



**ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL**

28 FEB - 15 MAR 2020

Mouthpiece

By Kieran Hurley
Traverse Theatre Company

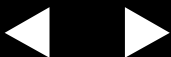
EDUCATION RESOURCE

Resource developed by
Deanne Bullen 2019

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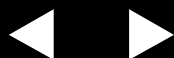
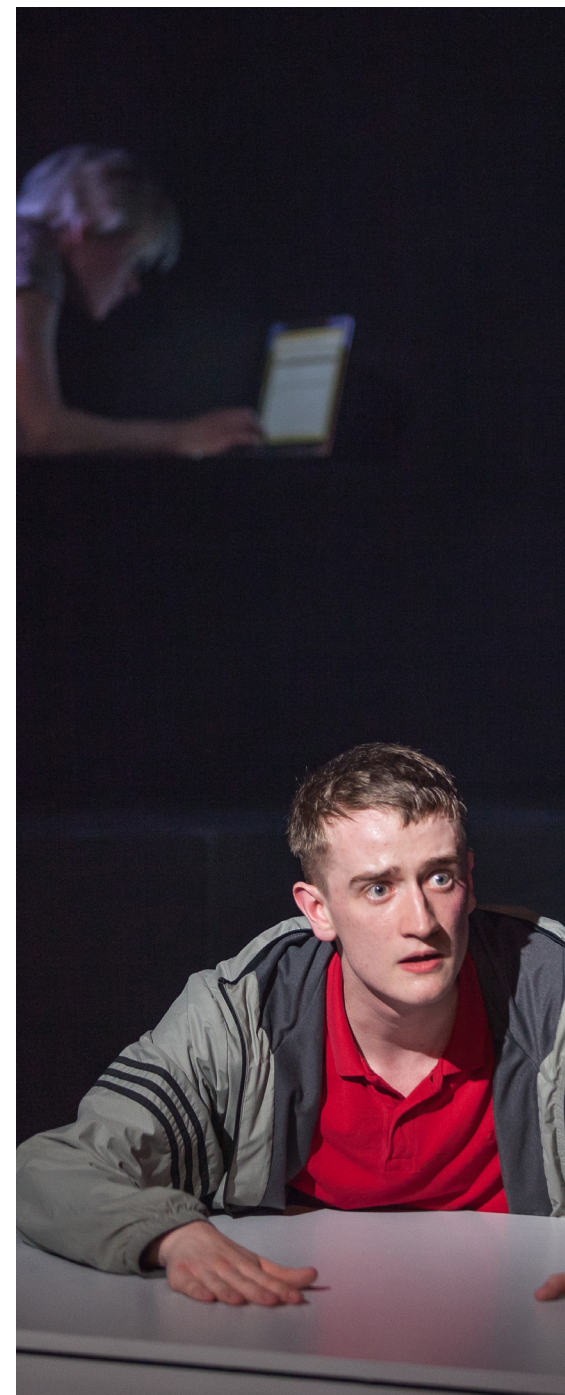
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Show rundown

Australian Premiere / Australian Exclusive

90 minute show – no interval

Winner of the 2019 Carol Tambor Best of Edinburgh Award, *Mouthpiece* is unmissable; destined to be a classic of our times.

After critically acclaimed, sold out performances in Edinburgh and London, the Traverse Theatre Company returns to Adelaide with Kieran Hurley's confronting new play about class, culture and appropriation, following their smash hit 2019 production of *Ulster American*.

Salisbury Crag, Edinburgh. Twilight. A woman takes a step forward into the air. A teenage boy pulls her back. Two lives are changed forever.

Who are they and where have they come from? Libby, a middle-aged, middle-class playwright has not picked up a pen in years and, roundly rejected by London's artistic establishment, spends her time brooding in the rarefied environs of Edinburgh's New Town. Declan is a 17-year-old struggling with a volatile home life on a deprived Edinburgh housing estate, but in possession of a remarkable artistic talent.

When Libby's despair drives her to a literal cliff edge, their lives collide. But if you think you've heard this story of despair and the power of an unlikely friendship before, *Mouthpiece* is way, way ahead of you. As their relationship strengthens and develops, Libby decides Declan's story must be told. And sure, it doesn't hurt that it also might reboot her career...

From its startling opening, through to its final devastating showdown, this audacious, gripping and self-questioning play invites us to probe where the lines should be drawn. It's very funny, very moving and will have your head spinning with the knotty ethical issues it provokes long after you leave the theatre.

WARNINGS

Content

- Smoking on stage (e-cigarettes)
- Drug references
- Strong language
- Scenes of a sexual nature
- Contains descriptions of violence and references to suicide

Production

- Haze machine
- Flashing lights (not strobing)

SUPPORTED BY BRITISH
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Supported by Creative Scotland and the City of Edinburgh Council.
Originally produced in association with HighTide.

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Themes

Mouthpiece takes a look at two different sides of Edinburgh that exist in ignorance of one another, and asks whether it's possible to tell someone else's story without exploiting them along the way.

Key themes:

- middle class meets working class
- examining who has the privilege to be able to speak about certain issues
- about people and love
- people searching for a sense of shared purpose or understanding in a world that increasingly tells us we're supposed to function as atomised individuals (self-interested and largely self-sufficient individuals, operating as separate atoms)
- simple, emotive moments and scenarios to really look at a subject from every angle

Production

Style and Conventions

Around 75 minutes in, the character of Declan breaks through the fourth wall and walks into the auditorium to perform amongst the audience. He addresses them directly (in character) but does not physically interact with the audience or engage in any participation with them.

Curriculum links & activities

This education resource has been developed with links to SACE Stage 1 and 2 and the International Baccalaureate. The resources are created with links and in relation to the subject outlines.

FOURTH WALL

The line dividing the stage from the auditorium, it is invisible and imagined, and separates the actors from the audience. The audience can see through this "wall", but the actors act as if they cannot.



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Theatre etiquette

The French word etiquette, and its second meaning, was adopted by English speakers in the middle of the 18th Century – “requirements for proper behaviour.”

This can sound a bit formal but having an understanding of “theatre etiquette” helps an audience know what to expect and how to get the most out of their theatre experience.

Why does it matter?

It respects other audience members attending the performance.

It shows respect to the performers. Don't forget – you can see them, and they can see you!

It acknowledges the hard work that it takes to bring a live performance together, by everyone.

It often includes a long list of people.

What are theatre etiquette expectations?

Depending on the age of an audience the expectations can vary. Theatre designed for very young audiences, think 2 to 8 year olds, will have different expectations. Often the theatre experience for younger audiences will invite and encourage participation. However, as the content becomes more complex and audiences mature, think 9 years and older, there is an expectation that students will have developed an understanding of enthusiastic participation and deliberate disruption.

What makes going to a live performance different to going to the cinema?

Many audience members have probably been to see a movie but might not have been to a live theatre performance. The BIG difference is that the actors are live and are there with you in the moment. Don't forget to show your appreciation. If it's funny, it's okay to laugh. If the actors invite you to respond, then it's okay to respond. Sometimes it can also be sad so if you know it's going to be sad don't forget to bring a tissue or two.

What to expect:

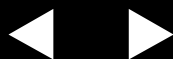
An usher will help you find your seat and you need to follow their directions. You will know the performance is about to start and that you need to settle and be quiet when the lights begin to dim or you hear a voice over or sounds.

Turn off your mobile phone. Avoid eating or rustling food packaging.

Try to cover coughs and sneezes. Go to the toilet before you go into the theatre.

Photographing and filming is not permitted and here are a couple of reasons why:

- It can disturb the actors on the stage and break their concentration
- Intellectual property is paramount. The production on stage is intellectual property of the theatre, therefore you are not allowed to take photos of it
- You will be missing out on the detail you can't see through the viewfinder



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Performance literacy

Art is a means of expressing emotion, a way of transmitting feelings, culture, beliefs and values between the creators and performers of the work and the audience. There is some art, which is created for the explicit purpose of eliciting a strong emotional response from the audience. There are a myriad of emotions that students can experience when they are viewing live theatre from happiness to anger, surprise, annoyance, just to name a few.

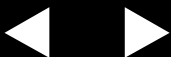
Students might ask - but how is live theatre different from watching films in a cinema?

The difference is that actors are real people telling stories on stage, the audience is with the actor in the moment. [Recent research from the University of Arkansas](#), published in Educational Researcher, which spanned two years and followed school groups who attended live theatre performance or a movie version of the same story revealed significant differences. Students attending live performances experienced an increase in tolerance as well as a greater understanding of the plot and vocabulary of stories.

[Live Theatre Improves Learning and Tolerance](#)

As students engage with and watch live theatre they develop a deeper understanding of the language of the theatre. They develop literacies allowing them to 'read' the gestures and movements of a performer, develop an understanding of the intention of the set, costume, or lighting designer, or reflect on what the playwright or directors intended meaning of a setting or character could be. The [Before the Show](#) activities, for the Adelaide Festival show you are attending, are designed to support students to develop these literacy skills, knowledge and understanding.

The [After the Show](#) activities are designed to provide students with the opportunity to discuss, analyse and comprehend their responses to the show. Having a strong knowledge and understanding of theatre terminology will support students.



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Before the show

Thinking about what's happening

As a class:

- [Watch the short video clip](#) of the actors talking about their characters Libby and Declan
- [Read the guest blog](#) by Kieran Hurley and his description of the characters and the play

Libby is a lonely, disillusioned ex-playwright who has returned home to Edinburgh in her middle age to live in her mum's spare room, still calling herself a writer even though she hasn't written a word in years.

Declan is a teenage boy who is just as isolated and desperate as Libby. He does drawings as a means of processing the trauma of a collapsing home environment and the stresses of growing up in poverty.

They (Declan and Libby) meet and form a kind of unlikely friendship. She introduces him to the city's cultural offerings, insisting they are his as much as anyone's, and inspiring in him the confidence to call himself a proper artist. He in turn awakens in her the desire to write again, and she begins to write his story. And that's where things slowly begin to get messy for them, as they're forced to navigate the power of dynamics of who is and who isn't afforded the privilege to speak and be heard in our culture, and Declan is faced with the inherent violence of being dependent on someone else to speak your truth.

As Hurley has Libby point out in his script, it's basically the plot of Pulp's *Common People*. Declan is, to some extent, an exercise in artistic exploration – a chance to see a different side of the Scottish capital, with a muse without the means to sustain himself.

Read the review on [Mouthpiece](#) at Soho Theatre.

[Common People](#) is a song by English alternative rock band Pulp released in May 1995 – protesting against class tourism. It reached number two on the UK Singles Chart.



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Opening scene

Salisbury Crags,
Edinburgh.
Twilight.

A woman takes a step
forward into the air.

A teenage boy
pulls her back.

Two lives are
changed forever.

As a class:

Discuss how someone in a situation where they are contemplating suicide, might be feeling as they are standing on the edge preparing to jump to their death.

- What would their movements, posture and voice be like?
- What would they be thinking? (Their internal monologue)

Discuss how the person, a young person, might be feeling as he witnesses this scene and has to react and pull someone back from this moment.

- How do you think they might be feeling?
- What do you think the tension and mood might be between these two people?
- What would they be thinking? (Their internal monologue)

Discuss how you might stage a scene like this.

- Where would you place the person who is about to jump on the stage?
- Where would you place the person who is going to do the saving?



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More info about the scene

Search on [Google Books](#), with the keywords <mouthpiece and Kieran Hurley and script> - this will take you to the beginning pages of the script for *Mouthpiece*. Go to the opening scene between Declan and Libby.

- Two students should read the part of Declan and Libby.
- One student should read the stage directions.

As a class or in small groups discuss:

- What information, from the reading of the script, informs their original thoughts about the staging of the scene?

Working with a partner:

- Rehearse the same scene being aware of how they use:
 - a. script directions
 - b. space and placement of the characters
 - c. mood and tension
 - d. voice, including patois and pronunciation of the dialogue movement

Their interpretation of the scene needs to convey their meaning to the audience.

Performances:

- Students perform their scene with the class providing specific feedback, to support their responses, on how the meaning was conveyed.

SACE

PA1 Expression and communication of ideas relevant to the program focus.

II2 Interpretation of the ideas of creative arts practitioners.

R2 Reflection on personal creative arts ideas, opinions, and skills relevant to the program focus.

IB – Theatre Standard Level

Participate in at least one production of a collaboratively created piece of original theatre, created from a starting point, which is presented to others.

IB – Theatre Higher Level

Direct and present at least one scene or section from one published play text.



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Examine/research and apply

With class comes power.

Mouthpiece is a story about class. Libby is a 46-year-old, middle-class woman, from a good part of Edinburgh and speaks proper English. She has known success as a professional playwright. Declan is a 17-year-old unemployed young man, with little money, who has been thrown out of college. He has a chaotic family life. He speaks with a strong working-class accent.

Experimenting with class, status and power

On a simplistic level they are defined here as:

Class – a division of a society based on social and economic status.

Status – the level of power or influence a person has.

Power – the ability where someone is able to achieve their goals despite opposition from others.

As a class:

Students will investigate their own ideas of status and power through a simple task, which is also a bit of fun. Discuss with students that they will each:

- get a single card from a pack of playing cards
- each of those cards is assigned a value – Ace holds the highest value and the card showing 2 is the lowest
- when they receive their card they will – hold it on their forehead, picture facing out, without looking at it
- they will need to figure out what card they have been given by how others react to them when they approach them
- the activity should be done in silence with no dialogue

Model with students how you might respond to seeing a card someone is holding. What would be your body language if the person was holding an Ace – think movie star, sporting legend, Queen, prime minister? Think about how it would be different if someone was holding a 10 or a 2.

Start the activity:

- Students receive their card and hold it, picture facing out, on their forehead
- Do NOT look at your card
- Walk around the room approaching others and reacting to their card
- Stop students after a prescribed amount of time – approx. 1-2minutes
- Ask students to place themselves on a line in order of what card they think they are displaying. When students are lined up ask them to check where they have put themselves on the continuum

Students discuss what their experiences were like:

- how did others approach them
- how did it make them feel
- how did they approach others

Students repeat the same exercise with a different card. They could choose randomly or they are distributed by the teacher.

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Examine/research and apply

Class discussion:

Ask students to consider what value/status they would assign to both Declan and Libby and discuss why they would assign the value they have chosen.

Drawing on the work students have worked on previously, of the opening scene, with Declan and Libby – students consider how the scene would be different if the roles had been reversed, i.e. if Declan was the one standing on the Salisbury Crags contemplating jumping and Libby was the one who pull him back from the edge.

- What would be different
- How would they respond and what would they say to each other

Review by [The List](#)

Create

The performance of *Mouthpiece* takes place in a number of settings including:

- Salisbury Crags
- Art Gallery
- Café
- Declan's bedroom
- Libby's house
- Theatre

In a review by *The List* the author discusses how the productions is, "Staged at a deliberately jarring acute angle on Kai Fischer's tiered set, Orla O'Loughlin's production plays everything the way Hurley's script demands, lithely going from naturalistic scenes to direct audience address – the fourth wall ending up another that Declan has to scale just to be heard."

Considering the two characters in *Mouthpiece*, the content of the play and the influence of geography students will design the set for the opening scene.

The design of the set needs to consider the use of colour, texture, props and space to create the impact they want to have on their audience in this opening scene.



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After the show

WHAT DID YOU THINK?

Individually:

At the end of an interview with Kieran Hurley he talks about his role as a writer to leave the narrative open for the audience. That he has a continuing desire to leave an audience with a:

- Question
- Thought
- Inference

Write about:

- what questions, thoughts and inferences you were left with at the end of the performance
- why and what did you think the storytellers were asking us to imagine
- what would you do next?

Pair and share

Share with a partner your questions, thoughts and inferences.

- what were your similarities and differences?
- what questions did/do you have?

As a class:

- Listen: to the song and lyrics of Pulp's [Common People](#)
- Read: The following articles:
 - [Working Class culture isn't a fashion trend](#)
 - [Privileged kids need to stop fetishizing working class culture](#)
- Discuss: ideas and questions raised by students after they have listened to [Common People](#) and read the two articles

BIG QUESTIONS TO PONDER

In the final scene Kieran Hurley puts the paying audience in the theatre on the spot as Declan steps through the "fourth wall" and rips into the notion of an "authentic voice".

How can you buy authenticity for fifteen quid a ticket?

Libby needed Declan's story – but was it hers to tell?

- What do you think?

If you were the director is there anything you would do differently?

Students share their ideas with a partner then the whole class.

CRITICAL RESPONSES TO THEATRE

Drama is a dynamic practice and responding to live theatre supports students to become better dramatic artists. Links are provided to a number of resources to support students to write a review and response to *Mouthpiece*.

A framework to support students to plan and develop their critical responses is provided.

[Guide for Writing a Theatre Response](#)

SACE

KU1 Knowledge and understanding of core concepts specific to relevant creative arts discipline(s).

PA4 Development and application of practical skills, techniques, processes and technologies.

I12 Interpretation of the ideas of creative arts practitioners.

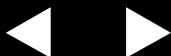
R1 Appraisal of creative arts products in terms of practitioners' ideas, processes, and decision-making.

IB – Theatre Higher Level

Practically examine the performance conventions of at least one world theatre tradition and apply this to the staging of a moment of theatre.

Anaïs Nin said that

*"We write to
taste life twice,
in the
moment
and in
retrospection."*



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Analyse & apply

As a class watch:

The interview with Kieran Hurley by David Overend, Lecturer in Drama and Performance Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

[Rantin and Raving: An Interview with Kieran Hurley](#)

[Kieran Hurley Scottish Theatre Archive Interview](#)

[Rantin and Raving](#)

Students analyse, evaluate and reflect on how he:

- describes his role as a playwright has been influenced in his career as a playwright
- sees recurring themes in other plays he has written
- believes there is a role for the audience to play
- views community as being problematic and difficult

Individual work:

Drawing on the discussions and work students have completed 'Before the show', they now write the dialogue for the role reversal. Students will need to consider:

- The character's internal monologue <stop and ask students to tune in to their own internal monologue they are having in that particular moment>
- How the character is feeling
- How the character will react to the other character
- Set directions

Pair and Share:

Students pair up and share what they have written and discuss any difficulties they encountered in writing the script for Declan and Libby with the role reversal. Students play the scene again using the text they have created. Students will need to consider:

- Mood and meaning
- Being open to developing and changing their script as they are rehearsing
- Set directions

Students present their work to the class. The audience will provide feedback regarding the development of the scene. The performers/writers share experiences in relation to the scene and using the internal monologue technique.

Working with a partner:

Students create their own ending to *Mouthpiece*. Students can select whether or not their final scenes need to begin back in the theatre OR whether they start their final scene from the Salisbury Crags.

Note: Ensure students work with different students.

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Analyse & apply

The students will work together to write the dialogue and set directions considering:

- class, culture and power
- mood and context
- set design
- sound
- how do the characters react to each other
- can there be a resolution

Using the 'internal monologue' technique explored in the before the show activity learning experiences in this resource to focus on heightening dramatic meaning – when there are awkward silences between the characters.

Students perform their scenes to the class.

Audience provides feedback to actors about their portrayal of the characters and the ending they have written, including their set design and sound used.

After they have seen the show, students can compare and contrast their design with Kai Fischer's using a Venn diagram to identify the similarities and differences.

Critique

Students write a 300 word justification to accompany their set design for the opening scene of *Mouthpiece*. The justification needs to:

- Explain the use of colour, texture and props
- Discuss the use of space, including the placing of set pieces and props
- Outline how the design reflects what they want to communicate to the audience about the scene and how they want it to impact on them



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Traverse Theatre, Scotland

As Scotland's new writing theatre, the Traverse Theatre is a dynamic centre for performance, experience and discovery, often referred to as Edinburgh's 'beating heart of the Fringe'. Their year-round programme brings new stories and live performances that challenge, inform and entertain. They aim to empower artists and audiences to make sense of the world today, providing a safe space to question, learn, empathise and – crucially – encounter different people and experiences. They believe that conversation and the coming together of groups are central to a democratic society.

The Traverse are critically acclaimed and recognised the world over for their originality and artistic risk, which they hope will create some of the most talked-about plays, productions, directors, writers and actors for years to come.

Cast: The cast for the Adelaide performance of *Mouthpiece* are Shauna Macdonald as Libby and Angus Taylor as Declan.



Shauna Macdonald - Libby

Shauna has worked extensively across theatre, television and film, including performances in *Born to Run* (Traverse Theatre Company), *King Lear* and *Pal Joey* (Citizens Theatre), *The Cry* (BBC), *In Plain Sight* (ITV), *The Five* (Sky), and film *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017), *The Descent* (2005), *The Descent: Part 2* (2009) and *Filth* (2013).



Angus Taylor - Declan

Angus Taylor is currently in his third year of training on the BA Acting course at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

Credits include: *Mouthpiece* (Traverse Theatre Company), *San Diego*, *Three Sisters*, *A View from the Bridge*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Royal Conservatoire of Scotland) and *A Christmas Carol* (Children's Classics Concerts).

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Creative team:

Writer - Kieran Hurley

Following is a link to an interview by the University of Glasgow with Kieran Hurley. He discusses factors that influenced him becoming a writer and he mentions how his teachers at school were a big influence.

[Kieran Hurley interview](#)

Kieran Hurley is an award-winning writer, performer, and theatre-maker based in Glasgow whose work has been presented throughout the UK and internationally. Recent work includes: *Square Go* (with Gary McNair, Paines Plough Roundabout); *A Six-Inch Layer of Topsoil and the Fact It Rains* (Perth Theatre); *Heads Up* (Show And Tell); *Rantin* (National Theatre of Scotland); *Chalk Farm* (with AJ Taudevin, ThickSkin). Awards include: Scotsman Fringe First Awards for *Square Go* and *Heads Up* and a Critics' Awards for Theatre in Scotland Best New Play for *Heads Up* and *Beats*. The film adaptation of *Beats* was released in 2019, after premiering at the Glasgow Film Festival.



Q&A Kieran Hurley

What was your first non-theatre job?

Making sandwiches and coffees in a café.

What was your first professional theatre job?

Tearing tickets at the Arches' box office.

What do you wish someone had told you when you were starting out?

Lean in to those you trust, work hard, look after yourself and others, keep asking why you want to do this and if you still do. And don't be a dick.

Who or what was your biggest influence?

Corny maybe, but the people who have shaped me most are my brothers, my sister, my mum and dad, and my partner.

What's the best advice you've received?

Don't ever look for your whole sense of self in what you're doing, in your 'career'.

If you hadn't gone into theatre, what would you have been?

I might have gone to art school, I might have been a teacher. I still might...

Do you have any theatrical superstitions or rituals?

I'll sometimes have a banana and a Lucozade before going on stage, if that counts.

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Director - Orla O'Loughlin

Orla O'Loughlin is a British theatre director. She is currently the Vice Principal and Director of Drama for Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London, and was previously Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre. Alongside this role, she also works as a freelance theatre director.

Over the course of her career Orla has directed an eclectic mix of award-winning and internationally acclaimed work at a range of theatres, festivals and non-conventional performance spaces.

She was listed in *The Observer* as one of the top fifty Cultural Leaders in the UK and in *The List* Hot 100 of Women in the Arts.

Associate Director - Katherine Nesbitt

Katherine is an experienced director who has worked productions throughout the UK and who holds an MA (Hons) in Theatre Studies from the University of Glasgow. She co-leads Directors Space, a directing peer support network with the Young Vic Directors Network. She is also a script reader for the Traverse Theatre, National Theatre of Scotland and Papatango Prize.

Designer & Lighting Designer - Kai Fischer

Kai Fischer is one of Scotland's leading stage and lighting designers and has worked widely across theatre, opera and installation art.

Composer & Sound Designer - Kim Moore

Kim Moore works as a composer, music producer and sound designer across experimental, electronic and contemporary music, in theatre, dance and film. Her work varies from ghostly orchestral worlds to distorted noise and electronic driven scores.

Costume Designer - Sophie Ferguson

Sophie Ferguson graduated from the Edinburgh College of Art in 2016, and previously trained in stage management. She works with the Traverse frequently, as well as gaining experience across the UK and Europe.



Mouthpiece

EDUCATION RESOURCE

CONTENTS

OVERVIEW & WARNINGS

THEMES, PRODUCTION & CURRICULUM

BEFORE THE SHOW

AFTER THE SHOW

ABOUT THE COMPANY

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources

[Close – written by Kieran Hurley, performed by Iain Robertson](#)

First commissioned by Theatre Uncut. (12:39 minutes)

[Interview with Kieran Hurley a Scottish Theatre Archive](#)

Kieran Hurley is a theatre maker – a writer and performer – with a background in solo performance. *Hitch* (2009) told the story of his journey hitchhiking from Scotland to the G8 conference in L'Aquila, *Beats* (2013) a music-infused coming of age story about life in small town Scotland and *Rantin* (2014) was a National Theatre of Scotland commission and tour. (6:12 minutes)

[Mouthpiece – An interview with writer Kieran Hurley](#) (1:33 minutes)

[Interview with Julia Taudevin and Kieran and Hurley about their collaborative work – Chalk Farm](#) (10:38 minutes)

[Meet the cast of Mouthpiece](#)

The original cast - Neve McIntosh and Lorn Macdonald talk about their characters Libby and Declan. (1:43 minutes)

[Rantin and Raving: An interview with Kieran Hurley](#)

David Overend, Lecturer in Drama and Performance Studies, The University of Edinburgh, thinks aloud with playwright Keiran Hurley about scales of connectivity linking theatre audiences to an aspirational political collective. (19:22 minutes)

[Theatremaker Kieran Hurley: 'Anything I write is a story about people and love, in some way'](#)



Guide for Writing a Critical Response

Opening Paragraph

| | |
|---|--|
| When | |
| What | |
| Where | |
| Plot Overview of the production and the intent of the playwright... The artistic contributors – director, set designer, lighting, costume | |

Language Features:

- Usually in past tense
- Uses subject-specific language
- Descriptive language
- Third person voice
- Analytical language
- Modality (how certain we are about something)
- Cast and crew referred to by their full names or last name
- In text references (quotes or specific moments)

1st Paragraph - Who

| | |
|--|--|
| How theatrical elements are communicated through the actors... | |
| Actor's name | |
| Character they played | |
| Discuss how they engage the audience - movement, voice | |
| Give examples | |

2nd Paragraph - What else

| | |
|---|--|
| Describe a key moment or scene from the production | |
| How were the theatrical elements combined to communicate meaning to the audience? | |

3rd Paragraph - Technical aspects

| | |
|--|--|
| Describe a key moment or scene from the production | |
| How were sets, lights, props and costumes used to communicate meaning to the audience? | |

Concluding Paragraph - Summarises the viewers opinion

| | |
|---|--|
| Your overall thoughts about the production. Note: This is not a rating of the production. | |
| What made it stand out? | |
| What did it make you think? | |