend nothing has happened?”

“Whatever it is that you think you have discovered. You must forget it.”

“Why won’t you help me?”

“Please tell me the truth about yourself”

“I promise”

“Know your number. If you don’t know it you might forget who you are.”

“Stop fretting and eat your madeira cake”

“Don’t you trust me!”

“Don’t throw me out please.”

“Remember we always think of you and love you. Mother.”

“I didn’t bring you up to speak as if your mouth was full of sewage”

“Don’t even try to make out I’m making this up. I’ve got proof. Evidence.”

DISCUSS:

Did you imagine who they were saying these lines to? Why did you come to the conclusions you did? What led you to make these decisions?

Family Freeze Frames

In the lead up to WWII over 10,000 children were transported to Britain via train as a means to save them from the increasingly menacing Nazi threat. Families had hoped that this would be a temporary situation but for most the separation was absolute.

Ask the group to split into small groups of 4 – 5, and imagine that they are at home with their family. Decide who everybody is i.e. parents, children, siblings etc.

Create the following three strong freeze frames:

- The family in their home, on a normal day before the war.
- The family are at the train station where the children are about to be transported. They are saying goodbye to each other, possibly forever.
- The family after the event. They have been separated and have no way of communicating with each other. (Each family member is still portrayed in the image, although they are existing in different places)

Now choose one line of dialogue for each member of the family and bring your freeze frames to life with your chosen sentence.

They should now have three short scenes, which they can present to the rest of your group.



Photos taken at The National Holocaust Centre and Museum, in The Journey exhibition

DISCUSS:

What did you see and feel? Whose story did you want to learn more about? Where were your sympathies? What do you think will happen next for each of the characters?

CONSIDER:

What crucial moments you want to show at the three critical points listed. How you are going to convey important relationships and personal moments that each family member faced? What are their bodies doing, what are their facial expressions?

Family conversations

This next exercise will help further explore some of the key reoccurring themes. Remaining in the same groups as you were in for the previous Family Freeze Frames exercise, choose one on the theme cards below:

**EXTENSION
EXERCISE!**



Each group can now use this theme as the family members overarching driving force to create a short improvised scene. Performers can also consider selecting one of the quotes they examined in *Who Said it* exercise and using this at some point in the dialogue of their scene.

Encourage the group to share their family conversations.

NOTICE:

Did they stick to their overarching theme? How would the conversation differ if they had a different theme?

Now the groups can try out a few different themes and quotes and examine how it affects the scene.

Now they could consider creating a short performance using three conversations from this exercise.

Uncovering a Treasured Object (40 mins)

Faith and Evelyn are surrounded by objects in the attic. All objects can hold meanings and stories behind them. This exercise helps students find and build new stories and form the starting point of a significant object.

Ask the participants to close their eyes and bring to mind an object that they have/or have had at home and see if they can bring to mind its qualities, why is it special or treasured to them? How did they come by it? What does it look or feel like? What is it made from? Where does it live in their house?



Working individually with pen and paper, ask participants to open their eyes and jot down or draw what they brought to mind. Write a sentence about why they are significant.

Creative Writing

Writing from the perspective of the special object they have chosen and what its story is – writing continually to a timer without stopping to think – accessing stream of consciousness (if the mind goes blank, write the sentence – in my world, in my world, over and over until the next thought comes – do not stop writing. Time 3 minutes on the clock. Now use this content to sculpt and create a piece of creative writing.

Sharing Stories

This exercise enables participants to share the stories behind their objects with each other. Assemble the group into two circles facing each other; an inner and outer circle. Each participant should be facing another participant. The pairs facing each other now exchange their stories. The inner circle then moves one place to the left and the outer circle remains where they are, each participant will have a new partner. They now share the story and object they have just heard, they may want to sensitively add some new details or build on what they heard. The participants continue and move around the circle and exchange stories. After so long, stop and ask if any participants want to share a story with the rest of the group. Does it resonate with anyone? How far has it gone from the original? Does it sound intriguing?

DISCUSS:

- What was significant in creating the writing?
- What was significant in sharing the stories?
- Whats was significant in re-telling the stories?

Kinder Crossings

To give the players an understanding of the problems faced by child refugees when they flee to another country, particularly when they do not speak the language of the host country and they must explain their situation in order to be housed with a new family.

Ask the participants to imagine that after having overcome many difficulties they have finally reached their new destination. They could be exhausted, sick, hungry and thirsty. They are frightened and missing their parents. They really don't expect much except perhaps some water, some food and a place to settle down.

Circle game- Gain eye contact with another and enter circle, one of them is the station guard and the other is trying to explain who they are and where they need to go.

Once this is set up split them into 3 groups of 4/5

- Choose one station guard, the others are kinder transporters
- Now in mime
- Now in an invented language

RESOURCES

Character Profiles

Eva/Evelyn –

- Jewish German
- Came to England when she is nine years old.
- Chooses to stay in England, changes her name and doesn't go back to Germany with her birth mother, Helga.



As Eva –

- Tries to fit in
- Persistent and determined
- Desperate and Hopeful
- Head strong



As Evelyn –

- Over cautious and controlling
- Obsessive compulsive, likes cleanliness and routine.
- Paranoid and stubborn.
- Guilt ridden.



Faith –

Evelyn's only child, twenty years old. Has close relationship with her grandmother, Lil. She is about to leave home but is worried about it.

- Wants to make her mum (Evelyn) happy
- Tries to be a good daughter
- Confused about her routes
- Curious



Lil –

Working-class English woman from Manchester. Takes in Eva and brings her up as her own. She has two birth children of her own. Ages throughout play from around early thirties through to her eighties.

- Wants to be a good person; to do the decent thing
- Down to earth and straight forward
- Caring
- Protective
- Warm



Helga –

Birth Mother of Eva, German Jewish woman. At the start of the play she is in her thirties, by the end around forty. Lives through the war and has her daughter taken to England for safety. She tries to reclaim Eva as a young adult after the war has ended.

- Affluent, middle class sophisticated
- Warm and affectionate
- Makes difficult decisions
- Composed in the face of adversity.
- Transformed by war.

Life Span Table

Character name: _____	As a child	As a teenager	Later in life
What the character wants or wishes in their lives...			
What the character fears or is scared of...			

The Journey – what will you do?

The Journey exhibition at The National Holocaust Centre and Museum tells the story of Leo Stein. He is a 10-year-old Jewish boy living with his parents and younger sister Hannah in 1930s Berlin.

Leo is a composite character based on authentic Holocaust survivor testimonies. Through his story, you can explore how the lives of Jewish children changed under growing Nazi persecution. Leo's story culminates when his parents decide to send him on the Kindertransport.

Visit the exhibition

You can experience and explore what life may have been like for a Jewish child refugee at this time through:

- watching video excerpts from Leo's fictitious diary;
- exploring historic rooms;
- learning stories by examining artefacts; and
- watching video clips of authentic survivor testimonies.



Images taken by The National Holocaust Centre and Museum, The Journey Exhibition

Download the app

We'll be launching The Journey digital experience in December when you will be able to explore Leo's world. You can watch a trailer now: www.nationalholocaustcentre.net/journey. Let us know what you think.

Contact the National Holocaust Centre and Museum:

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