



National Youth Theatre present

Imaam Imraan

Written by Asif Khan

Directed by Iqbal Khan

Exclusive resources, interviews
& classroom activities for
key stage 3–5

Created by Nadia Nadif

1–4 July

Kala Sangam,

Bradford Literature Festival



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Imraam Imraan follows the journey of **Imraan Iqbal**, a Bradford born actor, returning to his roots to rediscover his identity. The play begins with Imraan Grant (his stage name) having an argument with **Erica**, the producer of **Ashley Road**, the soap he has been in for three years, as she tells him of his next storyline, when, out of nowhere, his character will suddenly become Muslim, and in short succession radicalised.

Imraan tells the audience about his life thus far and the fact that his childhood Islamic faith hasn't followed him into adulthood. Gradually, he has lost contact with his family in Bradford and now lives in Bristol with his girlfriend, the talented yet ruthlessly ambitious **Pearl**, an actress who he met on the set of **Ashley Road**. But everything changes following an attack by terrorists on a church in Bristol. **Imraan** notices people's attitudes changing negatively towards him both on set and on line.

Following an argument with **Pearl** about Islam, **Imraan** realises he has slightly abandoned his faith and sets out on a journey of rediscovery - from a google search, to reading the Qu'ran, to visiting a mosque in Bristol. There, he meets **Yusuf** and begins attending Arabic classes there. He starts praying regularly and **Pearl** accuses him of being radicalised.

Back in the present day, **Imraan** ends up quitting the show as he doesn't want to play into stereotypes, especially as the only brown actor in the show, angering his agent and the producer in the process. Afterwards he prays in a park, is warned from doing so by a homeless man called **Jim** and their chat causes him to realise he needs to visit Bradford again, for the first time in three years. Over a curry, he debates whether to make contact with his family again. He can't quite do it, so checks into a hotel, breaks up with **Pearl** and visits his old haunts.

Imraan sees a derelict church and decides to buy it and convert it into an Islamic centre for all people of all faiths. He has a visit from concerned police officers, there is a No Mosque Here demonstration by local people. Eventually a man called **Julian** who is an architect writes a letter of support to the council about the planning permission needed. People are divided on the opening day of Islam Box. But then a local Bradford girl, **Zainab**, comes to ask for Imraan's advice with an audition. He helps her with it, tells her to join the drama club, and recognises himself in her, starts to see it might all be worth it after all.

Usmaan, Imraan's younger brother, turns up at Islam Box and rages at Imraan for the shame he has brought upon the family - being broadcast on a TV soap daily, the nude pictures with **Pearl**, living with her before marriage, drinking and clubbing - in short, a "haram life". He tells Imraan their **mother** was physically attacked by two White woman because she is wearing a hijab.

Then a news story breaks about **Imraan** becoming radicalised (**Pearl** has sold a story based on lies). He has a panic attack and collapses unconscious, to be found by **Harry**, a teenager who discovered Islam before Islam Box was opened and has been attending the prayers. People have graffitied the building so **Harry** and **Imraan** clean it off. **Harry** asks **Imraan** to convert him and takes the name of **Hamza**.

Imraan attempts contact with **Usmaan** again but it is not welcome. **Imraan** has to delete his twitter account due to getting so much online abuse. Then **Asim** (Zainab's dad) berates **Imraan** for doing a drama club in a place of worship and warns **Imraan** to stay away from his daughter as drama is "haram." **Imraan** focusses on his interfaith work when his mum calls him.

Imraan reunites with his **mum**, who is suffering from panic attacks following

her assault. She tells him his **Nani** died two years ago and **Imraan** becomes angry and upset, as no one told him.

Hamza and **Imraan** read the whole of the Qu'ran as an offering for his **Nani**. During which **Adiola**, Grace's parent tells **Imraan** their daughter won't be coming back to drama club and accuses Imraan of radicalising young people.

Following a tweeted video from Pearl's new boyfriend, a cage fighter **Solid Colin**, **Imraan** decides to do a public interview in the press to put his side of the story across about the accusations and also the difference between how Islam is treated by the press compared to other religions. Then about 10% of the public see his point of view. His agent calls and tries to get him onto a reality TV programme with a lot of money attached but **Imraan** refuses.

Usmaan returns and tells **Imraan** to stay away from their **mum**, then comes out to **Imraan** and accuses him of ruining his life as he's been forced to play the role of perfect son to make up for Imraan's way of life.

Imraan's **mum** visits Islam Box and invites **Imraan** to celebrate Eid with the family. She also says **Usmaan's** arranged marriage plans are in full swing.

Imraan and **Priest David** hold an interfaith event in a church to promote people coming together more, unifying and fighting extremism and hatred together. **Usmaan** and **Imraan** meet and **Usmaan** apologises for his treatment of his brother. **Imraan** accepts **Usmaan** as a gay man, a Muslim and his brother and comes up with a plan to break off the arranged marriage without **Usmaan** having to come out to his family before he is ready - **Imraan** ensures saucy modelling photos and broadcasts from **Ashley Road** are passed on to the future bride's family. It works and the marriage is over.

Imraan is still receiving hate mail, but is happy to have his relationship back with his brother. Visitors at Islam Box are becoming more numerous. Finally he hears from **Zainab** she thanks him for his help as she has been accepted into the Playhouse Youth Theatre, although she doesn't yet know if she'll be able to take up her place there.



Diversity, Intersectionality and Duality

The characters in the play are far from one dimensional. It is possible to be an actor and Muslim; a doctor and then an actor; Muslim and gay; a non Muslim, yet support the conversion of a disused church into an Islamic centre and more. The strength of duality is very clear in the script - without his background as a Muslim and an actor, Imraan may not have chosen to set up a new community space that offers drama classes and yoga as well as the daily prayers at the Mosque, and in doing so he slowly brings together people of many different backgrounds.

Family

The play explores on a number of levels: intergenerational relationships between parents and their children; the complexities of sibling relationships; and the differences between first generation and second generation immigrants, particularly around the ideas of having to choose a career or lifestyle that will further you and your family over one that you might actually want to do for yourself.

Community and Belonging

The play looks at various different communities and the ways communities can make life both more pleasurable when you can belong to one, (like Zainab when she joins her local drama group), and more challenging, when you are cut off from one, (as Imraan's mother is within her two communities - the Muslim community for the perceived shame her son brings on her family, and the Bradford community, for being visibly Muslim).

Integrity and Acceptance

The play explores being true to yourself and doing what you need to do to progress in your career, make your family proud of you and make a relationship work. Imraan spends his life savings on buying and converting the disused church into Islam Box. People are simultaneously angry at him for having Islamic prayers held there

and holding drama, fine art and yoga classes, but it's the first time in the play, we see Imraan at peace with his own actions.

Faith and religion

The different ways the Qu'ran (and any other religious texts) can be interpreted is explored in today's world where people with very varied political and social beliefs may use religion as a supporting mechanism for their views. In Zainab's monologue, she puts into historical context the life of the prophet Muhammed (Peace be Upon Him) and his youngest wife Aisha. The comfort of faith and the sense of belonging and peace it brings is examined in depth as well as the divisions religion can cause. The strength of interfaith initiatives is shown when Imraan gives the reasons of why he wants the doors to be open to "all people of all faiths". Throughout the play, Imraan is constantly berated for being both too Muslim and simultaneously not Muslim enough. His journey back to Islam is a very personal one, and a different one to characters such as Harry/ Hamza and his parents. Faith is seen as a very personal relationship with God/Allah and Imraan has shared aims with Priest David and other Christians during the play and also meets with those in the Jewish faith.

Prejudice

Islamophobia is a strong theme within the play, from the lack of nuance in the storylines of **Ashley Road**, to the conflating of religious and political ideologies for example when Pearl is terrified of Imraan saying "Allah" as she associates it with terrorism. **Homophobia** is also explored as Usmaan is preparing to go through a marriage with a woman, despite being gay, because he worries of what the prejudice will do to his parents. **Misogyny** is touched upon too by both the media (Page three of The Sun) and Usmaan's descriptions of Pearl as a 'slag'.

Suggested activity

1. Writing / Speaking / Presentation - discussing the themes using evidence within the play

- Choose **one** of the themes above and discuss **how Asif Khan explores this theme** throughout the play, including **references from quotations** in the play to support you.
- Consider how he does this bearing in mind the **audience** he is writing for.

This could be done as an essay (solo activity, 500 words) or as a 10–20 minute presentation (in pairs or small groups).

2. Writing / Directing - How to bring out the relationships between characters within a certain theme

- Choose from either Imraan and Usman OR Zainab and Asim OR Imraan and Pearl
- How would you work with actors to portray the different types of relationship (siblings, parent and child, partners)?
- What off text improvisations might you give them to do?
- How would you get them to use the stage space?
- How might they interact with other characters onstage, given their relationship status?
- What evidence is there in the script to support what a character's intentions and objectives might be? And how might the other character bring up obstacles to this?

This could be done as an essay (solo activity, 500 words) or a practical open rehearsal (groups of three where students take it in turns to direct and to play the two characters chosen, allow 30–60 minutes for each group to present).



When did you begin to write? How old were you? What first started it off?

I did a bit before going to drama school with Red Ladder Theatre Company and Asian Theatre School (now Freedom Studios) in Bradford - it was a project called Street Voices with Theatre in the Mill, and I wrote a short play for this which was 15 minutes long. I went to University of Bradford before RADA too and we made two short films which I wrote and directed.

I was mainly acting after I graduated from RADA but then in 2013, I had this idea for a play exploring what I wanted to say about the world as a British Muslim and the fact that my voice wasn't represented. I scribbled down these characters and then I sent it to people I knew and trusted, which eventually became my first proper play Combustion (which was produced in 2017). Initially it was just going to be one play but now I want to write more!

If you could give your 16 year old self one piece of advice about writing plays, what would it be?

You have to be quite brave to write honestly because it's not going to please everyone and if you try to please everyone it's not going to be good. Write what is honest and real and from your heart. The most important thing is that it feels truthful and you feel passionately about it, rather than trying to be clever.

Describe the process of writing Imaam Imraan

National Youth Theatre (NYT) approached me and asked if I had any ideas for a new play for them. I wanted to write about what it means to be a Muslim, and thought it'd be interesting to write a play about a young modern thinking imaam. Imam Omar Suleiman is an example which came to mind.

NYT said "don't write for young people, just write a play" and that's what I did. When I had the first draft I shared it with the director, Iqbal Khan, and we then workshopped the play with actors to see what we needed more or less of. Iqbal has a really good eye; he understands my voice, and says "we don't need this, we can show this instead." In fact he's helped to made the first scene twice as funny so he really compliments my writing.

Community and belonging are strong themes in the play. What communities were you part of growing up and what communities are you part of now?

Growing up to parents from Pakistan (Dad was 13 when he came over and Mum was 18), in Bradford, I had a mixture of friends - the majority were non Muslim white friends. I was the only Asian in my class, the only brown person in the group. I probably tried to fit in with that, I didn't feel different, just a normal lad. But I remember going to bars and clubs with them and they were drinking and I was not.

The first time making a real connection with Muslims and Asian people was Asian Theatre School. There were 30 people in this group, exactly like me. We had the same kind of things in common and loved theatre.

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I like being in a community of people from diverse communities and different backgrounds - that's what I want my two year old son to grow up with.

Can you name any plays or TV shows or movies that pass the Riz Test?

The Funeral Director by Iman Qureshi. Does My Bomb Look Big in This by Nyla Levy. Anything by Hassan Abdulrazzak or Hannah Khalil!

The RSC production of Tartuffe had a diverse range of Muslims and there was lots of different representation of Muslims. There's not that many on TV. That's why this play is really important. I often am really disappointed especially on screen, people gloss over things, there's no nuance. I hope there's more in the future.

How has your faith influenced your career?

My faith is something different which allows me to connect to the world and feel things connect with people, it grounds me and makes me question if I am doing the right thing. When you pray it gives you the opportunity to think about your life. The struggle is am I represented accurately, or demonised? I want to make people understand the Muslim community is diverse. There's not just one type of Muslim. I remember growing up feeling a bit afraid to say I am a Muslim to non Muslims but now I can have my voice and combine the two a bit more and have my say through my work.

What's your favourite part about writing?

To be able to put a character in front of the audience who they might never experience in real life, but for those 1-2 hours in a theatre they can be changed in some way, feel moved, be engrossed in the story and forget about the rest of the world.



Photo credit: Alessandra Davison

Over the last 30 years, there have been more Muslim characters on stage and screen in the UK. Over the past 15-20 years, Muslim characters have been more prominent and gradually more nuanced and less stereotypical (though there is still quite a way to go).

On the one hand, there are programmes on mainstream British television such as **Man Like Mobeen and Hounslow Diaries** which have leading characters who are Muslim and show a variety of different ways characters interpret Islam. On the other hand, many programmes contain Muslim characters who are portrayed in a very stereotypical manner, which borders on prejudice and even Islamophobia. Often these programmes are created by people who are not Muslim, nor from an Islamic family background.

What seems to be slowly changing is more artists who are practising Muslims, or are from a Muslim family, are being commissioned to create content that is closer to lived experiences of Muslims from a variety of different backgrounds.

What is the Riz Test?

Taking inspiration from actor Riz Ahmed's 2017 speech in the House of Commons on diversity on screen, the **Riz Test** is five criteria to measure how Muslims are portrayed on Film and TV.

The Test

If the film/show stars at least one character who is identifiably Muslim (by ethnicity, language or clothing) - is the character...

- Talking about, the victim of, or the perpetrator of terrorism?
- Presented as irrationally angry?
- Presented as superstitious, culturally backwards or anti-modern?
- Presented as a threat to a Western way of life?
- If the character is male, is he presented as misogynistic? or if female, is she presented as oppressed by her male counterparts?

If the answer for any of the above is Yes, then the Film/ TV Show fails the test. Like the Bechdel Test was created to avoid female stereotypes, sexism and misogyny on screen, the Riz Test has been created to encourage more nuanced, realistic Muslim characters than are more representative of Muslims in real life. Hopefully one day, there will be no need for either test as three dimensional characters that do not enforce a racist or patriarchal agenda, will become the norm!



Photo credit: Gage Skidmore



The following people all self identify as Muslim and / or have a Muslim cultural background:

Bradford born, educated and / or based:

Shazia Bibi (actor, writer and producer)
Nick Ahad (writer)
Natalie Davies (actor)
Kamaal Kaan (actor & writer)
Kash Arshad (director)
Shazia Ashraf (writer/artist/director)
Aisha Khan (co-artistic director of Freedom Studios)
Asif Khan (actor and writer)
Madani Younis (previously artistic director of The Bush Theatre, now creative director of The Southbank Centre)
Javaad Alipoor (writer, director and performer)
Dina Mousawai (creative producer and actor)

Other UK born or based artists you might recognise are:

Iqbal Khan
Director whose recent work includes Tartuffe and Othello, both Royal Shakespeare Company

Sabrina Mahfouz
Poet and Playwright who has recently adapted Malorie Blackman's Noughts & Crosses for Pilot Theatre, as well as writing With a Little Bit of Luck, Paines Plough

Riz Ahmed
Emmy Award winning actor who you may know from Rogue One: A Star Wars Story, and The Night Of (HBO)

Sally El Hosaini
Film director and screenwriter known for her work on award winning My Brother the Devil, and Green Zone.



How did you get into directing as a profession?

When I was younger I loved Hammer House Horror movies and I loved acting out those scenarios with my friends and brothers ! As a family we were poor so we couldn't afford to see anything live, but my brothers and I would record opera, theatre, music on the TV. I applied and got into Trinity College, Cambridge to do Maths. While there I contracted glandular fever very seriously and had to defer for a year, I developed clinical depression as a result, which affected my voice. I went to see a voice therapist who suggested I should go back to university and do some drama which would help my vocal issues. When I returned (I had changed to Imperial doing Physics) I auditioned for Twelfth Night and that first day in the rehearsal room felt so important for me - I found it was what I wanted and needed to do.

Very quickly I began to direct things - my only qualification being that I was the most passionate person in the room! Within a couple of years I was president of the drama society there, and curated a drama festival. I ran away to the circus before the end of my course, much to the horror of my family, set up my own theatre company, did shows above pubs and was now based in London. I was writing to theatres but, because I had no qualifications, no one was responding. Until Marianne Elliott (a director who has worked at the National Theatre and in the West End) responded. We met and she was so encouraging, suggesting I do an MA. Which is what I did.

It was fantastic as it gave me a year to reflect on who I was, what I wanted to do and what my voice might or might not be. The minute I finished that course, everything began to happen. I got a bursary to work at the Leicester Haymarket Theatre and then directed and acted in shows almost continuously.

What advice would you give your younger self about becoming a director?

Once I had decided to do it, I was very energised. I think I was self-conscious about what I lacked in theatre qualifications and experience when I was younger. So, I would encourage myself not to listen to that inner voice quite so much.

What do you like most about working with new writers, such as Asif Khan?

The discovery, the sense that everything is possible. I love the fact we don't know what the play is yet, we are forming relationships with each other as a company, with the writer and we are discovering the life of the piece because, until you get into the rehearsal room, it's just words on a page and images in your mind. When you let the actors' intuition into the process, the play-on-the-page very quickly reveals itself in extraordinary and surprising ways. Asif, in particular, has a very original voice. He's exploring stories that feel under-represented and he does it with wit, complexity and compassion.

Are there any moments in the play that you relate to on a personal level?

Many. I would hope I have been someone who has always represented a rather moderate , nuanced and inclusive view of the world, but throughout my life I've always encountered people who wanted to frame me in some kind of extreme, reductive light and it's very frustrating to try and control the way my words are communicated to the world, and how my work is viewed. So that big narrative we explore in the play is something I have lived with and encountered all my life.



The challenges of the relationship between the two brothers, Imraan leaving his faith and being isolated from his family - those are challenges I have experienced in my life too, not to the extent that he has in the play, but I really understand him. The Muslim Bradford community has many parallels to the Birmingham community I grew up in. Imraan is an actor who went to Cambridge, like me, who gave it all up, like I gave it all up. There are lots of emotional and intellectual parallels I recognise which speak to the truth of things.

What preparation did you do for the play before rehearsals began?

Whenever Asif and I have a conversation about the play we are talking about what stories we want to tell and how we want to tell them. We ask ourselves, are we representing the range of views as well as we could? As we've developed the script we've tried to open up the story, to make a piece that is specific to a young British Islamic man's experience, but to tell the story in a way that opens it out to as many different communities as we can.

Beyond that, I haven't felt like we needed to do an enormous amount of research, as I feel the play explores the world we are living in now. I'm alive, I read the papers, I watch (or rather endure) the news. It all informs the work that we are making.

Suggested Activity

For groups of up to ten - with one director and nine cast, or one director, one movement director and eight cast. Allow between 45 and 90 minutes for this.

- a) Choose one of these **stage directions** in the play that involve **ensemble movement** where there is no dialogue (*Pearl and Imraan are at a photo shoot together. People dress them, apply make up, sort out their hair etc, while a photographer takes pictures...*)
- b) Decide on what you want the **overall effect** to be – in terms of **atmosphere**, whether the **staging** is still or moving or like a series of pictures, maybe describing the effect in terms of a **metaphor** (eg *like a mermaid on a ship*) and **give this task to your cast of actors**
- c) After 5 minutes of letting the cast get their creative suggestions out, **check in with them about how they are feeling** about this ensemble moment and make any tweaks to make them feel more comfortable, **choose what aspects of it you like for them to keep** and tell them **What you want them to change** (eg do their movements need to be sharper or softer, are you happy with where their focus is - out, up, down?)
- d) Once you are happy with what it looks like, tell them **your vision** of this moment, what you want the audience to see, how this moment affects different characters.
- e) Put this moment **into context of the text and action that happens before and after** and get them to **walk through the movements** without doing them 100% just to ensure they are all clear about the timings of things. (If you have any music for this moment, you could play this to ensure familiarisation with how the moves go with this.)
- f) Get the cast to **run this section** and **give any notes** to them for how it's looking – **what works well** and **what would be even better** if they did something more or different.



1. What's it like to be in such an ensemble cast?

It's really great working in this ensemble. There's so much we've been able to play with in terms of the physical theatre and movement. A lot of the time, we use the ensemble to set the scene, to create a picture or to represent the community and so we're able to present a lot more to the audience, in a really clear, creative way. Having all of the actors on stage all the time also means that during the rehearsal process, you gain a really strong sense of the play's arc and there's always opportunity to input our own ideas too so no matter what role you're playing you feel really involved in the making of scenes.

Alia Aslam

2. How has this play affected your view of the world?

This play has made me more aware of how important it is for us to tackle worldwide political and social issues through unity, despite our differences. Furthermore, it has taught me how, in tackling issues, it is important to remain open minded and hear the complaints and disagreements of those who oppose/disagree with you. By not doing this, we lack understanding, separating ourselves from one another and causing a bigger gap between those with differences. When coming together, people power can truly be the most effective and powerful tool in implementing change and it is for this reason that we must understand and remain open-minded to each other,

whether that be in relation to race, religion or ideological beliefs. Personally, it has taught me the importance of remaining calm and collected when understanding why someone may have an issue with my actions or ideological beliefs, encouraging me to ask questions instead of resorting to relations. **Alexander Makar**

3. What is it like to have the writer in the room during some of the rehearsals?

It's great having Asif in the room as it's nice to show him the work we've been doing. But it's also really helpful as he's able to give us an idea of how he imagined a scene being played and he can also provide us with information such as what inspired him to write a particular section. **Dan Furlonger**

4. What is the biggest thing you've learnt so far from doing this play?

I've learnt to be truthful to your characters, as you're portraying the reality of people's lives.

Qasim Mahmood





Alexander Makar – Imraan



Charlotte Chimuanya – Pearl /Adeola



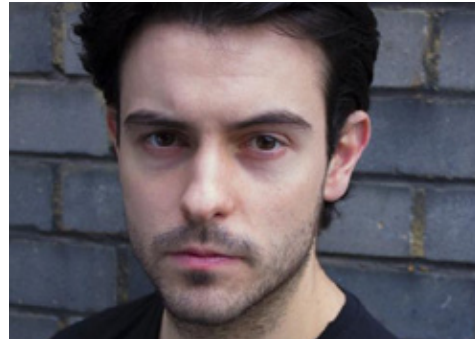
Ross Graham – Director/Chatty Charlie /Jim /Street Life Leader/Harry /Trump/ Priest David



Ella McCallum – Erica /News Presenter/ Protest Speaker/News Presenter



Alia Aslam – Photographer/Tweeter 2/ Colleague 2/ Person 1/Green Ways Leader/Mum



Dan Furlonger – Dad/Tweeter 4/ Paul / Umar /Nathan /Police Officer Ryan/Asim



Anshula Bain – Tweeter 3/ Colleague 3/ Islamic Eye Reporter/Zainab



Molly Ehrenberg-Peters – Laura /Police Officer Claire /Woman/Tweeter 1/Liz / Radio Presenter



Jay Olpin – Leon /Yusuf /Julian /Solid Colin



Qasim Mahmood – Tweeter 1/Colleague 1/Farooq /Waiter/Usmaan

**Writer
Asif Khan**

Creator and writer of the play, attends meetings, workshops and rehearsals developing the play throughout, works with the director and cast to move the play into production..

**Director
Iqbal Khan**

Director of the play, works with the writer, cast and creative and technical teams to stage the play.

**Assistant & Movement Director
Olivia Rembges**

Assists and supports the director artistically and directs the movement in the piece (includes ensemble work and physical characterisation)

**Designer
Mila Sanders**

Designs the set and costumes for the show

**Composer & Sound Designer
James Hesford**

Designs the music and the sound effects for the show

**Lighting Designer
Adam Foley**

Designs the lighting for the show

**Production Manager
Jack Greenyer and Jack Boissieux
for Infinity Technical**

Manages the technical team, liaises with the CSM, creative teams and directors and venue management, oversees fit up and get out and is on hand during technical rehearsals to help with any issues

**Company Stage Manager
Marina Dunford**

Provides support to the director and cast in rehearsals, relays logistical developments to the rest of the creative and technical teams as required.

**Stage Management Team
Natasha Rea and Aaron Martin**

Responsible for noting down staging, lighting and sound cues, costume and set changes and props used throughout rehearsals; then with the CSM helps to run the technical rehearsal, responsible for the smooth running of these departments throughout the performance run

**Head of Costume
Helena Bonner**

Manages and oversees the costume department and costume store at National Youth Theatre

**Costume Supervisor
Caitlin Shephard**

Makes and sources the costumes according to designer's imagination

**Dialect Coach
Natalie Grady**

Coaches the actors in how to achieve certain accents and dialects

**Producer
Jessica Hall**

Manages the creative and technical teams and corresponds with the venue, the PR and marketing for the show and deals with any issues that may come up which could be to do with budget, illness, ticket sales etc

**Production Coordinator
Lauren Buckley**

Corresponds with all members of the cast, technical and creative teams, coordinates casting, accomodation, travel.



Acting

Discovering clues for character (solo task)

Part of an actor's job is to flesh out the characters on the page with their own interpretation of them on the stage

- Choose **one character** (from the breakdowns on page nine).
- Go through the play and write down what they say about themselves, what they say about others, and what others say about them. These will all give you initial clues to go on for the next part of this exercise.
- Now write **three columns** - what I know, what I don't know, what I can guess at.
- Write **facts in what you know** eg *Imraan is an actor on a TV soap.*

Write down **missing information in what you don't know** eg *how long has Jim been homeless for?*

Write down **an opinion you have based on the facts in what you can guess at** eg *Pearl has been affected by her Dad's abuse towards her Mum and has not had access to any counselling.*

- Choose one of the things you have written down in the what I can guess at column. Write a diary entry from the point of view of your character (in first person using 'I' rather than he / she / they) based around that point.

Design

(solo activity or in small groups of 3–5)

1. Set Design

- Go through the script and write down all the locations mentioned in the play eg the mosque, Erica's office, the park in Bristol - and note also whether they are interior / exterior, crowded / sparse, what might be in these locations set and props wise, any details you can think of.
- Choose one of the locations** and using a sheet of A3 paper or on a computer, **create a mood board** - you can use pictures, photographs, magazine cutouts, newspaper headlines, colours, materials. Think of the **senses**, what might you be able to smell / see / hear / touch / taste in this location? What are the **textures** of materials that might be on the floor or walls if the location is interior? What might the **weather** look like if the location is exterior?
- Extension exercise - Go back to the list of locations you made in exercise a) and look for what they have in common - Are there objects in more than one location eg pillars? Are there similar shapes eg squares? Find the links. Think about the atmospheres of all the locations and the world they make up within the play. Using sketches and bullet points, explore ideas of how you could use the stage space to double up for different locations

2. Costume Design

- Choose one character in the play. Think about how they are described within the script and also how you imagine them to look. What is their style, age, background, profession, belief system? All these qualities will feed into: What might they be wearing - clothes, shoes, accessories? You could also consider hair style and make up. You can then create a mood board about this.
- Think about **the character's journey** within the play and what you want them to look like at the beginning, middle and end of the play and how they change. Is there a **costume element** that can be used to show the **passing of time or the changing of location or the change within the character**? You can then **create sketches** to show this.



Writing

1. What might happen next? (solo activity)

- a) **Choose a scene** from the play and **imagine what might happen after the scene ends** to those characters. **Summarise this in a sentence** (like a very short synopsis).
- b) Consider also what the play as a whole is **building up to** at the point the original scene is written. **Summarise in a sentence how the plot is going to develop** and how this **affects the characters** in the original scene.
- c) Using the **two above sentences as a starting point**, write a **one page scene** choosing **one** of the characters to focus upon, imagining the **dialogue** they might have with someone else in the play (eg *what is the dialogue like between Usman and his mum, after she meets with Imraan for the first time in years? Do they discuss his wedding? Imraan's mosque? The other things that have happened Imraan was not around for?*)
- d) **Extension** - give the scene to **two actors** in the class to learn, rehearse and **perform** and discuss how the scene furthers the **character development** and **drives the plot forward**.

2. Original script writing. (solo activity then pairs for the extension)

- a) Choose a **theme from the play** that you **relate to** and feels **relevant** to you. This may not be something that has affected you personally but you may have a **strong opinion** about it.
- b) **Invent a character** who might be affected by the above theme. Spend **10 minutes** writing down **everything** you can about them, ensuring your pen does not leave the page. You might include their name, age, ethnicity, class, what they do on an average day, what they do at the weekend, what their favourite meal is, what their secret dream is, what their secret fear is, who they live with, where they live, what community(ies) they are part of.
- c) Write a **half page monologue** for this character. Think about the **vocabulary** they might use. Do they speak in **long or short** sentences? How much do they / can they **speak their mind**? What **journey** do they make during the monologue (this is more likely to be an emotional journey although it could also be a physical one, is there something they as a character or we as an audience realise by the end of the monologue?) Decide **who they are speaking to**: Are they directly addressing the audience, as Imraan does in the play? Or are they talking to another character you have imagined?
- d) **Extension** - in pairs read out each other's monologues **as written** (don't tell your partner anything about the theme or the character - it's best they go in knowing nothing and then see what clues they pick up from the text only). Then make **any changes** to the monologue you have written after hearing it aloud. Then ask your partner to read out your monologue **skipping the last word** in each sentence you have written. Did it still make sense? Perhaps you can **cut out** some of these last words. Often first time writers over write, and it is worth **trying to write for the most intelligent person in your audience** as audiences are far more intelligent than we sometimes give them credit for and enjoy piecing information together and also feeling intrigued about characters and plot. In addition, often what the actor does or does not do onstage can speak volumes more than the words themselves. Somethings are better to show onstage than to say.



National Youth Theatre would like to thank Amal (a Saïd Foundation programme) for their support of Imaam Imraan

Amal - 'hope' in Arabic – is a programme of the Saïd Foundation making grants in the UK in support of a rich diversity of arts projects and activities, including storytelling, visual arts, theatre, poetry, film, music and dance. The programme aims to further the following dual interlinked objectives:

1. To increase understanding of Britain's Muslim communities among people of other faiths and none;
2. To foster a stronger sense of belonging in the UK among its Muslim communities.

Amal believes that engagement in arts and cultural activity broadens horizons and forges common ground within and between communities. The programme hopes to touch the lives of many, creating greater understanding and bringing people together in creative, innovative and exciting ways.



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