

**ROSE
THEATRE**

A ROSE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION WITH BRISTOL OLD VIC,
MALVERN THEATRES AND ROYAL & DERNGATE, NORTHAMPTON



**never
let me go**

A PLAY BY **SUZANNE HEATHCOTE**

BASED ON THE NOVEL BY **KAZUO ISHIGURO**

DIRECTED BY **CHRISTOPHER HAYDON**

LEARNING RESOURCE PACK

Created in association with **BRISTOL
OLD VIC**

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WELCOME

Welcome to this learning resource pack for *Never Let Me Go*, a Rose Original Production with Bristol Old Vic, Malvern Theatres, and Royal & Derngate, Northampton.

Rose Theatre has one of the largest participation departments in London. Through creative and curriculum based in-school and on-site opportunities, the Rose opens its doors to surrounding communities and enables participants to join in, and take part in, exciting opportunities led by world class practitioners.

If you would like to hear more about our activities please contact:

participate@rosetheatre.org

This pack is designed to support students and teachers studying A Level and GCSE drama in response to *Never Let Me Go*.

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THE PRODUCTION

Never Let Me Go was commissioned by and first performed at Rose Theatre, Kingston upon Thames, on 20 September 2024, with the following cast, in alphabetical order:

Hannah/Chrissie/Jessica	Amelie Abbott
Miss Emily	Susan Aderin
Ruth	Matilda Bailes
Kathy	Nell Barlow
Phillip/Lenny/Terry	Maximus Evans
Tommy	Angus Imrie
Laura	Princess Khumalo
Miss Lucy/Madame	Emilie Patry
Rodney/Alfie	Tristan Waterson
Vocals of Judy Bridgewater	Marisha Wallace

Additional roles played by members of the company

Director	Christopher Haydon
Set & Costume Designer	Tom Piper
Movement Director	Ayse Tashkiran
Lighting Designer	Joshua Carr
Composer	Eamonn O'Dwyer
Sound Designer	Carolyn Downing
Casting Director	Sam Jones CDG
Fight Director	Haruka Kuroda
Voice & Dialect Coach	Claudette Williams
Assistant Director	Emma Denson (Drama League Rose Directing Fellow)

For Rose Theatre

Chief Executive	Robert O'Dowd
Artistic Director	Christopher Haydon
Executive Producer	David Sloan

Never Let Me Go is a Rose Original Production with Bristol Old Vic, Malvern Theatres, and Royal & Derngate, Northampton.

SYNOPSIS

NEVER LET ME GO

ACT 1

The play opens with a young woman cradling a pillow as if it were a baby and swaying to the jazzy lulls of Judy Bridgewater's song, "Never Let Me Go." Oh, baby, baby. Never let me go.

Part One - Hailsham

Kathy has been assigned as Phillip's "carer". He's intrigued by how long Kathy has been a carer — almost 12 years — and that she went to school at Hailsham, a place he's only heard about. He presses Kathy to share what it was like. As Kathy answers, a memory comes to life. The story moves to a classroom full of 10-year-olds being taught by Miss Emily. Tommy and Ruth emerge in Kathy's memory as she tells Phillip about Hailsham. She describes how "exchanges" and "sales" provided different opportunities for students. Exchanges were solemn occasions and gave students a chance to share and trade their artwork, to show how they were creative. Sales were raucous and exciting, a jumble of discarded toys, games, and other unwanted "treasures" for students to purchase. Kathy describes a cassette tape she'd gotten at the sales, "Never Let Me Go," which she cherished but lost.

Kathy remembers reading to Ruth. She becomes part of the memory and relives a moment when the two of them were playing games. Kathy recalls a debate about the "guardians," those who taught and watched over Hailsham students, and Madame, a mysterious figure, who reportedly took their art to a place they'd imagined was "The Gallery." Kathy describes how, during one of her visits, the students tried to prove their suspicion that Madame was scared of them. When they gathered close around her she ran off, confirming the students' theory.



Phillip asks Kathy about Tommy. She describes his tantrums and how Tommy struggled with his art, but one of the guardians, Miss Lucy, encouraged him to not worry. She suggested that the students were not being taught enough about their futures. Tommy asks Kathy not to tell anyone what Miss Lucy said. Ruth arrives as Tommy leaves; she's found a cassette tape to replace the one Kathy's lost. It's not the same but Kathy appreciates the gesture.

SYNOPSIS

Kathy and Ruth wonder what they'll do when they're older. Ruth wants to be an office lady, suggesting that that's what her "Possible" might be. She asks Kathy not to tell anyone.

Back at the clinic, Phillip asks if "Possibles" are what Hailsham kids called them; he and his friends called them "Others." Emerging from her memory, Kathy explains how the Guardians shut down any talk of Possibles. Kathy confesses that she thought she'd forgotten about it all. Phillip presses her about whether she and friends knew what was waiting for them when they left Hailsham. Kathy explains they were told from the beginning and that they were taught to be healthy, to avoid cigarettes and alcohol. And, it was only Miss Lucy who was completely frank that they shouldn't imagine their futures because they were all clones, created specifically so they could donate their organs. That was their future.

Another memory: sex education. Kathy explains how it was never clear what it all meant and shares a memory of Ruth and her talking about sex. Ruth asks Kathy if she would think it weird if she and Tommy were together. She confides that they've done it. Kathy is stunned.

Back to the present and Kathy has received a letter advising her donations would soon begin. Kathy thought she'd have longer to prepare.

Kathy relives a memory with Tommy. They'll be leaving Hailsham soon. Tommy has thought about Kathy and her lost cassette tape. Kathy didn't realise Tommy knew about it and shares how she used to listen to it alone. She created a story about "Never Let Me Go" — a girl who was told she couldn't have a baby, but then by some miracle had one. Kathy would listen to the song and cradle her pretend baby to protect it. She shares that Madame had once seen her doing this and cried. She didn't understand why. Ruth rushes in and explains Miss Lucy has left Hailsham.

Phillip has made his first donation and thanks Kathy for sharing her memories. He asks if she ever told Tommy how she felt. She didn't know how she felt, remembering how she encouraged Tommy to get back with Ruth. Phillip can't believe it. She suggests they were all just really excited about growing up, seeing new things, and going to new places. Kathy, Ruth, Tommy and their peers leave Hailsham for the Cottages.

Part Two - The Cottages

At the Cottages, Ruth, Tommy and Kathy meet Rodney, Chrissie and Lenny. They are all now living together before they start training to become carers. The new group is fascinated about Hailsham and asks questions. As they discuss who is in a relationship with whom, Chrissie asks if Ruth and Tommy are going to apply for a deferral. Ruth changes the subject, pretending to know what that means.

A short time later, Rodney and Chrissie tell Ruth they think they've seen her "Original", their term for Possibles. She is an office lady, and the pair suggest they show Ruth. Separately, Kathy and Ruth talk about urges and feelings — the stuff that's not just about sex. Ruth imagines what it might be like to meet her Possible. They then talk about deferrals and how Ruth pretended to know what they were. Kathy and Ruth argue about the way each behaves in this new world outside of Hailsham.



SYNOPSIS

Back to the present and Kathy learns Phillip has completed after his first donation. She's shocked. As a nurse explains what happened, Kathy shares that Phillip helped her look at things. And, that she was no longer afraid.

Over sandwiches, Tommy, Ruth, Chrissie, Rodney and Kathy discuss deferrals, a three or four year delay in starting donations that a couple can reportedly request if they're in love. Chrissie and Rodney wonder if they can apply or if it's only something for Hailsham students. They then visit the office where Ruth's Possible is working. She looks just like Ruth. Tommy approaches the woman but, seeing her up close, it is clear she is not Ruth's Possible after all. Ruth, now upset and frustrated, suggests they all just come from trash and that they should be looking in the gutters and rubbish bins for who they truly are.



Kathy is with a doctor. She's preparing to start donations. They talk about what it's been like to be a carer. Kathy explains that she just did the obvious things like listening because the end can be scary.

Back in the memory of the Cottages, Tommy and Kathy stay behind as Rodney, Chrissie, and Ruth head off to see their friend Martin. The pair talk about what Ruth said about their Possibles, and Kathy reveals that she is worried her Possible affects who she is and that this is the cause behind her sexual urges. Tommy reminds Kathy of something Miss Emily had told them about what it was like to be with someone "you really want to be with," that it will be really good. Kathy is upset that Ruth behaves the way she does. Tommy suggests that she's struggling because everything is so different from what they learned at Hailsham. He wonders about deferrals and suggests Madame's Gallery may be part of the answer. He believes he blew his chance because he had never really been creative.

In another memory, Kathy can't believe Tommy found her lost cassette tape. Tommy shares that he's started drawing again. Imaginary animals. He suggests he needs to continue working before they're ready for Madame to see. Ruth enters and is surprised Tommy has gotten Kathy a tape to replace the one she'd lost at Hailsham.

Later, Ruth explains that she has something to tell Kathy, for her good, and that she doesn't want her to be cross. Ruth says that although Tommy really likes Kathy, he doesn't want her to be his girlfriend, even if Ruth and he aren't meant to be together forever. Kathy thanks Ruth for telling her.

SYNOPSIS

Kathy later finds Ruth and Tommy in a field. Tommy has told Ruth about his theory of what their art means. Ruth knows Tommy shared his theory with Kathy ages ago. After an argument, Kathy tells Ruth she's leaving the cottages to start her training as a carer.

ACT 2

1998: Kathy and Jessica, another clone, are about to make their first donations.

Part Three - 1992 (six years earlier)

Kathy and Laura meet and reminisce about the cottages, six years before. Kathy has gained a reputation for being a brilliant carer, in high demand. They discuss Ruth having had a difficult first donation and then making trouble for her carers. Laura tells Kathy Hailsham is now closed.

Kathy is now Ruth's carer. Kathy explains she wanted to help Ruth, who guesses it's because she had a bad first donation. Ruth asks Kathy to open a large envelope, which is full of Ruth's paintings of boats. Kathy hangs them up. Ruth tells Kathy she'd gotten rid of everything she'd bought at the exchanges but wishes she'd kept it all so she could look at it now.

On a balcony, Kathy reads from a book. "Art is the nearest thing to life. It is a mode of amplifying experience and extending our contact with our fellow-men beyond the bounds of our personal lot." Ruth confesses she wishes she'd been more like Kathy — bookish and clever. Kathy reminds Ruth of her tape. Ruth's mood changes. They discuss whether or not it is a good idea that Kathy continues to be her carer. Ruth suggests she'd like to see a boat in a neighbouring town, to break up the monotony of being in the hospital. Kathy reminds her that Tommy is also in the town and asks if Ruth would like to see him, too. Ruth explains that Tommy and she had never officially ended their relationship after Kathy left the cottages but that they drifted apart. The "glue" in their relationship was somehow missing. She insists she really wants to see the boat but that, yes, seeing Tommy would be good.

Ruth and Kathy drive to see the boat, and Tommy. Ruth is anxious that Tommy may not want to see them, wondering what he now looks like and how many donations he's made. They meet and reminisce about Hailsham, talking about their classmates and donations.

Ruth asks Kathy for her forgiveness and confesses she lied to Kathy about not feeling urges and having sex with others, not just Tommy. She also explained she knew Tommy and Kathy had feelings for each other and that she'd kept them apart. She promises to make it right. Ruth encourages them to try for a deferral. Kathy explains it's too late. Ruth insists and gives Tommy a piece of crumpled paper with Madame's address.



SYNOPSIS

Back in Ruth's room in her centre, Ruth wants Kathy to keep her boat paintings. She is about to make her second donation but Kathy doesn't want her talking about it. Ruth asks if Kathy has thought any more about becoming Tommy's carer. Ruth is taken for her donation.

There were complications. Kathy hasn't been able to see Ruth for two days. Kathy tells Ruth, unable to respond but taking Kathy's hand, that she was glad she became Ruth's carer. Ruth completes.

In his centre, Tommy can't believe Kathy is actually his carer. She guesses all the things he would want, that she as his carer would get for him. They kiss. Tommy explains he's been working on his drawings again. He asks Kathy if they should try for a deferral. Kathy explains he's got his third donation coming up, but Tommy feels confident he'll be fine afterward. Kathy is afraid they'll get nothing. The feeling terrifies her. Tommy insists they try.

Madame is shocked to see Kathy and Tommy and wants to know why they've come to see her. They explain they've brought something to show her, but she insists she doesn't want anything from them. They explain what they have is not for her but for her gallery. Madame is confused and invites them in. She leaves to find Miss Emily, with whom she lives.

Tommy offers Miss Emily the books with his drawings. He believes she needs them "Because our artwork shows who we are. Inside." Miss Emily calls it a soul and Tommy explains that Kathy and he are in love. Miss Emily realises they are looking for a deferral but explains they don't exist, that Madame and she have tried to end that story for years. She regrets that the idea of deferrals gave them hope, because it's clear they are in love.

Miss Emily explains they took the artwork to prove to the outside world that the students had souls, that donors should be raised in humane environments and shouldn't be treated only as clones to supply medical science. Miss Emily confides that the outside world needed to see them as "other" because clones were the reason they were no longer dying of cancer, motor neurone disease, and heart failure. Tommy slowly realises what it all means and why Miss Lucy was so upset and angry that the students were never told the truth. Kathy recalls a memory to Madame — when she was dancing in the school and she saw Madame crying. Madame explains she was moved by a little girl holding to "her breast the old kind of world," pleading to never let her go.

Tommy has a rage-filled meltdown reminiscent of those he had as a child because the Guardians misled them. Kathy realises Tommy has likely always known the truth, which is why he was angry as a student and is upset now.

Back at the centre, Tommy is in between his third and fourth donation and doesn't want Kathy to be his carer any more. She explains that that is exactly why she is there. Kathy appreciates what's happening even as he protests she can't know. They discuss why Ruth wanted to make things right and that they're glad Ruth completed before discovering the truth about deferrals. Tommy talks about how he used to pretend he was running through water when he was a child. Then he is gone.

Kathy reflects on Hailsham, her memories, her new understanding. She believes they were so lucky. She is now with her own carer, Terry. She unpacks a book and Ruth's paintings. She hangs the paintings and unpacks a cassette player. She listens to Judy Bridgewater's "Never Let Me Go." Ruth and Tommy appear in her memory. The lyrics "never let me go" float over them.



CHARACTERS

PHILLIP

“All you have to think about. Are things in your head. And I don’t like what’s in my head.”

We meet Phillip at the start of his journey as an organ donor. He is introduced to Kathy, who will act as his carer, and he quickly realises that she has been a pupil at Hailsham School. Phillip is keen to find out about Kathy’s time at Hailsham, as his own experience of growing up has been very different. Phillip is the instigator of Kathy’s journey back through her memories.

KATHY

“We were excited at the prospect of growing up. Seeing new things. But by the time we actually left I think I was more. Shocked. We all were. We had no idea that Hailsham was so different to everywhere else. That we’d be so different.”

Kathy is the main protagonist of the play, and the story of Hailsham and beyond are told through fragments of her memories. We first meet Kathy as a carer for Phillip, which is a job that clones can take on before they donate their own organs. Kathy has been a carer for almost 12 years, which is longer than most.

Kathy grew up at Hailsham School, where she meets her best friends, Ruth and Tommy. As they become teenagers and young adults, the relationship between the three characters becomes deeper and more complicated. Kathy has romantic feelings for Tommy and a strong, lasting friendship with both him and Ruth.

MISS EMILY

“She was a good Head Guardian. Strict. But Fair. Very no-nonsense.”

Miss Emily is the Head Guardian at Hailsham School. She wants to give the students a good education. Miss Emily gives limited information to the students about life in the real world in order to protect them. As the story unfolds, the truth about the background of Hailsham and Miss Emily’s involvement is revealed.

TOMMY

“I’d see him and I’d know somehow. Understand. How he would be feeling.”

Tommy is Kathy’s childhood school friend and a fellow organ donor. Tommy is seen having regular outbursts as a child and teen. He struggles to create artwork that is good enough to be selected for the mysterious “Gallery” by Madame, which causes him to become frustrated and angry. As a teenager, Tommy starts a relationship with Ruth although he harbours deep feelings for Kathy. Towards the end of the play Tommy and Kathy visit Miss Emily to present her with his collection of artwork, determined to show he has a soul and convince her that they are in love.

CHARACTERS

RUTH

“But for all Ruth’s defiance. For all her strength. The thing she was most aware of. I think maybe more than anything. Was how other people saw her.”

Ruth is a close friend and school peer of Kathy and Tommy at Hailsham School. She is impulsive, self-aware and captivating, and could be described as the leader of the group. At a young age, she questions the behaviour of the staff at Hailsham and confronts Madame to prove her point. Ruth and Kathy are very different, which can cause friction between the pair. Ruth’s relationship with Tommy creates conflict between the three friends. Ruth can be cruel but she also cares deeply for her friends. Towards the end of the play she has huge regrets about earlier choices she has made, which she attempts to put right.

MISS LUCY

“And if you’re to have decent lives. You have to know who you are and what lies ahead of you. Every one of you.”

Miss Lucy is a guardian at Hailsham. She is straight-talking but kind to her students. She finds it challenging to conceal the truth about what life holds for her students. She sometimes exhibits behaviour that the students don’t fully understand, as a result of her frustration. She has a good relationship with Kathy and tries to encourage her to make her own conclusions about what is happening. She also comforts Tommy when he is struggling with his artwork and explains that it is not his fault. She believes students should have all the information about why they exist and the limitations of their futures.

MADAME

“Everything about her was a mystery to us”

Madame is seen visiting the school to select student artwork for a “Gallery”. Very little is explained to the students, but they are told that having their work chosen is a “great honour”. Madame is aloof and reserved with a frosty attitude towards the students. The students do not understand why she seems so distant. Ruth believes that she is scared of them and constructs a plan to prove this to the other students.

HANNAH, ALFIE AND LAURA

School friends of Tommy, Ruth and Kathy. Laura also joins the trio at the cottages, and later meets up with Kathy when they are both carers.

CHRISSIE AND RODNEY

Chrissie and Rodney are a couple who live in the cottages where Kathy, Ruth, Tommy and Laura live after Hailsham. Chrissie is assured, considered and aware. Rodney is described as loyal, honest and insecure. Kathy and Tommy remark that there seems to be something fake about them, as if they are living a pretend existence. Ruth seems to want to be like them. They introduce the idea of organ donation deferrals for couples to Ruth, Tommy and Kathy. They both end up following their inevitable path of organ donation and completion.

LENNY

Lenny is another clone living at the cottages. He is described as confident, genial, perceptive. He strikes up a relationship with Laura.

THEMES

MEMORY

Memory is a recurring theme in *Never Let Me Go* and the power that it can hold. Kathy returns to her past to cope with what is happening in her present and the inevitability of her future. She spends time in her memories of Hailsham and her memories of friends who are long gone. She has a deep desire to hold on to these memories to strengthen her identity and keep hold of what she has lost.

Memory, however, is unreliable and delicate. Kathy's memories are fractured and she tries to reclaim lost moments of her past. Although memory can be a powerful tool of exploring and strengthening one's identity it can also be an incomplete reflection of reality. She starts by divulging her memories to Phillip and in the end concludes "He helped me, look at things I was afraid of, things I needed to see".

HUMANITY - WHAT IS IT TO BE HUMAN?

In the world of *Never Let Me Go*, groups of human beings are created and raised with the sole purpose of organ donation. Although their destiny is inevitable, the students at Hailsham are given an experience that is intended to mirror those who are not in their situation.

Despite the best efforts of those around them to give them a "normal existence", they are created with one purpose and forced into a life they cannot control or resist. Hailsham is unlike other places where clones are raised, in that the people in charge want to give their students a more rounded experience of life. The students experience love, friendship, passion, joy and grief just like those who are not raised to provide organs. However, their path is determined for them and they have no say in the outcome of their existence.

A fundamental question runs through the piece - "what is it to be human?". The play explores the ethics of creating human life with the sole purpose of benefiting others. The lack of free will in the clones' lives affects more than just their eventual fate. They do not achieve dreams or successfully plan and follow the romantic lives they choose. However, should these humans be given a life of experience or one where they simply exist?

Kathy comes to realise that the direction her life has taken and the choices she has made are as a human being and not just as a clone. All human life is short; you are born, you experience life and you die, and every experience along the way is something to be cherished. What is life without hope?



THEMES

POWER AND MANIPULATION

The clones are led to believe that they owe their lives to society and that it is a sacrifice they should be willing and prepared to make. The lives of those at Hailsham are predetermined. We never see the governing power structures, but at every turn their presence is felt and their control over certain people and their fate is inevitable.

The clones willingly give up their own organs for the benefit of others and, in all walks of their lives, they conform. The clones do not believe deep down that they will be able to break free from what they are destined to become and this level of conformity drives much of their decision making. Even at school the students follow the guardians without question. These rules and deadlines are laid down by an authority we never see.

There is a huge amount of importance placed on health. We see this from the fear instilled in the students about smoking cigarettes and drinking alcohol. The unseen powers that be have to keep these people healthy for them to complete their intended journey.

"Because no one wants to confront the reality of who you are. When you're the reason they're no longer dying of cancer. Motor neurone disease. Heart failure. It suits them for you to be other."

THE LOVE STORY

At its heart, *Never Let Me Go* is a love story. The story is driven by characters and their love for one another. The story is rooted in a love triangle between Ruth, Tommy and Kathy. Each new memory is determined by love. We see Kathy lost and stoic before she enters her memories and recalls the lost loves of her life which, in a way, bring her back to herself.





ADAPTING NEVER LET ME GO SUZANNE HEATHCOTE

Suzanne Heathcote is an award-winning playwright and screenwriter based in the UK and US.

It can be a very daunting task, adapting a novel for a different medium, particularly when that novel is universally loved and revered. When I first mentioned this adaptation to people familiar with the book, I was struck by how much the story meant to them, having been moved on such a profound and personal level while reading it. This only added to my anxiety. Now I wasn't simply adapting a great book for the stage; I was adapting a great book that people felt intensely connected to. But sometimes the clues are in the challenges, and I came to understand that my task wasn't only about retelling the story in a different form but also about protecting and maintaining the essence of the book through that retelling. It's that essence - what some might call the heart and soul of the story - that evokes such a powerful response in the people who read it.

Never Let Me Go has always struck me as a love story. While the world of the book could be described as dystopian, for me it isn't so much about that world, but the characters within it. These young people are coming of age, while navigating the complexity of their fears, desires and vulnerabilities. It is a story rooted in the human condition.

Some people have asked me why I don't think they would run away. I've always felt that their acceptance of the system they've been born into is far more honest than the idea that they would somehow try to revolt. Isn't that what most of us do? Remain compliant within the world we find ourselves in. What consumes these characters instead, is their love and pain and gratitude and disappointment and regret and hope, while trying to keep the quiet awareness of their mortality at bay. The same could be said for us.

This story is their story. But it is our story also.





DIRECTOR INSIGHT WITH DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER HAYDON

Christopher Haydon is artistic director of Rose Theatre, Kingston. Prior to that, he was artistic director of the Gate Theatre and associate director at the Bush Theatre. He was a 2017 fellow of the Clore Leadership Programme.

How have you collaborated with Suzanne Heathcote on the adaptation of the novel?

Suzanne Heathcote has been working on this play for 9 years and we both connected over our love of Kazuo Ishiguro's work. We've been working very closely developing the script and the challenge with Ishiguro's work is that he writes stories that have incredible emotional depth, but real clarity and stillness on the surface. You have to mine deeply to get to that feeling, to get to the profound questions that he's asking. So the challenge with the stage adaptation is how do you find that balance between depth of emotion on the one hand, but clarity of storytelling. Not letting it become too sentimental and too restrained and terribly English. I think what Suzanne has done beautifully is find that balance. It's in the structure of the play, how that emotion comes out, how the story unfolds.

Can you describe the rehearsal process for this production?

We have a really wonderful ensemble of nine performers, all who really understand the material and they're in a process of really getting it into their bones and their souls. We're doing really fun work, which is strange for a show that is so emotional and so moving, but actually the rehearsal room is incredibly fun! I think that's important, because in order to access those deep, complicated, powerful emotions, you have to feel at ease, you have to feel relaxed. We're really just trying to find all the energy. It's a story about young people when they're six, ten, sixteen and twenty one. Young people have an incredible energy, it's innocent when they're six, it's hormonal when they're teenagers and it's something else when they're adults, but the show has to be imbued with that extraordinary energy, that extraordinary drive, it has to be fun. It has to be surprising, it has to be witty, it has to have all the chaos and passion of youth. The journey of the show is to take all of that and turn it into something else. Take the audience's heart with us, and then break it at the end before gently trying to put it back together.

How have you worked with your movement director, Ayse Tashkiran, and what does this bring to add to the play?

It's a very physical show, which doesn't mean physical theatre in a choreographed way. It's a play about people's bodies, how your body changes when you grow up and literally having bits of your body removed by the State! It's very much an ensemble piece, it's a memory play moving between past and present all the time. It's really important that we create a really strong sense of ensemble amongst our actors. All the scene changes, all the moments when a memory explodes and then vanishes have to be really finely tuned and really well drilled. I work very closely with our movement director, Ayse Tashkiran, who's brilliant and incredibly experienced. She's having a huge input, both in terms of how the show fits together - how the scenes change and how one moment crashes into another - but also working with the actors to embody what it means to be six years old, what it means to be sixteen and twenty one. We're really exploring those shifts and how the body changes when it's been operated on, when it's been injured, so it's a really physical, tactile experience.

How do you approach the intimate scenes in the play?

It's a love story, so sex and romance, those are really inherent and important elements in the story. We're doing detailed careful work on the intimacy side of things to make sure the actors feel comfortable and safe with each other, which then enables them to do stuff that is passionate and exciting. All of that sits in the play because it's a story about people who may not have long to live, but they embrace it with every fibre of their being and they live as vividly and profoundly as any of us.

How have you worked with Tom Piper, the set and costume designer?

Working with Tom Piper has been a real thrill and the design process is completely essential to how you build a show. You're literally creating a structure within which everything will happen, so a designer needs to have a really strong dramaturgical eye. They need to understand what the story is doing, it's not just about painting a pretty picture, it's about creating a sculpted space within which physical and emotional action can unfold. It's a story which deals with profound emotion and in order to do that, you have to sort of play against it. If you lean into the emotion too hard, it can become sentimental and you need to avoid that.

My watch words were that everything needs to be fast, fluid and light. One scene turns into another scene and then another scene, an actor becomes six and then sixteen and they can do that all within three lines of dialogue.

We needed to create a space that was open, that had a real light touch to it, that you could create a whole world out of one simple piece of furniture. When you're making a film you need incredible levels of details and design. What you can do in theatre is the opposite. We can conjure a front room with one chair and with the actor's response and that activates the audience's imagination. We immediately fill in all the gaps, we paint it in and do all that work ourselves and that's what makes us emotionally and imaginatively engaged.

Tom and I have been creating a design, creating a physical space that allows room for the audience's imagination. If we're filling it with our imagination, filling in the picture and painting it for ourselves, it's only then a short step to then fill it with our emotion. We see something that happens and there is a gap created between the performer on the stage and us as an audience member and we then fill that gap with emotion. So what Tom and I have been doing is creating a space that can allow the audience's emotion to resonate with the action that the actors are engaging in.





INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR AMELIE ABBOTT

Amelie plays Hannah, Chrissie and other roles in *Never Let Me Go*. Questions were provided by members of the Rose Youth Theatre.

Amelie is a recent graduate of The Brit School and Rose Youth Theatre. Credits whilst training include *The Unreturning* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Rose Theatre credits include *Peter Pan*; *A Christmas Carol*; *Beauty And The Beast*; *Our Town*; *Hansel and Gretel*; *Alice in Wonderland*; and *The Wind In The Willows*. Additional Theatre credits: *The Gunpowder Plot* (Interactive Video for Layers Reality). TV, Film and Radio credits: *The Sister Boniface Mysteries*; *Halfway*; *Freddie*; *Cur(s)ed* and *Billy Goats Gruff*, Children's Storytelling - Cartoonito

What has the rehearsal process been like so far?

The rehearsal process has been so enriching for me as a young actor. I'm so lucky to work with a cast who are so open to exploring and creating a safe and brave space. We started the first week off with table work, uniting the whole script which helped us as a cast break down the story and find the beats between each moment. This gave us a great base layer to start playing from.

What interests you about your character/s?

I play multiple characters in *Never Let Me Go*, from a child at Hailsham to a nurse in the outside world. I get to dive down into each of their thought processes and into what makes them so different. Chrissie has this complex thought process of constantly wanting to escape the reality she has been placed in, whether this is going on adventures with her friends or watching American sitcoms, while Hannah just wants to fit in with all the other kids.

Have you learnt any new skills as part of this process?

We have a beautiful movement director called Ayse Tashkiran who worked on the physicality of what it would be like to be a child again. We explored the weight distribution of our bodies and how a child views the world differently to an adult. What I discovered is how everything is massive compared to them. They live consistently in the present moment compared to adults. They don't think, they just do.

What challenges have you faced as an actor in this production of *Never Let Me Go*?

Despite learning the movement of a child and how to distinguish between an adult and a child, the play constantly jumps between the different ages; 12 years old to 6 years old to 15 years old within the space of 5 minutes! It's definitely a challenge maintaining the specificity from moment to moment and layering our child voice on top of that.

This play is also very physically and mentally demanding. Facing the themes of mortality and what it means to live a good life. This is why as an actor it's important to look after my wellbeing after every rehearsal. I achieve this by having a chat and a cup of tea with my family.

When thinking about your characters did you use any exercises to help you develop their physicality?

Before every rehearsal session, the cast collectively partakes in a yoga session. It's really useful and important to have your body warm, ready and flexible when working on such a physically demanding show. Yoga has really helped me open up my body for different types of movement.

Diving into my character's backgrounds using Uta Hagen's questions helps me as an actor understand the way the character would hold themselves. For example, Hannah (from Hailsham) has grown up in an establishment where she has been encouraged to sit up straight and behave in a polite manner in front of authority.

Did different time periods and locations affect your characterisation?

When we arrive in the cottages we meet Chrissie. She has had a very different upbringing compared to Hannah and lives in a different location. The time period is late 70s and early 80s. Therefore I portray Chrissie with a different accent to Hannah and she is much more vibrant with her movements and physically free. To help with this I love playing a 70s workout playlist to get my body moving and the blood flowing.

How have you found playing multiple roles?

Fascinatingly complicated. All of these characters' lives are so different. From having different upbringing, to different opinions about "the system". I love to create Pinterest boards for each character to help me get into the character's world visually. Costume also really helps with this, especially shoes. Shoes can tell you a lot about a person.

Chrissie is desperate to get a deferral for her and her boyfriend. The rumour is that only Hailsham students can apply. So when she meets Ruth, Tommy and Kathy, she knows this is her way into getting what she wants. She tries befriending them in the hope they can be her golden ticket. However, when a group outing goes wrong, she fears she has lost her chance of the group ever trusting her again, losing the opportunity to achieve her dream.

Have you used any vocal techniques to differentiate between your multiple roles?

We are very lucky that we have a vocal coach working in detail with us about different vocal choices; from accents to different vocal resonance to represent the different ages. For example pushing the sound to the back and top of the mouth creates a much more youthful sound, while bringing the voice into the chest brings maturity to the voice. A technique I have been using to help unlock this is by loosening my diaphragm through massage and breath control.



INTERVIEW

TOM PIPER

SET & COSTUME DESIGN

Tom Piper is an award winning set and costume designer.

The play is framed as a memory piece in which Kathy is persuaded to relive her time at Hailsham school, the relationships which she established there and the powerful impact they have had on her short life. In discussion with Christopher Haydon, the director, we wanted to give the sense of the world in which Kathy works as a carer in the centres set up for the state sanctioned harvesting of organs from the clones. We studied many references and were drawn to images of clean and light filled medical environments that showed no hint of the brutality that lies behind them. At all times the language of the play shies away from confronting the reality of what is happening, so we wanted the world to initially appear comforting.

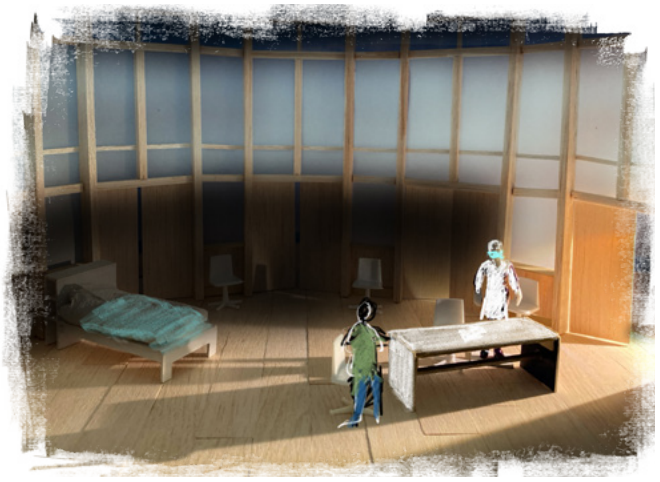
The story telling is very fluid between the memories and the journey of Kathy in her present day. As the events of the past flood in, the space transforms through light (Lighting Designer Josh Carr) to become the country

house that was the school, then later the cottages the adolescents are sent to, and the wider world beyond. Although the story is futuristic, in that it suggests a technology we have not yet mastered, let alone morally accepted, it is actually set in a parallel imagined version of the 1970s through to the late 90s.

For costume we have sourced many original period pieces for the adults while trying to stay true to the idea that everything the clones possess has come from hand me downs or charity. They live in a world with no parental influence, so once free of school, their only points of reference are fellow donors. They stand out as distinct from 'normal' society and are shunned out of fear and collective guilt at what they are being asked to suffer.



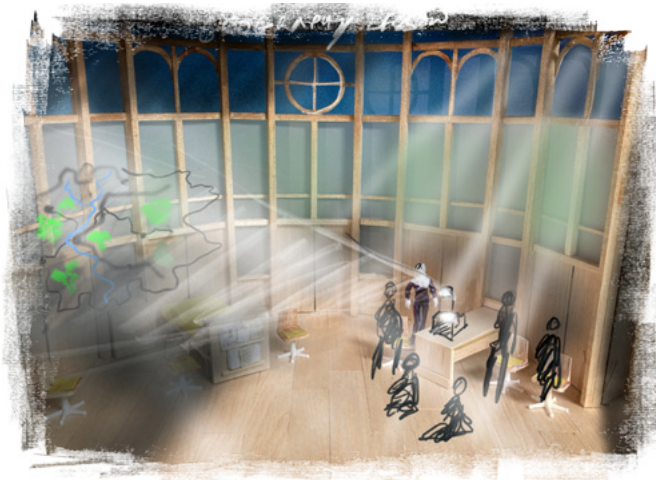
Model box: 'Art sale at Hailsham'



Model box: 'Kathy with a doctor'



Model box: 'The Cottage'



Model box: 'Geography lesson'

REHEARSAL DIARY

WEEK 1

By Emma Denson. Assistant Director of *Never Let Me Go*.

Emma Denson trained at Mississippi State University. Now based in Brooklyn, New York, she serves as the Associate Director at Origin Theatre Company, and has worked on shows at Irish Arts Center, The Irish Repertory Theatre, and Columbia University.

DAY 1

The first week of rehearsals was off with a bang with a meet and greet with the cast and creative team, and a look at the model box of the set. A model box is a small, to scale version of the set, created by the designer.

We then listened to the title song, "Never Let Me Go", composed by Eamonn O'Dwyer specifically for this production. The song is a recurring motif in the play, and beautifully captures the themes in the show.

DAYS 2-4

The next few days were filled with table work: we broke the entire script into units and analysed them as a group. We also began to construct a timeline, which is very important as this show is a memory play, and integrates a number of different time periods over the course of the play.

DAY 5

Finally, we had a larger meet and greet at the end of week one. This show is being co-produced and going on tour, so we got to meet some representatives from those theatres for the first time. Instead of having a read-through of the script, Chris (the director) had the actors do a crash-through. A crash-through is a run of the play, before any direction has been given. The cast, after having a week of table work, got to put the show on its feet for the first time, with nothing to guide them but the (limited!) stage directions, their raw impulses, and a sense of ensemble and trust in each other that already started to form over just a few days.

At the end of the week, I asked a few cast members what their favourite part of the first week was:

Susan (playing Miss Emily)

The crash run-through! Watching the actors become cohesive as an ensemble and seeing the play on its feet for the first time, and doing it in front of an audience for the first time.

Nell (playing Kathy)

Meeting everyone and being part of such a big company, and the reality of that in the room

Tilda (playing Ruth)

Biscuit Rota! (For context, Angus, playing Tommy, started the idea of every day, a different company member will bring in a new kind of biscuit. This continues to be a favourite part of rehearsal for everyone involved, as we've all got quite the sweet tooth!)

I also asked Tilda what is one thing she hopes audiences take away from the show, and her answer was beautiful:

"Hold your loved ones close and never take a moment for granted"



Marisha Wallace recording the title song for *Never Let Me Go*.
Photo: Alex Chisholm.



KEY STAGE 4

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 4 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

ACTING

Think about the performances in the play. Some actors play the same character at different ages and some actors play more than one character. Consider how the following acting techniques have been used:

Vocal

Volume, tone, pitch, pace, rhythm, accent, pause, intonation, inflection, resonance.

Physical

Posture, facial expression, eye contact, tension, pace, gesture, space, mannerisms.

Character	Vocal Performance	Physical performance	How do the actors make it clear they are different ages or characters?

KEY STAGE 4

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 4 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

SET

Think about the different locations in the play and how they have been designed. Consider how the following elements have been used by the set designer and the effect on the audience:

Colour, levels, texture, space, shape, position, scale, transitions (scene changes).

Projections, entrances and exits, set dressing (furniture), time period.

Location	Describe the set elements	Why do you think the designer has made these decisions?	What is the effect on the audience?

KEY STAGE 4

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 4 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

COSTUME

Think about the costume design and what this tells us about each character. Consider how the following elements have been used by the costume designer and the effect on the audience:

Colour, texture, fabric, style, accessories, shape, fit, condition, time period.

How does the costume design change when we see the characters at different points in their lives?

Character	Describe the costume elements	Why do you think the designer has made these decisions?	What does the costume tell the audience about the character?

KEY STAGE 4

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 4 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

LIGHTING

Think about the different locations in the play and how the lighting has been used. Consider how the following elements have been used by the lighting designer and the effect on the audience:

Colour, direction of the light (is the set/character lit from behind/front or the side).

Focus - are the edges of light soft or sharp?

Use of shadow, intensity of light (bright/dim), patterns, shape.

Transition – do the lights crossfade between scenes, is there a black out, or is the change quick and sharp?

Location	Describe the set elements	Why do you think the designer has made these decisions?	What is the effect on the audience?

KEY STAGE 5

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 5 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

PRODUCTION CONCEPT

How were the main themes of the play conveyed to the audience?

Tip: Think about decisions the director and designers have made to achieve an effect.

Describe the dramatic conventions and techniques that were used during one scene in the play and how this made you feel as an audience member.

Tip: Think about the following: how the space was used, sub-text, pacing, spatial relationships on stage, character interactions, vocal and physical performances, use of set, lighting, sound, props.

How were the key dramatic moments in the play staged?

Tip: Think about stage positioning, spatial relationship between different characters, use of levels, pace, transitions between the scenes, dramatic climax, use of set, lighting, sound, props.

KEY STAGE 5

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 5 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

PERFORMANCE SKILLS

Which performance skills were used by the actors who played different age groups. Also consider how the performers portrayed their character's decline in health.

Tip: Vocal performance: Volume, tone, pitch, pace, rhythm, accent, pause, intonation, inflection, resonance.
Physical performance: Posture, facial expression, eye contact, tension, pace, gesture, space, mannerisms

Which performance skills were used by the actors with multiple roles?

Tip: How did their physical and vocal performances change?

Can you describe the different ways that character's motivations were communicated to the audience?

Tip: Think about how subtext is used and the character's objectives and actions

KEY STAGE 5

LIVE THEATRE PRODUCTION CHECKLIST

For Key Stage 5 students coming to see *Never Let Me Go*, use the sheet below to analyse the production. You can use these notes to write about your experience in more depth.

DESIGN CONCEPT

How was the production design used to communicate different settings and the passing of time?

Tip: Think about the use of set, lights, sound and costume. What choices have the designers made and why?

How did the design reflect the social, historical and cultural context of the play?

Tip: Think about the use of set, lights, sound and costume. What choices have the designers made and why?

How was the production design used during the key dramatic moments of the play?

Tip: Think about decisions the director and designers have made to achieve an effect.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

ACTING EXERCISE ONE

Read the extracts below a few times. Make sure you read them aloud. The aim will be to create a short monologue for one of the characters in the scenes. The idea of this exercise is to help you explore the decision making of the characters. You can choose either Phillip or Kathy in the first extract or Kathy or Ruth in the second.

To do this you need to start by exploring the **who, where, what, why and when**.

Who am I?

Write down everything you know about your chosen character. Name, relationships, likes, dislikes, character traits. Anything you do not get from the text you can invent. Who are you talking to?

When is it?

When in the play does this take place, what year is it, do you know the time? Now you need to look at the year, month, time of day, season. What is the significance of this?

Where is it?

What is your location as you speak these words? Are you able to speak freely, or do you not want to be overheard? What surrounds you? How does the character feel about the space they are in?

What does your character want?

What do they want from the person they are talking to? This will help you find the character's objective or goal. What is getting in the way of your character trying to achieve this objective? This will give you the obstacle.

Why do they want this? What is motivating them?

Once you have all this information see if you can simply write in character for 5 minutes without editing anything. This will allow your thoughts to flow freely. It doesn't matter if it makes sense, you can go back and look at it afterwards. Once you have looked through your writing, see if you can edit the bits you connect with to form a short monologue. This can be a writing exercise or performed back to a group.

Voice

When you are rehearsing, think about what tone of voice your character has. What pitch they might use and why. Might their volume and tempo change at certain times according to how they are feeling. Also think about any words and phrases in your monologue that you might want to emphasise.

Physicality

Think about all the things you have discovered about your character and how this might affect their posture, gait and body language towards others.

ACTING EXERCISE 2

Subtext

What is not said. We can tell so much about characters and their relationships from what is not said out loud. Have a look at the extracts below and think about what is going on underneath each line.

For each line of dialogue write down what the character is not saying. This will help you to understand the intention behind each line.

DESIGN EXERCISE 1

If you had to create a costume design for Tommy, Ruth and Kathy what would you choose to represent their personalities and relationship with others? Think about the mood and atmosphere. Think closely about accessories, hair and make up. Be specific with your choices. You could draw pictures or create a mood board.

DESIGN EXERCISE 2

In the production of *Never let me Go*, locations move very quickly. If you were the lighting designer how would you use lights to help with these location changes.

Think about the following locations: The facility where Philip and Kathy are, a Hailsham classroom, The Cottages, a hospital room, by the sea.

Extract one

Phillip: So it's true what they say about Hailsham then?

A low hum. Kathy remains focused on the forms.

Kathy: I've no idea what they say.

Phillip: Oh come on. You must know. Hailsham's legendary.

The hum gets louder.

Phillip: I tell you what. I'd rather hear about Hailsham than some crappy old book.

The hum gets louder.

Phillip: Were you one of the ones to get a deferral? Is that why you're still doing this?

Kathy continues working on the forms.

Phillip: It's funny. You get this look. This expression. Every time I mention it. Hailsham.

The hum gets louder.

Phillip: It's like you're. Scared.

Kathy: *(slamming her file closed)* Enough!

Phillip: What?

Kathy: I've had enough. Of you Phillip. I've had enough of you. Kathy starts packing her things away.

Phillip: I don't understand –

Kathy: Everything's a battle. Filling out your forms. Taking your vitals. Finding ways for you to pass the time –

Phillip: Is this because I don't read –

Kathy: This isn't working. You need a different carer.

Phillip: What? No! Look I know I'm a bit of a prick sometimes.. But that's just me.

Phillip: Honestly. Changing carer won't help. I'm like it with everyone.

Kathy stands with her back to Phillip, closes her eyes.

Phillip: I'm sorry I didn't think it would upset you. About Hailsham. I won't mention it again. I promise. Kathy? The way people talk about it. I'd assumed Hailsham was amazing. That your memories would be good.

Kathy: They are but. She looks at Phillip.

Kathy: They are.

Phillip: The thing is. You have all this time to prepare for being in here. But it's only once you are that you realise. All you have to think about. Are the things in your head. And I don't like what's in my head.

Kathy looks at Phillip.

Extract 2

Kathy and Ruth (16) are brushing their teeth next to one another, before bed. They look at each other straight ahead, as if seeing one another in the sink mirrors in front of them.

Ruth: Today she asked Miss Lucy if she'd ever smoked.

Kathy: What did Miss Lucy say?

Ruth: Well that was the even crazier thing. She said she did smoke once. When she was very young.

Kathy: You're joking?

Ruth: But that it was different for her because she's a normal and smoking is so much worse for us blah blah blah. Miss Lucy really is going barmy if you ask me. Yesterday I walked past classroom six and she was in there on her own. Muttering to herself under her breath "It's not right. It's not right."

Kathy: Maybe she's overworked. With all our end of term exams and things.

They brush their teeth.

Ruth: Kath. You get on with Tommy don't you?

Kathy: I suppose.

Ruth: Would you say you were friends? Like good friends?

Kathy: I don't know.

Ruth: Well would you feel weird if something happened. Between me and Tommy.

Kathy: What? Like sex?

Ruth: *(laughing)* Oh Kath. You're such a prude. Yes. Like sex. It's just. I'm fairly certain he wants to do it with me. And I think he's OK. At least. He's better than most the boys in our year. But I wanted to check you hadn't got there first.

Kathy: No. No I would have told you if I'd. No.

Ruth: OK. That's good. Because we've already done it.

Kathy stops brushing her teeth.

Ruth: Don't say a word to Tommy. Not a word. We said we wouldn't tell anyone. But I've been dying to tell you.

Kathy: Do you think you'll do it again?

Ruth: *(shrugs)* It seemed like a one time thing.

Kathy remains still.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Below are some links to videos which complement the content in this pack.
You may wish to use these as visual aids when studying this production.

Recording the Title Song with Marisha Wallace

<https://youtu.be/xWSk0x2iJx0>

Behind the Scenes in Rehearsals

<https://youtu.be/QbwhN8xIsME>

IN CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR CHRISTOPHER HAYDON

The Story

<https://youtu.be/8ZaCGSuk2Kw>

Director & Writer Collaboration

<https://youtu.be/XxbinFq2rcw>

Director & Designer Collaboration

<https://youtu.be/PZGmrq916Qs>

The Rehearsal Process

<https://youtu.be/-BGQyCMAyc>

Movement

<https://youtu.be/7RUTFYMnXIO>

Trust and Safety

https://youtu.be/bgOF6OTv_LI



never let me go

CREDITS

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