



OFFLINE

GOTHENBURG ENGLISH STUDIO THEATRE

TEACHER'S RESOURCE PACK

Introduction

Hello!

We hope that this Resource Pack will help you and the students to prepare for and extend your theatre visit by further exploring what you have experienced by watching **OFFLINE** at Gothenburg English Studio Theatre.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact us.

Kind regards,
Mia Kjellkvist, Production Manager
Elizabeth Neale, Production Assistant

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PART 1. About GEST

GEST (Gothenburg English Studio Theatre) was founded in 2005 with the aim of providing quality, contemporary and award-winning theatre in the English language. GEST is the only professional English speaking theatre in Western Sweden. Celebrated by audience and critics alike, GEST brings the very best of contemporary drama from the British Isles and farther afield to Scandinavia and invites actors and directors from the British Isles to work with a Swedish/ English production team. We aim to produce theatre of the highest standard and often present Scandinavian premieres. The Gothenburg English Studio Theatre is an intimate 70-seater, situated on Chapmans Torg, in the heart of Majorna, Gothenburg. GEST also tours around Sweden as a whole, performing at places such as Kulturhuset Stadsteatern Stockholm and Borås Stadsteater.

--PART 2. About OFFLINE

1. Summary

15-year-old Ali is missing. The police are involved, the entire school and local community is searching.

What exactly do the parents know? Why do the school computers keep crashing? And who is Umi, the social media phenomenon and the girl everyone wants to be?

Offline is a thriller that talks about freedom of information and our identity. Online you can be whoever you want to be, if you're not satisfied with your life - create a new one. But what happens when it all gets out of control?

We meet the detectives (DI Charwood and DS Harkness) who believe that Alistair's classmates and teachers could have the answers they need to lead them to finding him and have therefore decided to set up and conduct their investigation in the local high school. Perhaps Alistair's classmates and teachers are hiding formation or trying to protect someone?

With each new development comes a new twist and someone keeps hacking in to the computers, eventually causing all involved to rethink everything...



2. Cast & Crew

Created by: Kristina Brändén-Whitaker, Elizabeth Neale and James Hogg

Director: Kristina Brändén-Whitaker

Production Manager: Mia Kjellkvist

Detective Inspector Charwood:
Elizabeth Neale

Detective Sergeant Harkness: James Hogg

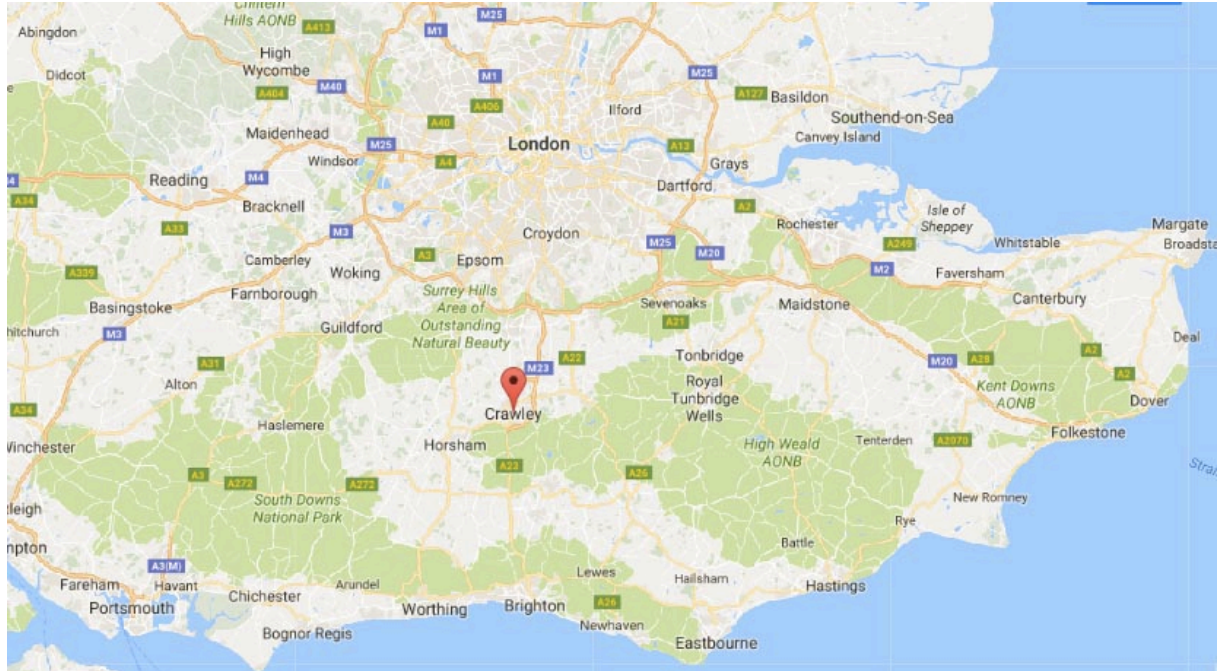
United Kingdom police ranks (up to Chief Superintendent)						
Rank	Police Constable	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Superintendent	Chief Superintendent
Insignia	24234	20300 				

Many of the information and activities in this pack can be used before seeing the show to prepare your class and discuss your visit to the theatre. Certain activities however are designed to be used after you have seen the play, as they could spoil some story points for the students. Therefore it would be good to save these until after your visit. These particular activities will be marked by a **RED** heading.

--PART 3. Useful Resources

Where is the play set?

The story takes place in a town called Crawley which is in Sussex, England.



In Crawley, people of a White British ethnicity account for around 85% of the population and only around 16% of people are from other ethnic backgrounds.

Post-show themes:

One of the major themes of the play is how people react to immigration and their opinions on living with others of a different race or ethnic background. In one scene of the play the headmistress, Janet, mentions that there have been some problems at the school due to people not getting along because of these reasons:

Janet: Obviously we live in a very multicultural, diverse area and that can breed...certain issues.

DS Harkness: Do you mean racism?

Janet: There have been fights...clashes, that kind of thing.

Lately, immigration and those who are seeking asylum (fleeing the war and conflict in Syria and the Middle East) and the effect it has on communities and peoples' lives has been a major part of the world news and the cause of many debates and conflicts. In the UK, especially after the Brexit vote (the vote which decided whether or not the British

people wanted Britain to leave the European Union), more racial attacks, hate crimes and abuse are being reported against people who are seen as not ethnically 'British', with most attacks seemingly aimed at people from Middle Eastern descent or at those who follow the religion Islam.

In areas of Britain with a diverse racial demographic (lots of people from different backgrounds and races) people tend to be a lot more accepting and supportive of immigration and the fact that people need to flee there for safety from the war in Syria. This doesn't mean that attacks and abuse never happen there but usually not as often as in those places with a lower diversity.

The character of Sanaz/ Umi is a refugee and has fled the war and conflict in her home country of Syria. The play talks about the war and the effect it has on Britain, but the conflict itself is mentioned, along with some video footage of war zones towards the end of the play. This may come up in discussion in your class and could be quite sensitive. Below is a link to a video which explains the conflict clearly and briefly and may help if it comes up in conversation (if you have received this pack on paper, you can search for the video on YouTube: **Syria's War: Who is fighting and why** by the user **Vox**):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKb9GVU8bHE>

Social Media/ Hacking

Another major theme in the story is that of social media and technology. In society today, especially amongst the younger generation, technology is seen as an essential part of life. It provides the main form of communication and education for most people.

In the story, the students in the school use an app of their own creation called CRAWLR. Although it doesn't exist in the real world, it would be very similar to Instagram and Twitter.

PHENOMINON - DEFINITION:

1. *Something that is impressive or extraordinary*
2. *A remarkable or exceptional person; prodigy; wonder*

For most of the play, the character of Umi is portrayed as a **SOCIAL MEDIA PHENOMENON**. Meaning that she has gained great popularity and interest over a short period of time. She also seems to be working anonymously however, as her posts never feature her face or any personal information about her. This is very common, with lots of people creating and living out new identities online, all the while never revealing who they truly are.

There are several well-known social media phenomena who have been able to earn a living by living their lives online for people to see, such as Zoella and Pewdiepie, who don't so much hide their identities but rather present a public version of themselves.

HACKING - DEFINITION:

The gaining of access(wanted or unwanted) to a computer and viewing, copying, or creating data(leaving a trace), usually anonymously.

The character of Ali is very good with computers and manages to hack into the school computer network and interfere with the police investigation. There is also talk of a **VIRUS** having infected the school computers, causing the IT teacher to have to wipe the servers. Hacking is illegal in most countries, not easy to do and can even cause worldwide scandals, such as the **UK Phone Hacking Scandal**.

--PART 4 Exercises for the Students

On the following pages you will find several group and individual activities to do in response to OFFLINE. This is so that, as a class, you can both prepare for and follow up after seeing the performance. They are designed for teachers who are new to drama as well as for those with experience using drama in the classroom and their aim is to help you and your class to:

EXPLORE - the form and content of play. To enable the students to get more from their experience as an audience member

RESPOND - to characters, themes and ideas in the play - consider drama elements

PERFORM - their own practical responses to key ideas and discussions and to more deeply explore the themes and characters in order to gain both a practical and emotional understanding of the play

1. Memory Round

A good way to start a group discussion is a Memory Round, since it might have been a couple of days since you saw the performance and the students might have different experiences and memories of the play.

Try questions like:

How did the play start?

What did the different characters look like?

How was the stage set out?

What relations did the characters have to one another?

How did the play end?

3. Debate and group discussion points

It might be a good idea to discuss each point as a group first then split the class into two separate groups and assign them a side of the debate to argue, reminding them that they can defend that side even if they don't agree with it personally.

It is said that there are more people on facebook now than have ever previously existed in the world up to this point. Social media and the internet, especially for young people, are the means of most communication in the world today and we rely on it in most areas of our lives.

Do you think young people today would be able to cope without the internet? Do you think they would find it easy to interact without technology?

Some points to keep in mind:

- *Freedom/ anonymity of the internet - pros and cons*
- *Online safety - how much freedom is too much?*

Seeking asylum and refugees are perhaps the most important theme of the play. We witness some conflicts and problems around this that exist in the world today. There are many things we could debate around this issue. Feel free to let your own debate develop but here are some good places to start:

- *Should people have the right to enter a new country without papers if they are in danger? Where do we draw the line?*
- *Why are people hostile towards refugees/ immigrants?*
- *How can we change how people approach immigration, both on a small and large scale?*

Below are some further discussion points that you may find it useful to talk about as a group:

- *How did the play make you feel?*
- *What did it make you think about that you perhaps hadn't before?*
- *Has the play changed your perspective or opinion on anything, or made you consider something in a new way?*

4. Drama exercise

Put the students into groups and have them improvise new scenes for the characters in the play. Each group should work out a basic beginning, middle and end for each scene, a journey for the characters to go on and come to an end point. Get them to think about their characters' personalities. How would they react in this situation? Encourage them to stay as true to them as possible.

Below are some suggestions. Perhaps the students can think of some others? The scenes can take place both before and after the events in the play, or maybe some events that happen during the play but that we only hear about, not see.

The last time that *Sanaz/Umi* and *Ali* see each other before she is sent back. Does she tell him?

Ali telling his *mother* about *Sanaz/ Umi*

Ali and Sanaz/ Umi meeting for the first time

What happens after the video plays at the end of the play? How do the police/ school + students in the classroom where the play takes place/ family react (Different groups could portray different reactions here)? Does *Ali* get into trouble? How does his life change?

The first conversation that *Ali* has with his *mother* after he comes out of hiding. Perhaps the car ride home?

5. Writing exercise

MIXED MEDIA

Often, one of the biggest differences between young people and adults is the way they communicate with others. When the adult characters in the play were growing up it was still very common to send letters. Nowadays that is quite unusual and most communication over distance is done via the internet, sometimes people even leave anonymous posts on public websites and apps (E.G: **SECRET**) as a way of confessing their feelings without anyone knowing. In this activity we can explore the characters and how they might communicate by having them message another character in the way that would be most relevant to them.

Some examples:

Write a **LETTTER** from **ALISTAIR'S MUM** to **ALI** after the events of the play.

Write a **SECRET POST** from **UMI** talking about her classmates and how she feels about her life here in England. Does she already know that she is being sent back to Syria?

Design your own **CRAWLR** post as a student at the school reacting what has happened after the police investigation. How do you feel? Has *Ali's* story inspired you/ changed any opinions you might have had? Feel free to use words, pictures, poetry and links to express yourself as you would online. Would you want your post to be seen by others or would you post anonymously?

6. Theatre review exercise

Write a review of the play. Below you'll find an example of a review (from the original production of **OFFLINE** at GEST in October 2016) which will help to show you how to structure yours.

7. Examples of theatre reviews:

Offline är omöjlig att värja sig emot

Publicerad: tisdag 1 november 2016, 11:50

Offline är en föreställning i tiden, skriver Kristin Ödlund.

Scenen är en plats för brottsutredning. 15-åriga Alistair är försvunnen och polisen gör allt som står i deras makt för att söka reda på honom med hjälp av familj, klasskamrater och inte minst den digitala världen. Föräldrarna är i upplösningstillstånd av förtvivlan och skolan blir nerringad av omväxlande press och oroade föräldrar. Parallellt hittas tecken på sociala medier, som kanske kan leda fram till var Alistair befinner sig och vad som hänt med honom. Handlingen utspelar sig delvis inne i en skola där polisen kommer för att be om hjälp från den saknade Alistairs skolkamrater.

Offline är en föreställning i tiden som gissningsvis kommer gå hem hos sin målgrupp då den tilltalar ungdomar utan att måla dem på näsan eller förlöjliga för att föra fram sin poäng. Trovärdighetsmässigt är det ett oerhört klokt val att inte ha rollkaraktärer där tonåringar ska spelas av vuxna utan istället ge tonåringar en inblick i vad vuxna människor kan hamna i för verklighet när tonårsvärlden och vuxenvärlden krockar. Tonåringen är huvudkaraktären vilka de vuxna förhåller sig till, men i fysisk gestalt är den inte representerad.

Det är tydligt att GEST har för avsikt att med Offline vara både aktuella och moderna. Elektronisk musik fungerar som en effektiv scenavskiljare, projektioner används flitigt och okrystat och som främsta verktyg i jakten på den försvunna pojken används en app som för tankarna går till såväl instamgramupploppen som till tv-serien Gossip Girl. Vid sidan av det populärkulturella anslaget inhyser Offline en brinnande tematik då den behandlar flyktingfrågan och den rasism som omger den. Ensemblen lyckas här med bedriften att bemöta den hatiska sidans argument genom att helt enkelt vända på dem och göra rasismen till problemet istället för tvärtom, det lämnas enkelt inte ens några alternativ.

Offline är en kompakt och tät föreställning i både text och skådespel. Publiken blir direkt fångad av Elizabeth Neale och James Hogg som pendlar mellan de olika rollkaraktärerna och perspektiven. Dialogen är rapp, intensiv och tar sin publik på allvar. Tilltalet är så koncentrerat direkt mot åhörarna att det är svårt att föreställa sig något annat än total hängivelse ute i landets skolor senare i vinter, även om den publiken är känd för att vara kräsen.

Kristin Ödlund

GEST offers post-show discussions with the actors, post-show workshops with the class covering themes in the play as well as our usual drama workshops in English in schools from ages 10-18

See our website www.gest.se for more information or contact us at:

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