***Stages* Toolkit for Hastings and Rother Schools**

*Stages* is a 5 year project at People’s Palace Projects based in the Drama Department at QMUL. The project encourages young people to express their ideas through creative and interactive activities that address local and global issues they are thinking about and/or experiencing. We include basic research exercises to find, evaluate and present information as part of these interactive activities.

We developed the methodology with university and secondary school students, and with young people in community arts centres and charities. Collaborative in nature, the activities encourage the whole group to participate, yet allow individuals to choose how much they want to contribute and how active they want to be.

During the pandemic we began transferring our creative and action oriented work to the digital sphere. This presented an opportunity to reach a wider audience, share our methodology, and offer practical techniques on how to bring more creative and interactive activities into the classroom and facilitate discussions on complex topics using the arts. Adapting our method for an educational framework meant breaking our creative and research process down into smaller workshops and exercises and structuring it so it so people could quickly and easily find what is most relevant and useful for their aims and purposes.

*Stages* first interactive production, *Stage 3*, was created by students at QMUL and performed at the White Rock Theatre in 2019. Followed by a workshop for young people 12 to 18 years old, their engagement and enthusiasm for the performance and workshop sparked interest in bringing these activities to schools in Hastings and Rother.

At the invitation of the Hastings and Rother Arts Education Network, we are planning to pilot the Toolkit with teachers in Hastings and Rother in the Spring semester.

The online Toolkit is divided into four sections.

**Section 1** is searchable by the UK’s national curricular aims for five secondary school subjects: Citizenship, English, History, Geography and Religious Education.

**Section 2** is searchable by “Themes and Sub-themes” and is useful to bring an interactive exercise or discussion into a class, workshop, or after school activity on a specific topic. Some example themes are *Identity & Diversity; Belonging; Media & Free Speech.*  Sub-themes include *Borders; Groupthink & Peer Pressure; Sharing & Defending an Opinion.* These exercises are suitable for a one-off class,

workshop, or seminar.

**Section 3** is for those who want to create a full workshop or multiple workshops that can lead to a

new interactive theatre piece. It includes sections with warm-ups, research activities, and

improvising exercises to create your own DIY series of workshops. This section highlights research

skills, creative self-expression, and collaborative teamwork.

**Section 4** includes full example workshops and contains all of the materials from several semester-long workshops with university students and young people including an existing performance script which can be used as is, or adapted, or an original script can be developed using these workshops.

*Stages* is planning for the Toolkit pilot to include:

* A hands-on workshop for the teachers in Hastings and Rother who sign up for the Pilot project. This will include how to use and adapt the exercises and bring them into your classroom;
* An interactive performance of Stage 3 in Hastings and Rother to spark enthusiasm and creative ideas;
* A Stage 3 Theatre Company member available to each teacher in the Pilot to answer questions or offer suggestions about how to use or adapt the Toolkit activities to your subject’s aims and purposes;
* A short questionnaire for teachers to fill out after Toolkit activities are used;
* A small stipend for teachers participating in the Pilot;
* An opportunity, if you’d like, to add your reflections, creative activities and/or scripts back into the online Toolkit for others to learn from, use, or adapt.

**For more information or to express your interest in participating in the Pilot, please contact:**

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