Kindertransport
by Diane Samuels
Education Pack by Gillian King
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The Pack

This pack is intended as an introduction and follow up to seeing a performance of *Kindertransport*. I've included background material, such as the history and culture of the time, and also information specifically on our production, which includes interviews with the Creative Team.

Although this cannot be an exhaustive account, I hope that it introduces some of the ideas and approaches central to Shared Experience and this production. Scattered through the pack are questions and exercises that I hope will be useful in stimulating discussion and practical work of your own.

Gillian King

Company Credo

We are committed to creating a theatre that goes beyond our everyday lives, giving form to the hidden world of emotion and imagination. We see the rehearsal process as a genuinely open forum for asking questions and taking risks that redefine the possibilities of performance.

At the heart of our work is the POWER and EXCITEMENT of the performer's physical presence and the unique collaboration between actor and audience – a SHARED EXPERIENCE.
Expressionism at Shared Experience

In our everyday lives we hide much of what we think and feel, for fear we would be considered foolish or even mad. I believe we have a longing to see expressed in the theatre that which we conceal in life; to share our ‘madness’ and understand that we are not alone.

Central to Shared Experience’s approach is the desire to go beyond naturalism and to see into the character’s private world. There will be moments on stage when we literally enact whatever a character is secretly feeling or imagining. In more realistic scenes the social façade is a thin layer beneath which bubbles a river of suppressed emotion. During rehearsals we encourage actors to allow this bubbling emotional energy to explode and take over. In a scene where someone is secretly feeling very angry, when we allow the inner to erupt onto the surface, they may viciously attack the other person; if the other character is feeling afraid they might crawl under the table. Having allowed the inner to erupt, the actor must return to the scene and struggle to conceal it. Although we may see two people drinking tea, we sense that underneath the social ritual, it is as if murder is taking place.

This emphasis on subjective experience runs through all areas of the production. For example, the setting of the play will be more expressive of what a place feels like than what it realistically looks like. In Jane Eyre everything on stage was grey or black to express the loneliness of Jane’s inner world. In War and Peace the set was a hall of mirrors to suggest the vanity and narcissism of the aristocracy in Tolstoy’s Russia. In The House of Bernarda Alba the house feels like a prison. We decided to make the door colossal and encrusted it with locks and bolts. In previous productions of Kindertransport the attic has been filled with junk. We decided to make the space more austere, the debris of the past hidden in cases and wardrobes, as a reflection of Evelyn’s inner state. It is this emphasis on the ‘inner’ or the subjective experience which characterises expressionism and it is at the heart of Shared Experience’s approach.

Polly Teale
Three incidents led me to write *Kindertransport*. The first was a discussion with a close friend, in her late twenties and born into a comfortable, secure home, who described her struggle to deal with the guilt of survival. Her father had been on the Kindertransport and I was struck by how her parent’s feelings had been passed down so fully to her. The second was the experience of another friend who, at her father’s funeral, overheard her mother recalling her time at Auschwitz. Until that moment she had had no idea that her mother had been in a concentration camp. The third was the ashamed admission by a fifty-five year old woman on a television documentary about the Kindertransport, that the feeling she felt most strongly towards her dead parents was rage at their abandonment of her, even though that abandonment had saved her life. What is the cost of survival? What future grows out of a traumatised past?

Past and present are wound around each other throughout the play. They are not distinct but inextricably connected. The re-running of what happened many years ago is not there to explain how things are now, but is a part of the inner life of the present.

I interviewed a number of the Kinder as part of my research. They were all very open about their lives and feelings. Many of the actual experiences are woven into the fabric of the play. Although Eva/Evelyn and her life are fictional, most of what happens to her did happen to someone, somewhere.

Since the first production of *Kindertransport* at the Cockpit Theatre in London in 1993, the play has been performed in a vast array of places. It has had a flourishing life in the United States since it was produced off-Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York in 1994 and has enjoyed numerous productions, both amateur and professional, from Santa Cruz to Buffalo. More surprisingly, it won an array of prestigious awards for a production in Japan. It has been produced at the Market Theatre of Johannesburg in South Africa and toured Israel. I met an Israeli playwright and wondered aloud to her why it took a while for the play to be produced there. ‘Ah, in Israel’, she replied, ‘We have had enough of the Holocaust. We have other concerns we want to explore, we have done this enough.’ I in turn replied that the play is not about the Holocaust, not a history play at all, and certainly does explore territory to which Israelis can relate very directly: the question of how human beings survive after they have suffered deep emotional trauma and how the damage caused is passed onto the following generation. Also, at its heart, the play is about that universal and timeless aspect of human experience: the separation of a child from its parent. Every person on earth, whatever their age, can relate to that.
What does Kindertransport mean?

The German word ‘Kindertransport’ translated literally into English means ‘the transportation of children’. It was how Jewish parents, in desperation, tried to get their children out of the growing Nazi territory.

In Britain, a coalition of Jewish, Quaker and other groups appealed to Parliament, which agreed to admit a limited number of refugee children between the ages of 5 and 17, provided each posted a £50 bond ‘to assure their ultimate resettlement’. The coalition provided the money and from late 1938, children began leaving Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia by train.

In the nine months before World War II began, nearly 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish and other children escaped from Germany on trains headed for the freedom of Britain. All hoped it would be a brief separation, for most it was a final farewell. The last train left Germany just two days before the start of the war.

The Journey

The Nazis made sure the journey was humiliating and terrifying. Trains were grimly sealed. The children had to take trains to Holland so that they would not ‘sully’ German ports. Their luggage was torn apart by guards searching for valuables. In some cities, parents were not even allowed to say goodbye at the train stations so as to avoid any public spectacle.

In Holland, the trains were met by committees of volunteers, who gave the children refreshments and helped them board the boats taking them to their new homes.

Arrival

The first Kindertransport ferries arrived in Britain in early December 1938, each carrying about 200 children. Thereafter, about two transports per week landed until June and July 1939, when they landed daily. The organisation, which found accommodation for the children in Britain, was called the Movement for the Care of Children from Germany (later shortened to the Refugee Children’s Movement). The Movement generally billeted or fostered the children with local families, or settled them at orphanages or other institutions around the country.
The Kinder

‘It is not a small thing, in these years of suffering without parallel, to have given to ten thousand children the opportunity to grow up in an atmosphere of decency and normality, to work, to play, to laugh and be happy and to assume their rightful heritage as free men and women’ Dorothy Hardisty, General Secretary of the Refugee Children’s Movement

Between December 1938 and September 1939, the RCM (Refugee Children’s Movement) brought over 9,354 refugee children. Of these 7,482 were Jewish. In addition to these, many more children came, including:

• 431 children sponsored by Inter-Aid in the months before Kristallnacht
• 700+ who came to Britain under the auspices of Youth Aliyah
• 100 orthodox children rescued by Rabbi Schonfeld and the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations
• Polish and Czech refugees

The total is thought to be well over 10,000.

By the end of 1939, only 331 of these children had re-emigrated, to join their parents or relatives, mostly in Palestine or the United States.

It needs very little imagination to appreciate the anguish of parents, bundling their young children onto trains and sending them off to an unknown land. This was all under the gaze of the Nazi police and bullying, unsympathetic officials. This was, after all, long before the age of mass travel to all parts of the world, and few parents, and far fewer children, had any knowledge or understanding at all of Britain or any other country, nor even of long distance travel by train across whole countries. Few would even have seen the sea.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene One

The RATCATCHER plays his music.
The sounds of the railway station become louder and louder.
Another train whistle.

EVA Mutti! Vati! Hello! Hello! See. I did get into the carriage. I said I would. See, I’m not crying. I said I wouldn’t. I can’t open the window! It’s sealed tight! Why’ve you taken your gloves off? You’re knocking too hard. Your knuckles are going red! What? I can’t hear you!

Sound of long, shrill train whistle.

Louder! Louder! What! I can’t hear! I can’t . . . I love you too . . . See you in England.
What's Eva like?
She's very strong-willed and determined, hard-working and proud. These are traits she gets from her mother. But she's also desperately scared of being abandoned and she is very lonely.

What research helps you with your characterisation?
For me, it's mainly visual, rather than reading a lot about the country and era. I like to see pictures and think that that's what Eva looked at, that's what her world looked like. I've also read first-hand accounts of the children's experiences in And the Policeman Smiled by Barry Turner which helped enormously.

I will go to the zoo to look at the different animals to see what animal Eva is like. This helps me physically embody Eva. At the moment I think she's like a big bird, powerful but flustered, graceful and proud but who could snap at any time. I think Eva has quite a nervous internal rhythm.

How do you find working with Shared Experience?
It's great. It's a very physical process, which I like, and which allows you to be very expressive. Right on the first day we were playing games and trying out ideas so we all made fools of ourselves and that really broke the ice! Now it's very easy to experiment and push boundaries.

And the Policeman Smiled, Barry Turner

‘First memories are of the railway station. Few of the children can immediately recall what happened in the days and weeks before the journey. It is as if their parents deliberately made life as ordinary as possible in a vain attempt to ease the inevitable trauma, or simply as a way of holding off reality.

They gathered in small groups, usually in the early morning when there were few other travellers about, the boys fidgeting in thick tweed suits, the girls more comfortable in woolly dresses and long coats buttoned up to the neck. Each child had a suitcase.

Little was said. The parents were tongue-tied by emotion, the children bewildered into silence. Only the teenagers had any clear idea as to why they were going away. The youngest were mostly consoled by fantasy – that they were off on holiday, or to stay with relatives for just a few weeks. Some were not told anything. It was worst for them.’
Refugees and displaced persons, unlike migrants, are not dreaming of different lives. They are usually ordinary people - ‘innocent civilians’, in the language of diplomats – going about their lives as farmers or students or housewives until their fates are violently altered by repression or war. Suddenly, along with losing their homes, jobs, and perhaps even some loved ones, they are stripped even of their identity. They become people on the run, faces on television footage or in photographs, numbers in refugee camps, long lines awaiting food handouts. It is a cruel contract: in exchange for survival, they must surrender their dignity.

They are also rarely able to put their lives together again, or at least not as before. Some become permanent refugees, permanent camp-dwellers, like the Palestinians in Lebanon. Their lives acquire a certain stability but, as victims of politics, they remain vulnerable to politics. Some can go home, but choose not to, having built alternative lives that offer more security. Others who do eventually return to their countries have become different people, perhaps more politicized, certainly more urbanized.

But no matter what their final destination is, all are forced to live with what they have learned about human nature. They have seen friends and relatives tortured, murdered, or ‘disappeared’, they have cowered in basements as their towns have been shelled, they have seen their homes burned to the ground. I would watch children laughing and playing soccer in refugee camps and wonder what hidden wounds they carried inside them. All too often, refugees have little say in the political, ethnic, or religious conflicts that degrade into atrocities. How can they be consoled when they have seen humanity at its worst?

Sebastião Salgado
Refugee Blues

Say this city has ten million souls,
Some are living in mansions, some are living in holes:
Yet there’s no place for us, my dear, yet there’s no place for us.

Once we had a country and we thought it fair,
Look in the atlas and you’ll find it there:
We cannot go there now, my dear, we cannot go there now.

In the village churchyard there grows an old yew,
Every spring it blossoms anew;
Old passports can’t do that, my dear, old passports can’t do that.

The consul banged the table and said:
‘If you’ve got no passport, you’re officially dead’;
But we are still alive, my dear, but we are still alive.

Went to a committee; they offered me a chair;
Asked me politely to return next year:
But where shall we go today, my dear, but where shall we go today?

Came to a public meeting; the speaker got up and said:
‘If we let them in, they will steal our daily bread’;
He was talking of you and me, my dear, he was talking of you and me.

Thought I heard the thunder rumbling in the sky;
It was Hitler over Europe, saying: ‘They must die’;
We were in his mind, my dear, we were in his mind.

Saw a poodle in a jacket fastened with a pin,
Saw a door opened and a cat let in:
But they weren’t German Jews, my dear, but they weren’t German Jews.

Went down the harbour and stood upon the quay,
Saw the fish swimming as if they were free:
Only ten feet away, my dear, only ten feet away.

Walked through a wood, saw the birds in the trees;
They had no politicians and sang at their ease:
They weren’t the human race, my dear, they weren’t the human race.

Dreamed I saw a building with a thousand floors,
A thousand windows and a thousand doors;
Not one of them was ours, my dear, not one of them was ours.

Stood on a great plain in the falling snow;
Ten thousand soldiers marched to and fro:
Looking for you and me, my dear, looking for you and me.

W H Auden

Refugee Figures

Currently 52% of the world’s 22.7 million refugees and other ‘persons of concern’ to UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency) are children and adolescents under the age of 18. In some refugee situations this figure rises to 65%. Every day of the year, over 5,000 more children become refugees; 1 in every 230 people in the world is a child or adolescent who has been forced into flight.

‘A child is an orphan when he has no parents
A nation is an orphan when it has no children’
Timeline 1918-1939

1918
November - Germany finally collapsed, signalling the end of WWI.
Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated and fled to exile in Holland.
Emperor Charles of Austro-Hungary abdicated.
Germany signed the armistice on November 11 and at 11am, The Great War ended.

1919
Treaty of Versailles was signed.
For the most part, Germany was allowed to keep its borders, but to satisfy France, had to agree to massive reparations – which it could not hope to meet and thus did not meet.
German National Socialist Workers’ Party (NSDAP or Nazi party) was founded in Munich. One of many such groups formed at this time, it called for ‘the uniting of all Germans within one greater Germany’ and insisted that only ‘persons of German blood’ could be nationals. Adolf Hitler, a former corporal in the Great War, joined during its early days and began to organise and strengthen the party. Hitler, even in those early days, already held strongly anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik views, often grouping the two together as the ‘Jewish-Bolshevik’ tyranny.

1923
France occupied the Ruhr because of German non-payment of reparations. Hyperinflation occurred in Germany. Fear of German collapse lead Britain and America to persuade France to withdraw.
Hitler attempted to seize power in Bavaria (the ‘Beer Hall Putsch’), aiming to march on Berlin and overthrow the Weimar Republic. The attempt failed, Hitler was arrested and imprisoned.
Hindenberg was elected President of Germany.

1926
General strike in Britain and much labour unrest. There was unease amongst the ruling classes at the ‘rise of the masses’. This contributed to a vague desire for a strong Germany, as a bulwark against the Bolsheviks in the east.

1928
The Nazis failed to gain widespread support in the Reichstag elections, polling only 800,000 votes (12 seats).

1929
The first Labour government was elected in Britain.
The Wall Street crash in America. The Great Depression began.

1930
Effects of US Depression were felt across Europe. This led to significant gains for the Nazis in the 1930 elections (18.3% of the vote and 107 seats in the Reichstag, making it the second largest party in Germany).

1931
Alfonso XIII abdicated and Spain became a republic.

1932
New Reichstag elections - the Nazis became the largest party with 37.3% of the votes and 230 seats. Over this period, Hitler toned down much of his anti-Semitic rhetoric and concentrated more on German nationalism, he won much support from the unemployed, the disaffected middle classes and younger people.

1933
Hitler became Chancellor and anti-Semitism immediately moved back to centre-stage. On April 1st, an official one-day boycott of Jewish shops and businesses was proclaimed. For many Jews this was the first shocking realisation that they were becoming the target of hate.
Only about 10% of German Jews had left the country by this time, having had to forfeit most of their property as the price for emigration. Apart from this forfeiture of property, emigration as impoverished refugees to countries which were themselves suffering harsh economic depression, was not an option that many Jews wanted to consider. About 200,000 Jews left Germany during the first six years of Nazi Government, with most – over 130,000 – going to America, 55,000 to the British Mandate of Palestine (later to become Israel), about 40,000 to Britain, 20,000 to South America and smaller numbers to Shanghai, Australia and South Africa.
The burning of the Reichstag led Hitler to move against all dissident groups - communists, trade unionists as well as Jews. All civil liberties were abolished and the Enabling Law gave him dictatorial powers. For many Germans, these acts presented no problem, since it was commonly perceived that Hitler had given Germany back her pride, confidence and respect and finally erased the spectre of defeat and shame of 1918.
1934  Hitler strengthened his position by moving against many of his original supporters – in particular, the ‘Brown-shirts’ led by Ernst Rohm – who might have constituted a threat to him. The so-called ‘Night of the Long Knives’.

1935  The Nuremburg Laws deprived German Jews of their civil rights and banned marriages between Jews and Aryans. Spain’s left-wing won a majority in the national elections, which prompted the onset of the Spanish Civil War.

1936  The Berlin Olympics.

Germany reoccupied the Rhineland. No action was taken by the Western Powers.

Rome-Berlin Axis was formed between Italy and Germany.

Italy and Germany recognised the fascist general, Franco, as the legitimate leader of Spain.

France and Britain decided not to intervene in the Spanish Civil war, despite overt German and Italian support for General Franco. Nonetheless, many volunteers travelled to fight for the Republican cause.

In Britain, Edward VIII abdicated.

1937  In Spain, Guernica bombed by the German ‘Condor Legion’.

1938  ‘The Anschluss’, or peaceful annexation of Austria within the Reich. The intensity of anti-Semitic feeling and actions was said to have amazed even the Germans. The German model of rapid and radical anti-Jewish measures was immediately adopted by Austria.

Jews were obliged to report their total assets. Plans were initiated for the full scale ‘Aryanisation’ of Jewish businesses.

Western democracies finally woke up to the scale of anti-Jewish brutality, legislation and attitudes. Efforts were then made to facilitate Jewish emigration, but most countries were reluctant to take in more refugees, and cited various problems of their own, such as unemployment, which was still high following the depression and a reluctance to import ‘racial problems’.

17,000 Polish Jews living in Germany were expelled en masse and deposited on the Polish border. Poland refused them entry.

In response to this, a German diplomat in Paris was assassinated by a young Jewish man. Germany was outraged, declared it an ‘act of war’ by the world-wide Jewish community and unleashed ‘Krystallnacht’ – acts of extreme violence against Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues and against any Jews caught in the open. More than 400 synagogues and 7000 business premises were looted and burned, many Jews were murdered and thousands rounded up and summarily herded off to concentration camps.

‘Krystallnacht’ sped up efforts to evacuate Jewish children from Germany. This programme – advocated and organised by Jews themselves within Germany – allowed only young children to leave and only if countries could be found to accept them. Very few countries were willing to accept refugees, and even when they did arrive, they had no plans to cope with them.

America refused to relax its rigid immigration restrictions and all told, only 433 children were allowed in, all through the efforts of private individuals. Britain took 10,000 and appeals were made by the BBC for foster homes.

Germany occupied the Czech Sudetenland. Chamberlain made his infamous ‘Peace in our time’ speech, on his return from Munich, which accepted Hitler’s actions.

1939  The final collapse of the left in the Spanish Civil War and the formation of a Fascist government under Franco.

Germany occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Italy invaded Albania.

Germany signed a non-aggression pact with Russia.

Germany invaded Poland.

Britain and France declared war on Germany : WWII
Excerpt from *Kindertransport*: Act One, Scene One 1939

HELGA  Put the heel of the right shoe to your ear.

EVA  Why?

HELGA  Do it.

EVA puts the heel to her ear.

HELGA  What can you hear?

EVA  It sounds like . . .

HELGA  Yes?

EVA  Ticking.

HELGA  My gold watch is in there.

EVA  How?

HELGA  The cobbler did it.

EVA  I’ll look after it for you.

HELGA  And in the other heel are two rings, a chain with a Star of David and a charm bracelet for you. All made of gold.

EVA  For me?

HELGA  From my jewellery box. A travelling gift.

EVA  Thank you.

HELGA  My grandfather used to wear a black hat and coat. ‘You are my children. You are my jewels.’ He told me. ‘We old ones invest our future in you.’

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Act Two, Scene One 1947

Evelyn is 17. She re-meets her mother, Helga, after the war has ended.

HELGA  I am sorry that there has been such a delay. It was not of my making. (Pause.) I am your Mutti, Eva.

EVA  Evelyn.

HELGA  Eva. Now I am here, you have back your proper name.

EVA  Evelyn is on my naturalisation papers.

HELGA  Naturalised as English?

EVA  And adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Miller.

HELGA  How can you be adopted when your own mother is alive for you?

EVA  I thought that you were not alive.

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Consider the time that has passed since Mother and Daughter were last together. How much of Helga’s experiences during that time does Eva know about? What do you feel Eva’s fears and expectations are on meeting her Mother again? What do you think Helga understands of Eva’s life in the UK and what are her fears and hopes?
An Interview with Peter Salem - Composer

*Kindertransport* follows Eva on her escape from Nazi Germany and her subsequent decision to reject her Jewish faith and culture. Musically how do you show these changes?

Like the watch and bracelet, Eva’s mouth organ and the simple tune which she can play on it are links to her Jewish background which she carries with her and which symbolise her increasingly fragile and ultimately broken ties with her cultural past. At one stage in the play, in the attic, Evelyn doesn’t even recognise the instrument illustrating her total separation from her background.

Also the Ratcatcher’s music, which in some way draws her away from her Jewish culture, also has a Jewish flavour when he represents a mirror to her Jewishness - holding up an image to her of what she is trying to deny or pull away from.

**How do you approach a character such as the Ratcatcher musically?**

The Ratcatcher has the power to draw people away - from parents, countries, mothers, faiths, cultures. He is associated with trains, boats and death itself. Therefore his music seems to need a mesmeric quality, an ability to draw people in, lure them in a direction they didn’t want to go in, make them want to locate the source of that sound.

I didn’t want his music to be inherently Jewish but to be able to take on the characteristics of Jewish music when it seemed appropriate i.e. when Eva/Evelyn feels pulled towards the culture from which she is striving to escape.

**What instruments are you using and why?**

Polly and I were both concerned with not making the Ratcatcher ‘folksy’. And there seemed to be a danger in going for the ‘pipe’ of the Pied Piper of Hamlyn if we weren’t careful. Polly had the idea of using a mouth organ (or harmonica) because not only does it have a rougher edge - connotations with down-and-outs and vagrants - but also connects with Eva and the mouth organ of her childhood.

And since the Ratcatcher is a product of her imagination and even an aspect of her psyche, this link between Eva and the Ratcatcher seemed to be quite compelling.

In addition, the sound of the mouth organ is haunting and has a reedy, breathy, at times even wheezy, quality and also a sound which can easily mutate into the sound of a train’s hooter or ship’s horn strengthening the connection between the Ratcatcher and these vehicles of separation.

**What are the major challenges for you?**

Learning how to write for mouth organ - and discovering what a fascinating instrument it is. Using elements of Jewish music without doing so in a clichéd way.

**Exercise**

In small groups using just your voices create a theme for Eva/Evelyn and a theme for the Ratcatcher.
The Ratcatcher

Except from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene One

HELGA Which story do you want?
EVA The Ratcatcher.

FAITH pulls out a hard-backed children’s story book identical to the one HELGA is holding.

Pipe music.

FAITH ‘Der Rattenfänger’.

HELGA Not that one, Eva.
EVA You said I could choose.
HELGA Choose something else.
EVA I don’t want anything else.

In 1284, the town of Hamelin was suffering from a dreaded rat infestation. One day, a man claiming to be a rat catcher approached the villagers with a solution. They promised him a shilling for the head of each rat. The man accepted and thus took a pipe and lured the rats with a song into the Weser river, where all 999,999 drowned.

Despite his success, the people reneged on their promise and refused to pay the rat catcher, on the basis that he had failed to produce the heads of the rats (which were, of course, still attached to their bodies in the river). The man left the town without argument, but returned several weeks later seeking revenge.

While the inhabitants were in the church, he played his pipe again, this time attracting the children of Hamelin. One hundred and thirty boys and girls followed him out of the town, where they were lured into a cave and sealed inside. Depending on the version, at most two children remained behind. Other versions claim that the Piper returned the children after the villagers paid several times the original amount of gold.

The earliest mention of the story seems to have been on a stained glass window placed in the church of Hamelin c.1300. The window was described in several accounts between the 14th century and the 17th century but it seems to have been destroyed.
The Ratcatcher in Kindertransport
Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene One

HELGA Beware little children. Take heed and learn the lesson of Hamlyn where one bad soul brought tragedy upon the whole town.

FAITH Hamburg. 1939.

HELGA Happy Hamlyn after the rats had been led away . . .

FAITH carefully looks at the first page.

HELGA A town teeming with life. Full to overflowing. And every day, the good people counted their blessings. Every single one . . . Eva?

EVA I’m listening.

FAITH (looking at a picture). Counting their blessings for being so lucky . . .

HELGA They all knew how fortunate they were. All except for one very wicked soul who was ungrateful and did not count.

FAITH (looking at another picture). Mr. Ingratitude. Jesus.

HELGA ‘We are forgotten. We are lost. We are destroyed’ cried out all the uncounted blessings.

FAITH The cloud . . .

HELGA Then a cloud appeared in the clear, blue sky casting a shadow down below.

RATCATCHER Who is not counting?

HELGA Whispered the shadow.

RATCATCHER Who has forgotten their blessings?

HELGA It hissed.

RATCATCHER I will find you.

HELGA It spat.

RATCATCHER I will search you out whoever wherever you are.

FAITH (turning onto another page). My God, and the shadow growing legs . . .

HELGA ‘ . . . and strong arms and spiky nails . . . ’

EVA And eyes sharp as razors.

FAITH The Ratcatcher.

The shadow of the RATCATCHER hovers.
A train whistle blows. Sounds of a busy railway station.

HELGA remains stuck in bedtime story mode. EVA puts on her coat and hat and label with her number on it – 3362.

HELGA The Ratcatcher searched for the ungrateful one. He searched and searched but all in vain.

RATCATCHER Who will make up for the lost blessings?

HELGA He raged.

RATCATCHER If not the one guilty soul, then all.

HELGA And he raised an enchanted pipe to his snarling lip, making a cruel promise to all the people of Hamlyn.

RATCATCHER I will take the heart of your happiness away.

The RATCATCHER plays his music.
The Ratcatcher in *Kindertransport*

In rehearsals Polly, the director, and the cast looked through the book *Struwwelpeter* by Dr. Heinrich Hoffman. This was a book that Polly’s own father had brought back for her from a trip he made to Germany and Polly said that, like Eva, she was both fascinated and scared by the stories.

The stories with accompanying pictures tell macabre tales of children who suck their thumbs and get them sliced off by Mr Suck-a-Thumb (a kind of Ratcatcher figure) or are burnt to death because they played with matches. It warns that children must be very good at all times, or else..!

Polly and the cast discussed what the Ratcatcher might represent in this play and what he could express in this production. These are the words they listed:

- Punishment
- Guilt
- Greediness
- Fear
- Poverty
- Persecution
- The abyss
- Torture
- Loss
- Separation
- Abandonment
- Rage
- Hunger
- Deceit
- Fascism
- Hitler
- The evil you don’t understand
- Concentration camps
- Being trapped
- Anti-Semitism
- Decay
- Degeneration
- Illness
- Death

Question

Have we missed anything out? What does the Ratcatcher mean to you?

Exercise

In groups, act out the scene on page 16, with at least one person playing the Ratcatcher (several people could play him either as one body or portraying several elements of his character).

Do your characters see or feel him? How does his presence in the scene affect how the other actors play their parts?
How do you physically and vocally begin to create a character like the Ratcatcher?

We do a lot of physical work with Polly and Liz Ranken (Movement Director) in rehearsals. In one exercise we (the cast) created a wild pack of dogs and slowly through this I was able to start creating the physicality of the Ratcatcher. He’s very mercurial, with constantly changing energy levels depending on whom or what is around him.

What is the Ratcatcher?

He represents what the other characters are repressing, he physically changes depending on what he’s expressing at that precise moment.

He is everything you try to run away from - everything you fear, and because you fear it, you try and suppress it and the more you suppress it, the stronger the Ratcatcher becomes!

With Evelyn, she’s made a decision to lie about her past and I’ve come to embody that lie.

How does the set and staging help your characterisation?

Well it’s set in an attic (which itself represents a place where secrets are stored and hidden) and he’s omnipresent, he creeps through walls or out of suitcases. As an animal he’s rather like a mole buried in the dark, hidden away, but then Faith opens up the book and he’s released like a genie out of a bottle!

All the other characters I play, like the Nazi, the organiser, the station guard and so, all come out of the Ratcatcher.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene One

RATCATCHER  Who has forgotten their blessings?
HELGA     It hissed.
RATCATCHER  I will find you.
HELGA     It spat.
RATCATCHER  I will search you out whoever wherever you are.
FAITH     (turning onto another page)
          My God, and the shadow growing legs...

The shadow of the RATCATCHER hovers.
The Post WWI Period

The collapse of the old pre-war empires – Russia coupled with the rise of the Bolsheviks, Austro-Hungary, the Turkish Empire and of the Kaiser's Germany itself - ensured more decades of instability and unrest. Long subjugated nationalisms resurfaced, fuelled by poverty and resentment against those leaders and bureaucrats whose grandiose ambitions had led to war and collapse. A new polarity began to emerge, with Bolshevik Russia seen by many on the left as the new hope for the future, but by others as an alarming threat with visions of chaotic rule by the masses and the collapse of any semblance of public order. In Germany, the civilian government established after the war – the Weimar Republic – was far too weak to establish a strong sense of national unity. It was impoverished by the massive reparations demanded of Germany at the Treaty of Versailles, crippled by hyperinflation and, in any event, few Germans were sympathetic to a civilian government which they saw as responsible for Germany's military collapse in 1918. Small wonder that this period saw the rise of splinter groups both on the far right and on the far left. Hitler and his embryonic Nazi party were, early in these post war years, just one of many such groups.

The Jews

Before the Nazis came to power during the 30s, Jews lived amicably in Germany. Many, if not most, considered themselves more German than Jewish. They had fought honourably during the 1st World War, they were generally law-abiding, skilful workers or successful industrialists and many were accomplished musicians and scientists. They suffered, as much as any, the sense of shame and betrayal following Germany's collapse in 1918 and the deprivation and hyperinflation of the Weimar republic. For the most part, they considered themselves thoroughly 'Germanised' and accepted as Germans, with no sense of foreboding for the future.

In terms of numbers, Jews accounted for about 1% of Germany's population and had little or no political influence. However, they constituted 11% of its doctors and 16% of its lawyers and tended to be successful shopkeepers and small businessmen. It is probable that, by virtue of their success in these professions, they may have suffered less during the years of hyperinflation than others and thus laid the foundation for much middle-class jealousy and professional resentment.

There were many other factors contributing to a slow but steady build up of anti-Semitism during this period. The far right was active in its search for communists, black marketeers and profiteers, as well as trade-unionists and liberals, all of whom were singled out as responsible for Germany's collapse in 1918 and, inevitably, Jews were lumped into these groups. A steady stream of impoverished Polish Jews into Germany was another visible example of the 'Jewish problem', especially in the bigger cities to which they naturally gravitated in search of work.
As Germany prepared for and carried out World War II, it implemented a variety of forms of propaganda. This was necessary for several reasons, but primarily to serve two main Nazi agendas. It was important to convince the public to fight and that it was necessary to fight. Germany had just recently gone through a power struggle establishing the Nazi Party as superior over the socialists, but it still lacked enough political support to go to war. The main body of German propaganda consists of material increasing or fueling the wartime effort. Also, Hitler and many of the higher Nazi leaders harbored racist attitudes and wished to begin the extermination of races they deemed inferior. Although there was some discontent between the German Jews and other Germans already, it was still necessary to convince the German population that action was necessary against them. This anti-Semitic material formed the second main body of German propaganda.

German wartime propaganda utilised a variety of forms in its delivery. Much of the propaganda was implemented through the recently invented radio, as well as through speeches from the main Nazi leaders. Posters and other visual material were also widely circulated and vital to the persuasion. Much other visual and printed material (such as books and leaflets) was only circulated to specific groups, such as Nazi party members or soldiers. However, almost all the propaganda was spread though a variety of media.

Many posters served to dehumanise the German Jews. The film *The Eternal Jew* compares the Jewish people to rats. By dehumanising Jews, the Nazi leaders began to prepare for Hitler’s ‘Final Solution’. The Nazi leaders knew that when the deportations began it would be much easier for the German people to watch friends and neighbours shipped away if they associated them with rats or with age-old stereotypes. The propaganda was able to play off the existing racial difficulties in Germany as well as to enhance the original nationalistic pride of the German people that they were somehow chosen or holy. Anti-Semitic propaganda was common in wartime Germany, and often depicted Jews in league with communists or another hated groups seen to be causing harm to Germans.

The Nazis did not invent anti-Semitism. It has existed since biblical times when the Jews were marginalised and reviled for their failure to accept Christ as their Saviour. The spread of Christianity throughout Western Europe established the view of Jews as ‘enemies of the faith’ and their portrayal as grasping usurers, dissolute and scheming; in short as the very antithesis of the Christian ideal. Various levels of persecution followed through the ages. The Crusaders massacred them, along with Muslims, on their way to the Holy Land. They were expelled from England in 1290, from France and the German principalities and in the 15th Century, ruthlessly hunted by the Inquisition in Spain.

The Nazis were not the first to contemplate and carry out what we now refer to as ‘ethnic cleansing’. Apart from the instances mentioned above, witness the persecution and herding into reservations of the native Americans during the late 1800’s as the whites moved across America, the treatment of the Boers by Britain in South Africa around the 1890’s and the massacre of over a million Armenians by the Turks during the Great War. Stalin’s rise to power in Russia saw perhaps as many as 20 million shot or transported to the gulags as ‘enemies of the Marxist state’. Even now, in modern times, think of the Pol Pot regime and the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia or Idi Amin’s expulsion of the Asians from Uganda. Sadly, there are many other examples.
An Interview with Lily Bevan - Faith

What would you say were Faith's strengths and weaknesses?
She’s only 21, but being independent is definitely one of her strengths. She’s had to be independent because of how her mother behaved whilst Faith was growing up. She’s also emotional (I’m counting that as a strength) and loving. Her weaknesses are being insecure at times, indecisive and lonely – is that a weakness or a condition?

How has Evelyn’s behaviour affected Faith?
She’s missed out on being a normal grumpy teenager, she’s always had to be the adult as her mother is so vulnerable. All her life, Faith has been treading on eggshells. She’s so afraid that if she upsets her Mother or does something wrong, her Mother will say she’s not ‘good enough’.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene Two

FAITH I have never been a good enough daughter.
EVELYN What are you talking about?
FAITH I’ve always thought it was my fault that you were so unhappy.
EVELYN I am not unhappy. Heavens knows why you are.
FAITH Because of you.

Why is it important for Faith to discover her roots?
She wants to understand her context, where she fits in. She also wants an explanation as to why her mother is as she is. As an only child, finding an extended family would mean a lot to Faith, she would feel less isolated.

The cast have read books and watched films about the Kindertransport, what bits of the research have you found pertinent for your character?
I’ve looked into the stories of the children of the original Kindertransport, the second generation Kinder. They’re often called KT2. They have feelings of grief and guilt about what their families have experienced in the past and often a feeling of frustration that they can’t do anything to make things better. They do actually make things better though, as a lot of charities have been created around the Kindertransport and they look to help refugees from all countries around the world.

Who was Faith’s father? And what’s going to happen to Faith at the end of the play?
He was a wealthy American working in England (this is our created back story anyway) and he and Evelyn separated when Faith was 13 years old. He went away on business and just never came back. It was a quiet separation with no conflict, no emotional arguing, as of course Evelyn wouldn’t have been able to handle that!

Now that Faith knows about her family history, I think that she’ll go to Germany to try to trace any family she may have and I think she’ll educate herself about Judaism too.
Laws Relating to Asylum Seekers

‘At its heart, the play is about that universal and timeless aspect of human experience: the separation of a child from its parent. Every person on earth, whatever their age, can relate to that.’ Diane Samuels

- Central to international refugee law is the principle that no-one should be sent back to a country where they would risk persecution or torture. This is called the principle of non-refoulement. Only when an asylum seeker has gone through a fair and thorough decision process and received a negative result, should they be returned to their country of origin. In certain cases, even if an asylum seeker does not meet the full refugee criteria, there may be pressing humanitarian or human rights reasons. It is of course, difficult to prove you are at risk of persecution or torture.

- Under UK legislation asylum seekers can be and are detained at the discretion of immigration officers. Currently some ‘manifestly unfounded’ cases are held at specific reception centres and rejected cases are held in pre-deportation centres. There is also a large number of asylum seekers held in mainstream prisons. Like other detained asylum seekers, those held in prisons have simply applied for asylum – they have committed no crime, and received no trial. There is evidence that a number of victims of torture and detention in their countries of origin are being held in mainstream UK prisons alongside convicted criminals. Although there was a government proposal to end this practice, asylum seekers continue to be sent to prisons around the country.

- The 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention is the cornerstone of international refugee protection and to date a total of 143 states have acceded to it. It defines who is a refugee and ensures that asylum seekers fleeing persecution can have their cases heard, without being sent back to a place where they might be in danger. Overall, the 1951 Convention has probably saved more lives than any other single human rights convention.

An excerpt from an article in The Guardian by Melanie McFadyean
Thursday November 16, 2006

Child asylum seekers are cast as liars or economic migrants in a leaked government document

Nobody is more vulnerable than a child arriving alone as an asylum seeker. There are 5,200 in British social services care, but the systems for looking after them are seriously in need of review. A leaked government draft consultation paper acknowledges this, but the policy makers responsible for it are motivated less by humane concern than by providing taxpayers with value for money.

To make this lapse of humanity stick, they say these children are here ‘to take advantage of the benefits of migration to a richer country and owe nothing to the more common reasons why other children become the responsibility of local authorities’. In other words, they are ‘economic migrants’ - the bogus, the unpeople of popular mythology. Some 95% don't get asylum, and this figure is used as the basis for proof that these children don't need the protection young British citizens in care are entitled to.

Decision makers, say the authors of Seeking Asylum Alone, are ‘unaware of practices or events which are the basis for the fear being expressed by many unaccompanied children’.

Many of these children have experienced violence, torture, detention and the death of parents, experiences that don't fit into the confines of the refugee convention. There is a plethora of other legislation under which they could be given protection, but isn't being used. Bolton cites cases of child clients who, despite being accepted by the Home Office as torture survivors, are deemed safe to send back. One, a 16-year-old girl, is a torture survivor from an African country, but by the criteria put forward by the draft consultation paper she would be classed as an economic migrant. An eight-year-old Kenyan girl who was trafficked to the UK was immediately sent back to face further persecution.
The Experience of one Jewish child

‘The Kindertransport was at the centre of many episodes, which all together added up to one huge destabilising, alienating and ongoing trauma. All Jewish children in Vienna, like myself at the age of ten, were deeply aware of the terror, fear and humiliation which was all around us. And also we continuously heard our parents talking about who had been sent to Buchenwald or Dachau concentration camps; and about trying to get an affidavit from America or a visa to just about anywhere – even to unimaginable Shanghai, if one still had enough money to buy a capitalist visa.

Our family of four had already once escaped to Brussels. We overstayed our three day transit visa limit with disastrous consequences: parents separately arrested; a crack of dawn police swoop; a railway journey to a fictitious refugee camp; the shock of being pushed across the border back into Germany; arrival at Aachen railway station, father vanished, what to do next? Confusion, new shocks and baffling conundrums.

Back in Vienna, confidential, urgent warnings of imminent arrest from a Nazi Party friend forced my father to leave us behind and travel to London by himself, equipped with his two month business visa issued to him for the purpose of registering his photographic patent at the London Patent Office. Staying with a hardworking but poor and newly discovered uncle in the heart of the old London Docks, my father made it his first priority to find a sponsor for me and a live-in housekeeper job for my mother. Uniquely, for such a domestic job, a coveted domestic permit for entry into the country was usually granted.

The actual Kindertransport journey filled me with apprehension as well as anxiety for my mother, who, now all alone, was left behind in hostile Vienna. My brother, at his second attempt, had managed to reach Palestine on a clandestine immigrant ship. Well, in my case my mother did make it to London, to her housekeeper job, before the outbreak of war – in fact by just a few days. And yes, we were all lucky; but everything in life is at a price.

Life with my sponsors, elderly grandparents, themselves immigrants from Bessarabia at the turn of the century, with their totally different background, culture and of course language, had its problems. This episode, followed by evacuation to Wales and Cornwall and life there with Ethel Maude, and her husband Jack-the-Parcel-Office, brought yearnings of reunion with my real parents, who had themselves been forced to live apart.

When such reunion after years of separation finally became possible, my parents had been greatly changed by their experiences and I had been changed beyond recognition by mine. And I was now fifteen years old. Tragically, as a family we were now split in two and decimated. My brother had become rooted in the embryonic Israel. Our relatives had not survived the Holocaust. Most sadly, neither my parents nor myself were able to find in each other the hoped-for image we had built up during our period of separation; and in this way fate robbed us of the pleasure we might otherwise have had in each other. But despite all odds, we had nevertheless survived and it remains a perpetual mystery and wonder how, in the midst of disaster, the seeds of recovery can remain intact.’

From A Lapse in Humanity, Edward Mendelsohn
What are Helga's strengths and weaknesses?
She's very practical, determined and caring, but she's afraid of showing affection. I think she finds it difficult to show love.

She loses her daughter twice during the play, once when she leaves on the Kindertransport and the second time after the war, when Helga comes to England to take Eva with her to America. How do these losses feel?
Well, the first time she feels guilt at sending Eva away, but she also feels justified, as she knows she'll be saving Eva's life. Also, she has no idea how long Eva will be away from her, it may have only been a few months.

The second time she feels very hurt and rejected. She has survived Auchwitz by thinking of her daughter and imagining them both together in happier times. When Evelyn rejects her she is very hurt and angry.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act two, Scene two
HELGA Hitler started the job and you finished it. You cut off my fingers and pulled out my hair one strand at a time.
EVELYN You were the Ratcatcher. Those were his eyes, his face . . .
HELGA You hung me out of the window by my ears and broke my soul into shreds.
EVELYN You threw me into the sea with all your baggage on my shoulders.
HELGA You can never excuse yourself.
EVELYN How could I swim ashore with so much heaviness on me? I was drowning in leagues and leagues of salty water.
HELGA I have bled oceans out of my eyes.
EVELYN I had to let go to float.

What happens to Helga in America?
She lives for another twenty years, so she is a strong woman. I think she works hard within her own community, alongside other people who have shared her experiences.

Exercise
In groups, create three frozen images: the first a happy family scene; the second an image capturing the stress, panic and fear of emigration; and in the third image show how the second image has affected the once happy family. What's changed? What are the overriding emotions that you need to show in image three?
In groups of 6, choose 3 characters from a particular scene in the play *Kindertransport*. Identify each character’s feeling (the predominant or a dominant one within the scene), for example do they feel guilt? Fear? Hurt? 3 of the 6 actors should be cast as the characters, with the other 3 playing their feelings. What sounds and physical shapes illustrate these feelings? Don’t be afraid to be quite abstract.

The 3 characters all have a set task to complete, like cleaning or packing and un-packing suitcases. They are aware that these physicalised emotions are following them and trying to interrupt their task; yet they must try to carry on with their set task.

- How hard is it to ignore or repress strong emotions within you?
- Do the characters in the play manage to suppress their feelings?

In pairs create 2 statues of:

1) A strong and turbulent emotion
2) A person trying to present a calm exterior to the world whilst this buried emotion runs riot inside them.
Scene Study

Polly, the director, read through the opening scene, following Helga’s and Eva’s story. Listed at the end are some of the questions the company discussed after they had read through the scene.

Read through the scene in small groups and then consider the questions below. What else do you need to know? What are your answers to the questions?

Excerpt from *Kindertransport: Act One, Scene One*

Ratcatcher music.
Dusty storage room filled with crates, bags, boxes and some old furniture.

EVA, dressed in clothes of the late thirties, is sitting on the floor, reading. The book is a large, hard-backed children’s story book entitled *Der Rattenfänger.*

HELGA, holding a coat, button, needle and thread, is nearby. She is well turned-out in clothes of the late thirties.

EVA

What’s an abyss, Mutti?

HELGA

(sitting down and ushering EVA to sit next to her). An abyss is a deep and terrible chasm.

EVA

What’s a chasm?

HELGA

A huge gash in the rocks.

EVA

What’s a . . .

EVA puts down the book. Music stops.

HELGA

Eva, sew on your buttons now. Show me that you can do it.

EVA

I can’t get the thread through the needle. It’s too thick. You do it.

HELGA

Lick the thread . . .

EVA

Do I have to?

HELGA

Yes. Lick the thread.

EVA

don’t want to sew.

HELGA

How else will the buttons get onto the coat?

EVA

The coat’s too big for me.

HELGA

It’s to last next winter too.

EVA

Please.

HELGA

No.

EVA

Why won’t you help me?

HELGA

You have to be able to manage on your own.

EVA

Why?

HELGA

Because you do. Now, lick the thread.

EVA

licks the thread.

HELGA

That should flatten it . . . And hold the needle firmly and place the end of the thread between your fingers . . . not too near . . . that’s it . . . now try to push it through.

EVA

concentrates on the needle and thread.

HELGA

watches.

HELGA

See. You don’t need me. It’s good.

EVA

I don’t mind having my coat open a bit. Really. I’ve got enough buttons.

HELGA

You’ll miss it when the wind blows.

EVA

Can’t I do it later.

HELGA

There’s no ‘later’ left, Eva.

EVA

After the packing, after my story . . .

HELGA

Now.

EVA

gives in and sews.

EVA

(sewing). Why aren’t Karla and Heinrich going on one of the trains?

HELGA

Their parents couldn’t get them places.

EVA

Karla said it’s because they didn’t want to send them away.

HELGA

Karla says a lot of silly things.

EVA

Why’s that silly?

HELGA

Of course they would send them away if they had places. Any good parent would do that.

EVA

Why?

HELGA

Because any good parent would want to protect their child.

EVA

Can’t you and Vati protect me?

HELGA

Only by sending you away.

EVA

Why will I be safer with strangers?
HELGA Your English family will be kind.
EVA But they don’t know me.
HELGA Eva. This is for the best.
EVA Will you miss me?
HELGA Of course, I will.
EVA Will you write to me?
HELGA I’ve told you. I will do more than miss you and write to you. Vati and I will come. We will not let you leave us behind for very long. Do you think we would really let you go if we thought that we would never see you again?
EVA How long will it be before you come?
HELGA Only a month or two. When the silly permits are ready.
EVA Silly permits.
HELGA Silly, silly permits.
EVA The needle’s stuck.
HELGA, with difficulty, pulls the needle through.
EVA Finish it off for me.
HELGA (handing the sewing back to EVA). No.
EVA takes the coat and carries on sewing.
HELGA Try to meet other Jews in England.
EVA I will.
HELGA They don’t mind Jews there. It’s like it was here when I was younger. It’ll be good.
EVA When you come, will Vati get his proper job back like he used to have?
HELGA I’m sure he will.
EVA (finishes sewing). Finished.
HELGA Now let me check the case.
HELGA Picks up a case hidden amongst the boxes and opens and checks through it. EVA watches her.
HELGA (pulling out a dress). This suits you so well.
EVA I’ll only wear it for best. Promise.
HELGA (re-folding the dress). Someone will have to press out the creases when you get there.
HELGA The case is too full.
HELGA pulls a mouth organ out of the case.
HELGA What’s this doing in here?
EVA That’s my mouth organ.
HELGA You’re not allowed to take anything other than clothes.
EVA But it was my last birthday present and I’m just beginning to get the tunes right.
HELGA The border guards will send you back to us if they find you with this. Then where will you be?
EVA I’m sorry.
HELGA gives the mouth organ to EVA and sets to reorganising the case contents

Questions

• How does the Ratcatcher appear?
• What does the Ratcatcher represent for Eva?
• How does Helga associate with other Jews?
• Why does Eva sneak the mouth organ into her suitcase?
• What would you pack for Eva, who is going away for an uncertain amount of time?
• How would you explain to Eva why she has to be sent away?
A Refugee’s Story from Southern Africa

Eva’s story begins in Nazi Germany in 1939, and although what happened to many Jewish people under this regime is well documented, history is still repeating itself. The example below is from Africa but it could be any country where war or political ambitions target certain groups of people.

During the initial stages of establishing refugee settlements in Southern Africa, separated children were placed with substitute families, without regard to differing provinces of origin or dialect. This action had profound consequences with respect to the children's development and was evident when repatriation began and a significant number of such children were abandoned.

There has been a civil war in the country for the past five years.

Joseph, aged 10 years, had been living with his mother and father, older sister and four younger brothers and sisters in a small village. The village was attacked at night, and in the chaos that followed the members of the family fled in different directions. Four days later, Joseph was found by soldiers on a road a considerable distance from his village. He had been wandering around in a dazed state, too terrified by what he had experienced to say anything about himself. He was taken to a state orphanage in a town that was 200 kilometres away.

The rest of the family managed to find each other and were eventually resettled in a village some distance away. They assumed that Joseph had been killed. No family-tracing work was undertaken, because of the continuing conflict and lack of capacity for this work.

Three years have passed. A government tracing programme is under way, and Joseph's family has been located with the help of a village leader. The family now have one more child, aged a year. The family has been given a small plot of land, but because Joseph's father lost a leg in a landmine accident, life for the family is difficult. None of the children goes to school.

It has not been possible for Joseph to meet with his family until now. The government social welfare officer brings him to the family's village for a meeting with his parents and the village leader, with the intention of leaving him with his family unless the situation looks impossible.

**Exercise**

In small groups choose one person to be the refugee: he/she should leave the room whilst the remaining actors decide on a method of communication that the ‘refugee’ won’t understand. It could be hand signals, or a made up language (create simple words that you can understand, as a group, especially greetings, yes/no etc.)

Choose a setting for a short scene: it could be an immigration centre, a Kindertransport train or even a school playground. Once you have decided what your scene involves, allow the ‘refugee’ to enter into the scene. He or she has to try to understand what’s happening, what people expect or want from them and how to communicate in a language unfamiliar to them.

Try different scenes with different people playing the ‘refugee’. How does it feel from both sides? What techniques help you to infiltrate the group? How can you fit in?
What are Lil’s strengths and weaknesses?
She’s very caring with a strong sense of integrity; she tries hard to be a good person. As to weaknesses, well she’s lied about Evelyn’s past to Faith, but that was to protect Evelyn.

Why did Lil offer to provide a home for Eva in the first place?
Lil’s a committed Christian so she would probably have heard about the need for homes for Jewish refugees through her church. She’s a person who wants to help and do good. With Evelyn she’s kept her secret, because Evelyn’s gone through so much it seemed safer and kinder to do what she (Evelyn) wanted.

Now that Evelyn’s past is out in the open, what happens to Lil and her relationships with Evelyn and Faith?
Not a lot changes really. Lil is secure in her relationships with Evelyn and Faith. She only ever lied to protect Evelyn. But now the great big secret is out, maybe now Lil can stop protecting Evelyn so much and help her grow up.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act Two, Scene One

EVELYN You’ve always done too much.
LIL How could I ever do enough?
EVELYN You took too much.
LIL How did I take?
EVELYN Too much of me.
LIL What d’you mean by that?
EVELYN I wasn’t your child.
LIL As good as . . .
EVELYN You made me betray her.
LIL I got you through it. Never forget that, Evelyn.
Hidden Truths

At Shared Experience, we are committed to creating theatre that goes beyond our everyday lives, giving form to the hidden world of emotion and imagination. This is because in everyday life we often cover over our true feelings. Whether they be excitement, anger, desire or jealousy – it’s rare that we’ll truly expose ourselves by laying our full truths bare! In Shared Experience productions, we explore ways of externalising this often hidden inner truth. That way, hopefully the audience and company can enjoy a shared experience of empathy and truth. To explore this approach, try the exercise below.

Exercise

Create a scene, in small groups, with two people playing the two sides of Evelyn: the external, seemingly ordered, tightly controlled woman and the inner Evelyn full of fear, aggression and depression.

Choose a situation with some conflict within it, perhaps Evelyn’s husband leaving, or Faith being in trouble at school or even an everyday scene, such as a row in a shop over being short-changed.

Both Evelyns must be in the scene at all times. They must be in physical contact. Evelyn wants to control and subdue the inner Evelyn who wants to be heard.

The other characters in the scene can only see the outer Evelyn. What happens?
An Interview with Marion Bailey - Evelyn

How would you describe Evelyn?
She’s a strong person with an ability to organise herself and other people, she’s intelligent and artistic. She creates homes that are beautiful.

At the start of the play, we hear about her obsessive cleaning and tidying; why does she do this?
It’s bordering on O.C.D. (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) I think. Cleaning is therapeutic, it gives her an objective to achieve which takes up a lot of physical energy and this stops her from having the time to look closely within herself. Her cleaning and need for order makes her very selfish and controlling, she won’t let the edifice she’s constructed around her crumble and fall. She can’t be a giving person and I think this is one reason why her marriage failed. She just can’t give love out freely, she’s afraid of intimacy.

Because her mother sent her to England, she survived the war when millions didn’t. How does this make her feel?
She suffers from enormous guilt - this becomes destructive. Her guilt is over how she survived, how she treated her birth mother and her rejection of her Jewish faith.

Excerpt from Kindertransport: Act One, Scene Two
Pipe music. The shadow of the RATCATCHER looms.

EVA He’s coming.
EVELYN Stop.
EVA His eyes are sharp as knives.
EVELYN Be quiet.
EVA He’ll cut off my nose.
EVELYN He’s not coming.
EVA He’ll burn my fingers till they melt.
EVELYN You’ve not done anything wrong.
EVA He’ll pull out my hair one piece at a time.
EVELYN You’re a good girl.
EVA Don’t let him come. Please!
What Do I Want?

Each character in the production has a ‘want’, something that drives them through their lives and the play. This is called the Super Objective. Also there is an ‘obstacle’ that stops them from achieving their objective.

Throughout rehearsals, Polly, the director, and the actors discuss what each character’s objective and obstacle might be. The actors discussed the ideas below in the very first week of rehearsals. These are never carved in stone because through the rehearsals ideas grow and change.

Character: Evelyn

**Super Objective:** To maintain absolute control in order to protect her inner child.

**Obstacles:** All feelings: a sense of worthlessness; feelings of helplessness; need of love; guilt; fear of anger and fear of annihilation.

**Favourite Line:** ‘I think, Faith, that this conversation must come to a close.’

Character: Faith

**Super Objective:** To make Evelyn happy; to be a good daughter.

**Obstacles:** Her need to be true to herself.

**Favourite Line:** ‘I don’t think I need two teapots.’

Character: The Ratcatcher

**Super Objective:** To be free.

**Obstacles:** His fear of freedom.

**Favourite Line:** ‘I will take away the heart of your happiness.’

Character: Lil

**Super Objective:** To be a good person; to do the decent thing; to care for others.

**Obstacles:** Her need to protect Eva and then Evelyn.

**Favourite Line:** ‘And I want to keep you. Like no one ever kept me. I don’t care if it’s hard. I’ll do right by you. Somebody has to in this godforsaken world.’
Question

Choose one character, what is their Super Objective in:

a) the whole play?

b) a particular scene?

Character: Eva

Super Objective:
To belong, to be part of a family and to survive.

Obstacles:
Her fear of rejection by the adult world.

Favourite Line: (Evelyn’s)
’Well blood is all I have left. Gallons and gallons of the freezing stuff stuck in my veins.’

Character: Helga

Super Objective: To survive.

Obstacles: Her vulnerability and her need to love and to be loved.

Favourite Line: ’Do you understand what I mean about you’re being my jewels?...We all die one day, but jewels never fade or perish. Through our children we live. That’s how we cheat death.’

Exercise

Two chairs are placed in the empty space and two actors (A and B) each sit on a chair. Each actor is given a ‘want’, which needs to work in opposition with their partners ‘want’. For example:

A: to punish B
B: to want forgiveness from A

Using only the chairs and their position relating to the other person, each actor must try to change the emotional state of the other. No words or sound needed!

One person ‘speaks’ by moving their chair in relation to the other, then the second actor ‘answers’ by moving his/her chair.

Each person’s physical ‘sentence’ is complete when he/she places their chair back on the floor. The actor must stay in contact with his/her chair at all times.

They pursue their ‘want’ in opposition to their partner. Their objective is to win their case and to change/dissuade the other actor in theirs.
Writing a review

Guidelines for writing a review:

Say what you saw
Say what you think
Reflect on your responses
Write freely from the heart
Don't worry about given theories
Create your own theories
Describe the tiniest moment that remains vivid
Question that moment
Find out what it says to you
Say why it spoke to you

Consider:

The light, the sound, the movement, the colours and textures of the play
The words, the music, the rhythms of the text
The set, the costumes, the style of the production
The objects; the suitcases, the wardrobes, the dolls, the documents, the story books

THE THEMES
THE CHARACTERS
THE STORY
THE ENDING...

(and try to say everything you want in just 300 words!)

Send your review to:

SHARED EXPERIENCE
The Soho Laundry
9, Dufour’s Place
London W1F 7SJ

e-mail: admin@sharedexperience.org.uk
or post it on our website: www.sharedexperience.org.uk

Bibliography and recommended books/ DVD’s

• Into the Arms of Strangers – Stories of the Kindertransport (Film) Mark Jonathan Harris and Deborah Oppenheimer (2000)
• Strüwwelpeter, Dr. Heinrich Hoffman (1858)
• And the Policeman Smiled, Barry Turner (1991)
• Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl, Anne Frank (1947)