

**National  
Theatre**

# **Shut Up I'm Dreaming**

**Learning Guide**

# Index

About This Guide.....	2
Background Information .....	3
Teaching Information.....	4
Production Notes.....	5
Contextual Information.....	5
Key Design Elements.....	6
Performance Style.....	11
Key Moments.....	12
Plot Synopsis with Timecodes .....	13
Find Out More.....	24

# About

This learning guide supports the National Theatre's touring school's production of *Shut Up, I'm Dreaming*, directed by **Kane Husbands**, which opened on 9 January 2023.

Our packs are designed to support viewing the recording on the **National Theatre Collection**. This pack provides links to the UK school curriculum and other productions in the Collection. It also has a plot synopsis with timecodes to allow you to jump to specific sections of the play.

Here you'll find all the information you need to enable you to study the production and write about it in detail. This includes notes about all the key elements from performance style to design. You'll also find pointers for further research.

# Background Information

Recording Date – 22 March 2023

Age Recommendation – PG

## **Cast (as themselves)**

Joseph Adelakun

Marc Benga

Jeff D'Sangalang

Jake Garvey

Lewis Griffin

Rachel-Leah Hosker

Rianna Kellman

Bianca Stephens

Molly Walker

Seda Yildiz

## **Creative Team:**

Director ..... Kane Husbands

Set & Costume Designer ..... Peter Butler

Lighting Designer ..... Amy Mae

Sound Designer..... Roly Botha

Composer..... Naomi Hammerton

Intimacy Coordinator ..... Seda Yildiz

# Teaching Information

**This production is particularly suitable for:**

- Drama students who are creating their own devised theatre as part of a GCSE or A Level course.
- Drama students who are interested in studying The PappyShow as contemporary theatre practitioners as part of an A Level course.
- Anyone with an interest in theatre that created specifically for and/or about young people.

**In particular you might like to explore:**

- The process of devising and creating the production, in particular how The PappyShow worked with groups of young people around the country to research and create the show.
- The versatile and creative way in which the production is staged, allowing it to tour into different spaces, in schools around the country.
- This production alongside *Our Generation*, another production on the NT Collection, which focuses on the experience of young people.

# Production Notes

The following notes have been compiled to help guide you through the significant design and performance aspects as you watch the production, or to remind you of them after you have watched it. You may also want to make your own notes and form your own opinions on the effectiveness of these aspects as you explore the production.

## Contextual Information:

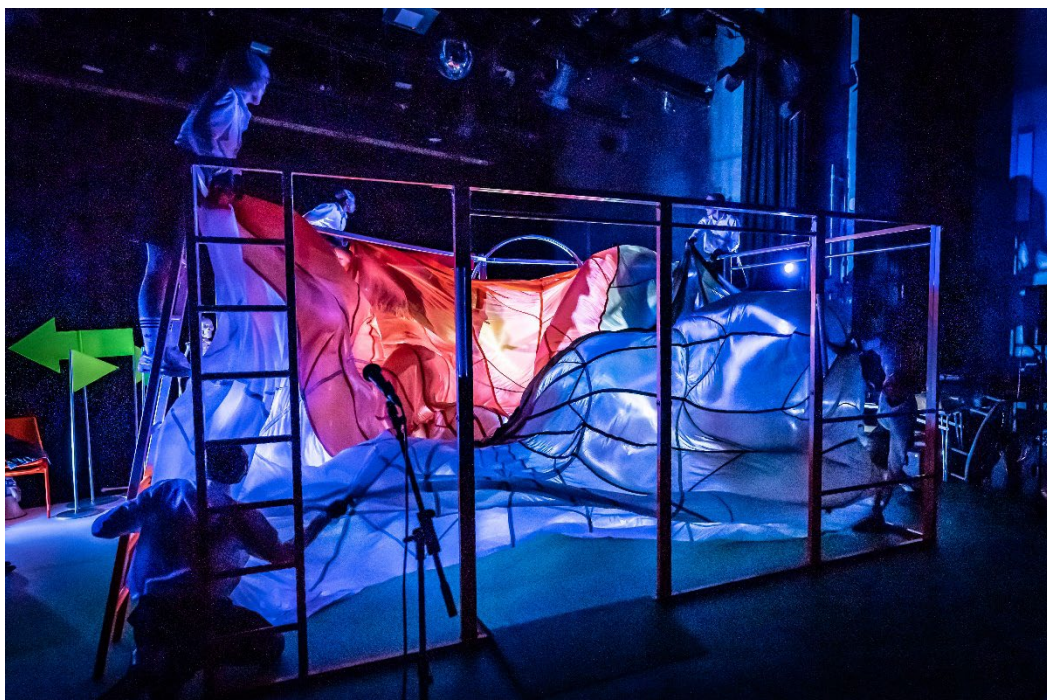
- Throughout 2022, artists from The PappyShow spent time with 100 students across three schools in Sunderland, Wakefield, and Walsall to have conversations about dreams and ambition in an uncertain world. From these conversations, *Shut Up I'm Dreaming* was created.
- You can find out more about The PappyShow and their working practices here: <https://www.thepappyshow.co.uk/>



# Production Notes

## Key design Elements: Set

- The set is dominated by a large climbing frame style structure. It is painted white and orange – the two colours meeting about halfway up the structure in an ombre effect. The frame both creates a space in which to perform, but also a variety of levels on which to climb. There are two ladders within the structure, at diagonally opposite corners to each other.
- The stage space is also delineated by green flooring.
- A costume rail is placed stage right. The actors change costumes on stage.
- The tour cases, props and costumes are all visible to the audience. A trestle table holding props is also visible.
- There are several orange chairs – the same type that you would normally see in schools.
- A TV is placed downstage, in the centre.
- A silk parachute is also used at one point in the play, again within the climbing frame structure.





# Production Notes

## Key design Elements: Costume

- At the start of the play, most of the actors wear black clothes. They wear items such as bomber jackets, hoodies, black or white T-shirts, cycling shorts or dark trousers.
- At various points the characters wear school blazers and ties – these are generic, so that they are instantly recognisable. They do not have specific school crests, for example – the idea behind this costume is that the target audience can identify with it.
- Simple role signifiers such as a lanyard instantly give a character an identity – for example a woolen cardigan and a lanyard suggests a teacher.
- Seda wears a blue jumper, and black cycling shorts.
- Lewis wears a costume that includes a black t shirt and checked black & white trousers.
- Rhianna's costume includes a black t shirt and black trousers.
- Bianca wears a blue and beige striped t shirt with black trousers.
- Jacob's t shirt is also black with a printed image and worn with black trousers.
- Molly wears a white polo neck with black trousers.
- Joseph's t shirt has a pink hue, he wears black trousers and wears black fingerless gloves.
- Jeff's shirt is white, he also wears a black waistcoat and black trousers.
- There are also two stage managers (Lily and Tom) who wear black t-shirts and trousers. They are referred to several times in the performance and are often on view to the audience as they fulfil their roles within the performance.



# Production Notes

## Key design Elements: Lighting

- The nature of this production (touring and hosted in school halls or drama studios) requires the set and lighting to be versatile and transferable between venues. Therefore, the lighting is provided by lanterns on stands.
- The basic lighting palette includes blue, pink and yellow hues.
- There are some moving lights, and lighting tubes which are used at the end of the performance.



# Production Notes

## Key design Elements: Sound

- Much of the music in the production is played live on stage.
- Early in the performance, the company perform a rap, *I Don't Need School*.
- Molly plays live trumpet, and other actors play guitar and drums during the performance.
- A recorded piano track is also used.
- Recorded sound effects include a fire alarm bell.
- During the scene where Molly is bullied, drums and recorded sound punctuates the scene.
- The actors use handheld microphones when singing or rapping. Radio mics are used to amplify voices in the spoken sections.





# Production Notes

## Key Design Elements: Wigs, Hair and Make-Up and Puppetry

- Natural hair styles are used throughout this production.
- The only exception to this is the use of blonde wigs by all the actors during Molly's monologue.
- There is one puppet used in this production. It is of a small boy and is operated by three performers.
- The puppet wears a blue school blazer, black trousers, and a white shirt, mirroring the school uniforms worn by the actors.



# Production Notes

## Performance Style

- The structure of the play is quite episodic, with each character interacting with the audience, delivering monologues, as well as interacting with the other characters on stage. This interaction with the audience because the content of the play is based on the experiences and ideas of students of the same age group as the target audience.
- There are moments of physical theatre, including use of the climbing frame and intense physical work between actors.



# Production Notes

## Key Moments

- The 'Letter to My Future Self' (00.12.23-00.14.33) begins to show the relationships between the different characters, and their personalities.
- 'A List of School Things' between 00.17.39-00.18.37 is an excellent example of rhythmic speech. It is also an excellent example of how ideas and information that have been used in discussions and rehearsals, can become part of a script when applied in a creative way.
- Rhianna's scene, and the reactions of the ensemble, takes place between 00.25.05-00.27.05.
- A song, *Who Are We?* is performed between 00.45.40 and 00.51.26. This song is also a good example of how transitions are integrated: the case also changes for the next part of the piece whilst singing this song.
- A physical theatre scene takes place between 00.36.06 and 00.37.33 incorporates movement, music, and interaction with the set. This is an excellent example of two actors working together and demonstrating their relationships. It also draws on several different production elements to create an emotional response in the audience.
- An example of the puppetry used in the performance can be seen from 00.54.33-00.56.09.

# Plot Synopsis with Timecodes

## **I Don't Need School 00:00:00**

A school hall. The characters all hang around in a large metal frame, with various ladders, and climbing bars, like a school gym apparatus. The cast sing of their lives and the challenges of school.

Miss enters, the cast have started the show without her. She is annoyed, and they start the show proper.

## **Prologue 00:03:00**

Jeff introduces the show. He tells the audience "The show is about what we dream about and why." It is a coming-of-age tale, it is about being a young person, today. The cast explain the nature of the show, how it has been made with parts of their real stories and introduce themselves.

## **Puppet #1 00:06:00**

The cast bring onto the stage a puppet of a young boy. They operate the puppet and the surrounding scenery to tell the story of the young boy, and his creative, epic dreams.

"In this story, this boy can be an astronaut, a doctor, a zookeeper, a fireman, a bin man, a father, an Olympic winner, an X-Man, a deep-sea diver, a king, a lover, a window washer, a baker, a builder."

### **School Anthem 00:08:15**

Molly is brought onto stage, embarrassed, with her trumpet. The cast encourage her to play. The first section of playing goes well, the second section goes offkey and her trumpet is taken away. Dressed in school uniform, Rianna steps in and begins to sing the school anthem. Molly interrupts her, followed by the rest of the cast, singing about how they won't break under the pressures of the school regime.

### **10 Years Letter 00:11:15**

Joseph interrupts the song, realising the date. He tells the audience that 10 years ago, we wrote himself a letter to be read on this exact date. He reads the letter to future him. Future him wonders what he will be like, will he be handsome? Will he be able to grow a beard? He tells of an amazing memory that he hopes future him hasn't forgotten, of him and his siblings looking out over an amazing sunset, after going swimming. He speaks of how he loves each and every one of his siblings and is grateful of how they are no longer in foster care.

### **Kissing #1 00:14:45**

The cast, all in their school uniform, are all anxious for their first kiss. Various cast, led by Lewis, enact their first, awkward school kisses.

### **Procession (Rock Song) 00:15:30**

The cast sing and enact the chaotic variety of activities, subjects, rumours, and rules at school.

### **List of Things From School (Girls) 00:17:30**

Bianca lists a long list of things that they encounter at school, from Nando's dates to friendship bracelets, to periods, foundation lines, school dinners and teachers' coffee breath.



### **Jeff's Gesture Dance: 00:18:35**

Jeff uses a blend of dance and physical theatre to gesture being a teenage boy surrounded in a circle by his friends. Bianca pushes him out the circle, and uses the same blend of gestures, dance, and physical theatre to represent being a teenage girl.

### **Alternative School #1 00:19:30**

Miss takes a register. She tells the class that they are going to be trying something new today. She invites them to do... nothing. The class are confused. Why do nothing? The aim is to think about why we do what we do, in the moments when we are alone, and often distract ourselves to pass the time.

“The unknown can be scary. But it's through the silence that we can actually listen to what we really need.”

A school bell rings.

### **Boys Duet #1 00:22:50**

Through a physical movement piece, Jeff and Jacob enact a typical, physical relationship between two young male friends.

### **Slut Story: 00:25:05**

Rianna talks of a school experience that impacted her at school. She tells the audience of a time where a rumour, spread by her best friend, went around the school that she had kissed someone else's boyfriend. She was singled-out and isolated, dropped by her friends, and was labelled as a “slag.”

## **Place 00:27:00**

The cast sing “Where’re you from? Where do call home.” They ask the audience about if they are proud of where they come from by a show of hands. They ask what are they proud of in the place that they live and encourage the audience to consider the place where they live.

## **Jeff Gesture Dance #2 00:30:15**

Through physical movement, Jeff and Bianca replicate Jeff’s earlier movement sequence, emulating the daily actions of teenagers. Molly and Lewis take the floor, Molly gestures smoking and Lewis screams.

## **Alternative School #2 00:31:25**

Miss calls a register. Miss asks the cast what does “trust” mean to them. The class calls out who they trust. Why do we trust the people we trust?

Miss calls Rianna and Bianca to the front. In this roleplay, she asks Riana what she would say if Bianca was the person who spread the lies about her, as mentioned previously. It is a tense scene, Riana directs her anger towards Bianca, and Bianca apologises, though insists she wasn’t the person who spread the rumours.

## **Girls Duet #1 Clapping Song 00:36:00**

Molly and Bianca enact the trust dynamics of their friendship through a movement sequence.

## **School Reports: 00:38:30**

The cast share their school reports.

Jeff’s Year10 maths teacher notes that he is easily distracted, but otherwise is good and seems to enjoy multiplying numbers.

Jacob's Year 8 Spanish teacher is not impressed with the focus on his work.

Joseph's Year 7 Form Tutor notes that he is shy and should engage in more enrichment activities to make more friends. He briefly explains that he had a lot going on at that age, and the cast support him by telling him not to worry.

### **Kissing #2 00:40:20**

The cast, led by Lewis, enact a second round of awkward, teenage kissing for TikTok. Bianca tells Jeff that she prefers kissing girls.

### **Prom Dress Letter 00:40:45**

Bianca sets the scene. The cast will be making "anti-prom" looks from bits of clothing, costume, and props from around the stage space, and the audience are encouraged to cheer, clap and make noise for them when they come out in their finished looks.

While they get ready, Bianca tells a story of her prom dress. The night of her final "sportsman's dinner" she wore a blue dress, had her hair done, makeup done, and got her uncle to drive her to the event in his sportscar. On arrival, a group of boys saw her, started laughing, and she overheard one of them call her a whore. For the rest of the evening, she was very self-conscious, and tried to hide herself.

Bianca: I spent the rest of the evening pulling the bottom of the dress down and the top of the dress up. Trying to hide the whore in the middle of it.

Looking back, Bianca wishes that she'd told those boys to screw themselves, and that she wishes that there were more events where people could turn up and be celebrated for being unapologetically themselves.

### **Catwalk 00:43:35**

Bianca acts as the MC as the cast walk a runway in outfits made from what they have found in the school hall, from bits of costume, props, and other items. Bianca

encourages the crowd to celebrate them as they walk the runway in their strange but fantastic outfits.

### **Face (Who are we?) Wigs: 00:45:45**

Bianca says she wishes her prom was more like the previous scene where everyone was celebrated for being themselves. Instead, the cast remove their self-made outfits and sing “Who Are We?”. They dress identically in grey school skirts, white shirts, and blonde wigs.

### **Fight 00:47:25**

Molly talks about how, as a girl, the easy way to get by is to skate through the middle, to not stand out too much, but to still participate enough to not be singled out. The pressure comes from a society that is not built for others to stand out.

As Molly calls out the “the sexist, racist, ableist, homophobic, patriarchal, heteronormative, capitalist society we live in” she is interrupted, the cast move away from her. She has said and stood out too much. She dons her blonde wig and tries to conform again with the crowd, but she is ridiculed and abused by the group. A fight breaks out as she tries to defend herself, but she is outnumbered. She is kicked, beaten, and thrown to the floor. She is alone.

### **Rianna’s Letter 00:51:20**

Rianna reads out a letter she has written to herself, encouraged by Bianca. She reminds herself that she should love the person she is, embrace the body she has, and give herself credit for the learning that she is undertaking.

Rianna: Even if you don’t believe it, tell yourself you’re beautiful  
You are beautiful.  
You are beautiful.  
Rianna Kelman is beautiful.

### **Home: 00:52:45**

Rianna sings of how recently she feels lost, wanting to run away, but all she knows is home. The cast applaud and cheer her on.

### **Puppet #2: 00:54:15**

The puppet of the boy we met earlier has grown. The world he used to dream of is darker now. It is full of monsters, mistakes, and challenges. This world cannot be allowed to know how fragile this young boy is.

### **Students and Teachers/List for Bianca 00:56:00**

Bianca details a list of significant moments, positive and negative, based on a list of students and teachers at her school.

### **Teacher's Diss Track/Teacher's Response 00:57:10**

Lewis drops a diss track on Mr Cook, who called him out in his music class last week. Molly drops a diss track for Miss, full of personal attacks on Miss' personal appearance.

Jeff joins in. Miss enters the scene and puts the entire class in detention.

### **Grief 00:59:00**

Jacob introduces the scene, "this is a representation of what grief might feel like".

Bianca, armed with a headtorch, scales the climbing frame, and attempts the climb the entire way around. A large red parachute is pulled across the frame by the cast, and in a symphony of noise and red flapping material, Rianna falls and crashes to the ground, and remains still for some time. The music stops. Alone, she wraps the parachute material around her, and exits the scene.

Jacob tells the story of how, when he was in school, his grandma passed away. He confesses, though sad that she passed, he was grateful that she was no longer in pain. He remembers how he tried to carry on at school and tried to focus on his mock exams with his friends, but he couldn't. He knew he should have asked for help, but he stayed quiet.

### **Kissing #3 01:04:05**

The cast lines up in the same order as previously for the "Kissing" segment. However, this time, the Actor 8 says no to Lewis. He apologizes, and she thanks him for respecting her and listening. They move on.

### **30 Things (Teacher) 01:04:50**

Bianca reads a long list of items in the day in the life of a teacher. The list ranges from struggling with the challenges of being a teacher, to Love Island updates, and the inner thoughts they wish they could say to the students.

### **Alternative School #3 01:07:15**

Miss asks the class what they think their future careers will hold for them in the future. They range from being an actor, something with football, going to University, and wanting to be a teacher, just like Miss.

Jacob tells Miss that he's going to be a billionaire. The class mock him, telling him to lower his expectations. Joseph rebukes them, telling them that he is dreaming something bigger than all of them.

Joseph: No ifs or buts, it's happening. Do you know how many problems I could solve? I could end homelessness, stop all poverty, give every single child a safe home, I could save the whole planet. ME. And why not me? Lower my expectations? Are you mad? If everyone thought like youse lot, we would still be living in caves.

He tells them; having an education, being allowed to be who he wants to be would have been his grandparents wildest dreams, and he owes it to his future family to make a future that is better than ours.

### **Story of My Body 01:09:55**

Molly talks about how when she was younger, she was a tomboy, and one of the boys. She was just as good as them at sports, running, climbing. She was hurt often but it was her body to break and make stronger.

But as they all got older, the boys changed. She was left out, no longer considered equal. The pain of this is not the same pain of a break or a muscle strain, but a pain that just doesn't go away. Something needs to change.

### **Gesture Dance #3 01:12:05**

Molly leads the gesture movement sequence; it is a movement that shows a performance of restraint, frustration, and anger. The rest of the cast join and mirror Molly.

### **Puppet #3 01:14:20**

Lewis calls the puppet back to the stage. He tells the story of the young boy, who even though he has to fight many monsters, issues and doubts of this dark world, he never allowed himself to stop dreaming.

He reveals that the young boy is him. Though he hasn't fulfilled many of his grandest dreams, he is still happy, and a proud uncle to his nephew. Though he struggled at school, he asked for help and took the process slowly.

He tells the audience to keep their inner child alive, and to never stop dreaming.



### **Alternative School #4 01:16:30**

Sedda is tired of playing the teacher. The class/cast are rude to her, the pay is terrible, and she is tired. The cast are reminded that the teachers are doing the best that they can with the resources that they have available to them.

Sedda takes on the role of Miss again, and tells the class to take out the letters that they wrote to their younger selves. The class ask Sedda to read hers.

Sedda gives herself permission to be herself, to feel and be human.

Sedda: Small acts add up, make conscious choices every day, be radically full of joy and laughter and kindness and care. Show up for your friends, your family, your community and for humanity and trust that others will show up for you too.

### **Hymn Song: 01:20:35**

Bianca, Rianna and Joseph sing of being young, being protected and being allowed to dream. The full cast join in for the final reprise.

The cast discuss what happens once the play ends. Perhaps it will be forgotten. Or perhaps, the audience will think that they too, have a story worth telling.

“You can leave but maybe seeing this show and the stories in it will make you think, oh yeah, I have a story too, and it’s an important one, and so you’ll tell it. You’ll tell it through the clothes you wear and the songs you sing and the way you treat others, and that’ll make them realise they have a story too and they’ll pass that on like a little light”.

**End.**

# Suggestions for Further Activity

- This production based its content on material from workshops and interactions with secondary students. The key focus was the experiences and concerns of that age group. In a group of no more than 5, mind-map the different issues that you wish to explore. Ask yourselves, 'what frustrates me about the world we live in?' and 'how do I want this world to change?'. Once you have identified one key focus (e.g. the environment), interview five of your peers, three adults whom you already know, and three other people of your choice (whom you already know). Combining the interview material create one or more of the following: i) a rap with which to open a performance ii) a monologue to be delivered straight to the audience iii) a song iv) a piece of physical theatre in which the words of the material are translated into physical movement and gesture.
- This production uses live and recorded sound, and several songs. Imagine that you are creating a play about being a young person in the 2020s. Create a Spotify playlist of 10 songs that you think create a sense of the world around you. There are no limits on the musical style of genre: aim to use at least two pieces of music that do not have lyrics, but instead create mood and atmosphere in other ways.
- The PappyShow describes this production as "a love letter to a new generation". Discussion: if you were writing a love letter to your generation, what positive attributes would you describe? What would you hope for the NEXT generation?

# Find out More

## Find Out More:

### Explore

### Learning Hub

You can find more resources for schools and teachers on the National Theatre's Learning Hub. Search by key stage, subject, theatrical style or practitioner and discover an ever-growing library of short films, learning guides and digital exhibitions. Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/learn-explore/schools/teacher-resources/>

### National Theatre Archive

More materials relating to the production including the costume bible, poster, prompt scripts, programme, stage management reports and more are held at the National Theatre Archive, which is free to visit.

Find out more: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/archive>

We hope that you have enjoyed watching and studying **Shut Up, I'm Dreaming**. Don't forget that there are many more fantastic productions to explore as part of the NT Collection. We hope that watching this recorded production has made you feel inspired to see and make live theatre. [Why not find out what's happening at your local theatre and how you can get involved?](#)

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**Thank you**