

The Winston Machine:

A Heritage Project
Kandinsky Theatre Company



Guide to the workshop & how to use this pack

Kandinsky makes and tours new devised theatre nationally and internationally. Each show is made collaboratively, with an ensemble of performers and creatives. It allows us to make theatre that is not only playful and entertaining, but which disrupts, challenges and enlivens an audience's view of the world.

We have been commissioned and produced at Royal Exchange Manchester, New Diorama London (where we are an associate company) and Schauspielhaus Vienna. Our work has toured the UK and transferred internationally to the Schaubühne, Berlin and 59E59 Theater New York.

In January 2022, we premiered *The Winston Machine* at New Diorama Theatre London in the Borough of Camden. Alongside this project, we ran a wraparound workshop programme in Camden and neighbouring boroughs, working with schools and community groups to explore our relationship to history, how it is created and remembered, and how it shapes our sense of the present. This pack is a digital version of one of the workshop strands and is suitable for year 10 to year 12 students studying drama.

As we are a devising company, it has a focus on devising skills, using sources as inspiration to devise from, and how theatre and the arts can be a medium through which to explore our heritage. This workshop explores how we inherit history and historical narratives from our culture: what are the stories we receive about the kind of world and country we live in? How do those stories affect our relationship to the place we live and the people around us? How does the history we inherit shape our present?

By the end of the workshop, students should:

- **Have increased skills at theatre devising and working with source materials**
- **Have worked collaboratively to create short theatre extracts which can be built on**
- **Have explored their relationship to localised recent history (London)**
- **Be better placed to articulate how they connect to history and how they feel about their place in it**

This pack is designed as a guide for the teacher or facilitator who will run this workshop. There are six embedded videos which can be watched directly by the young people taking part in the workshop: they include clips and imagery from *The Winston Machine* - which this workshop was created alongside - and exercises set directly by some of the creative team.



Overview:

This pack contains a four-part workshop with six videos that can be shown directly to the participants. These videos are designed to set exercises, further unpack the themes, start conversations and showcase how some of the techniques they are learning are used in real theatre.

However, all of these are linked again as and when they should be used.

The workshop involves two main exercises:

- 1. Staging short images / moments based on each other's memories of lockdown one in March 2020 (detailed in section one)**
- 2. In two groups, staging a scene from either the 1940s or 2020s, using the resources at the end of this pack (detailed in section three)**

There are two different sets of resources at the end of this pack, to be used to support the second exercise.

One



Two



Three



Four



Five



Six



Part One: Introduction

The first video is an introduction to the company and our work, as well as the show this workshop is developed alongside and what it's about. You can watch it here: [VIDEO ONE](#)



After watching this together, begin the workshop by discussing the concept of history as a group. What do we think history is? In books? Letters? Events? Is it the Tudors? The Second World War?

Then talk to the group about having lived through history themselves - in the form of the recent COVID-19 pandemic and UK lockdowns.

We suggest that you discuss the announcement of the first UK lockdown as a clear 'living through history' moment - or else, when people first heard about Covid. Does everyone in the group have a memory from that time about where they were / what this felt like? Discuss this as a group.

EXERCISE

This video sets out an exercise to do in smaller groups based on staging the group's memories of living through recent history:



After they've created their short scenes / moments, watch each other's, and experiment with stringing some of these short moments together. Afterwards encourage the group to consider:

Does it feel different to watch one of these little pieces in isolation, and to watch lots of them together? Why? Why not?

What does it feel like to watch these pieces as an audience member? Does it capture the feeling of living through that time? If not, why not? What's missing?

Part Two: Creating History

The characters in our recent show *The Winston Machine* all have a different relationship to history. We expressed this through the relationship between the present day and World War Two - which felt to us like the biggest historical event of the last 100 years. Some of the characters in the show feel that it was a more exciting, glamorous time than the present; others feel less connected to it.

Obviously, lots of people who remember WWII are now dying and it's passing out of living memory - which makes first-hand accounts of it feel more important to us, as they help us feel connected to real people in the past and what it must have been like. We suggest raising some of these ideas with the group - some people in the room might even have stories in their families connected to the war, which swept people up all over the world - before watching the next video:

The letter in this video was written by a resident of Camden as the bombs were actually falling on London, on 10 September 1940. We found it in Camden Archives. The writer's name isn't on the letter; she wrote it on a typewriter and left a blank space at the bottom, to hand-sign. It was sent to friends in America and Canada, and one of them donated it to Camden Archives after the war, along with some of the writer's other letters, as her friend felt they "belonged in England".

Letters and diaries ('sources') like this can be a useful starting point for devising. The letter was written by someone who felt they were living through history and wanted to write down how it felt - but people today, who have lived through the kind of history we've just been talking about, aren't writing letters like that anymore.



Discussion:

What are sources from today that people in the future will have when they want to understand what our lives were like? Tiktoks? Whatsapp messages? Tweets? Does anyone in the group stream or make Tiktoks? Talk together about sources you might have created that could one day end up in an archive. (This conversation should help reinforce the idea that whoever wrote the letter we just heard was a real person - and that things we are experiencing in our own lives will one day be part of historical record.)

Try to compile some of these modern 'sources' - we will return to them later.



Part Three: Turning It Into Theatre

Watch this video together, about how we used style and contrast as theatrical techniques to make The Winston Machine:



In Kandinsky we often use sources as a starting point for devising. Sources might be books or articles by experts, they might be first-hand accounts like the letter we heard earlier - or your own experiences can be a source. The next exercise explores how to turn sources into theatre.

Split the group into two.

Exercise - Group One:

Stage a short scene using the letter as a starting point. We suggest that at the start, they don't go back and re-read the letter or re-watch the video. Begin by asking them to note down what they remember. What images stick in their mind? The cat called Friday? The old man with the cough? Filling the bathtub in case the water went off? Sweets being passed round? Part of devising is knowing how to trust your instincts about what seems interesting to you - so start by working out what has stuck with them.

Then read the letter again, or watch the video.

Ask the group to consider:

- What journey does it go on? Where does it start and end up?
- What story is it telling?
- What spaces does it take place in?
- What is the role of the narrator? She is experiencing these things *as* she's writing them down. How might you stage that?

We have included some other source material in the pack about life in the 1940s. How did they talk? What did they wear? What was the style?

What would you want the performance style of the piece to be? Naturalistic? Heightened? Old-fashioned? Or do you want it to feel more like it's happening now?

Aim to make at least 90 seconds of devised theatre that responds to the letter as a starting point.



Exercise - Group Two:

Think about the sources you gathered together earlier. (If you didn't assemble many, we've included some in the info sheet at the end of this pack that you can use.) You can also read aloud some of the script from the first section of *The Winston Machine* and talk about how the interruptions from Becky's phone feel.

We called this section Becky's "Day in the Life". We'd like this second group to use the lockdown 'sources' as a jumping off point to begin to stage a modern person's 'day in the life' during lockdown.

These might be related to the short scenes you made earlier, or to your own experiences, or it might be something new.

Ask the group to consider:

- Does this person live alone or with other people? How many people? Are they isolated or struggling to get peace and quiet?
- Is this person getting texts from their friends and family? Or notifications? In your piece, will those feel different from seeing people in real life, or the same?
- How do we know time is passing?
- What story are you telling? The sections you've seen from Becky's 'day in the life' give a sense of somebody who feels a bit trapped in their daily life - a bit assaulted. What sort of story can you tell in your piece?
- What does this character want? What characters want, and how they go about getting it, teaches us a lot about them.

What would you want the performance style of the piece to be? Naturalistic? Heightened? Very modern? Noisy? Quiet?

Aim to make at least 90 seconds of devised theatre that respond to these sources as a starting point.



Part Four: Reflecting

Show the pieces to each other. What would it feel like to watch these alongside each other / intercut them with one another. How different do they feel? Or how similar?

Watch the final video:



This video sets up a discussion for you to have together as a group, or in smaller groups if you prefer.

Conclusion

The resources for part three are presented as an appendix to this pack, in the following pages. Thank you so much for using this document and we really hope that you and your groups enjoyed the workshop. If you'd like to hear more from Kandinsky in future, please contact lauren@kandinsky-online.com to be contacted with any future opportunities.



Resources, Part One: 1940S

Brief Encounter



*An ambulance worker in Kennington, London
applies her lipstick, 1940.*



A group of women, 1940s



Song: We'll Meet Again

We'll Meet Again is a 1939 song by English singer Vera Lynn with music and lyrics composed and written by English songwriters Ross Parker and Hughie Charles. The song is one of the most famous of the Second World War era, and resonated with soldiers going off to fight as well as their families and sweethearts."

Letter From Blitz

this is the same letter in the video, provided here
for use as a text resource

Sept 10th 1940

I hardly know what to say about our present life except that it is an amazing experience. As I write the big night raid has begun. I think the Primrose Hill guns are in action and I can hear the special crump of bombs but some distance away as yet. As soon as they fall nearer, I will have to join the others in the basement. They have settled in down there, the place is like a dormitory. I want to stay near the phone until midnight in case they want help at the rest centre. We organised this centre in a church a while back as a third-line precaution or something, quite sure we would not have to use it - that the first and second line centres would be sufficient for any homeless. Well, we're using it all right. Most of the bombed-out people there today are French refugees, poor devils, and there are a few families from our terribly battered East End.

The night before last we were homeless ourselves for a few hours, a delayed action bomb was dropped near the house. We thought something like that had happened, there was the usual whine and a thud but not explosion. The police and wardens banged up everybody in the street and shepherded us round to an emergency shelter at the BRitish Museum. After the "all clear" we saw another delayed action Bomb explode at the back of the museum, looked a small one, couldn't have done much damage.

Turning out at 4 a.m. with rucksacks and bundles - these we always have ready - and our cat Friday squawling in his basket was the climax of a nightmare night - Oh! And Ernest with his cigarette cough blasting everybody and saying he'd rather be blown up in his bed than trek out at that hour. But we were lucky, back by breakfast time. Some people are turned out for days.

[...]

After having our district bombed systematically night by night from blackout until daylight, we have decided to find somewhere outside to sleep and come back home in the day. Apart from the terror of it, you can't sleep for the noise and we're all exhausted. Ernest has been down from Newcastle this week yelling and raging at me to get out - adding to the noise - and Tom does the same to my sister Joy who is living with me just now. Tom is in the army. No doubt they are right but I have a certain responsibility to the people in the house and have got Mother to arrange for, and she in turn has to arrange for the girl student who shares the flat with her while Charles is away.

[...]

I must admit it is a terrifying experience, this being bombed hour by hour without let-up by night. It isn't half so frightening in the day, not so many planes get

through. You see, you lie there listening to the planes getting nearer, then you hear the crump of bombs and they get nearer too. Suddenly, they are all around you, trying to hit the stations, the City, Whitehall and so on, and we are within a mile radius and less of all these points. As one wave of bombers passes on, there are intervals of a few minutes' silence, you strain your ears and then that devilish thug-thug of the bomber again and a new formation advances.

This goes on all night. First we talk, try to be philosophical, argue that it is still a thousand to one chance against a direct hit. We cram some more clothes into our rucksacks, I remember to turn off the gas and fill the bath, somebody produces candy - glucose barley sugar "so good for the nerves", we take off our top clothes, try to settle down on our mattresses. There is a particularly deafening shattering crump and we're up again. Somebody sneaks out into the yard to have a look, everybody shrieks at him to come down, we make tea.

[...]

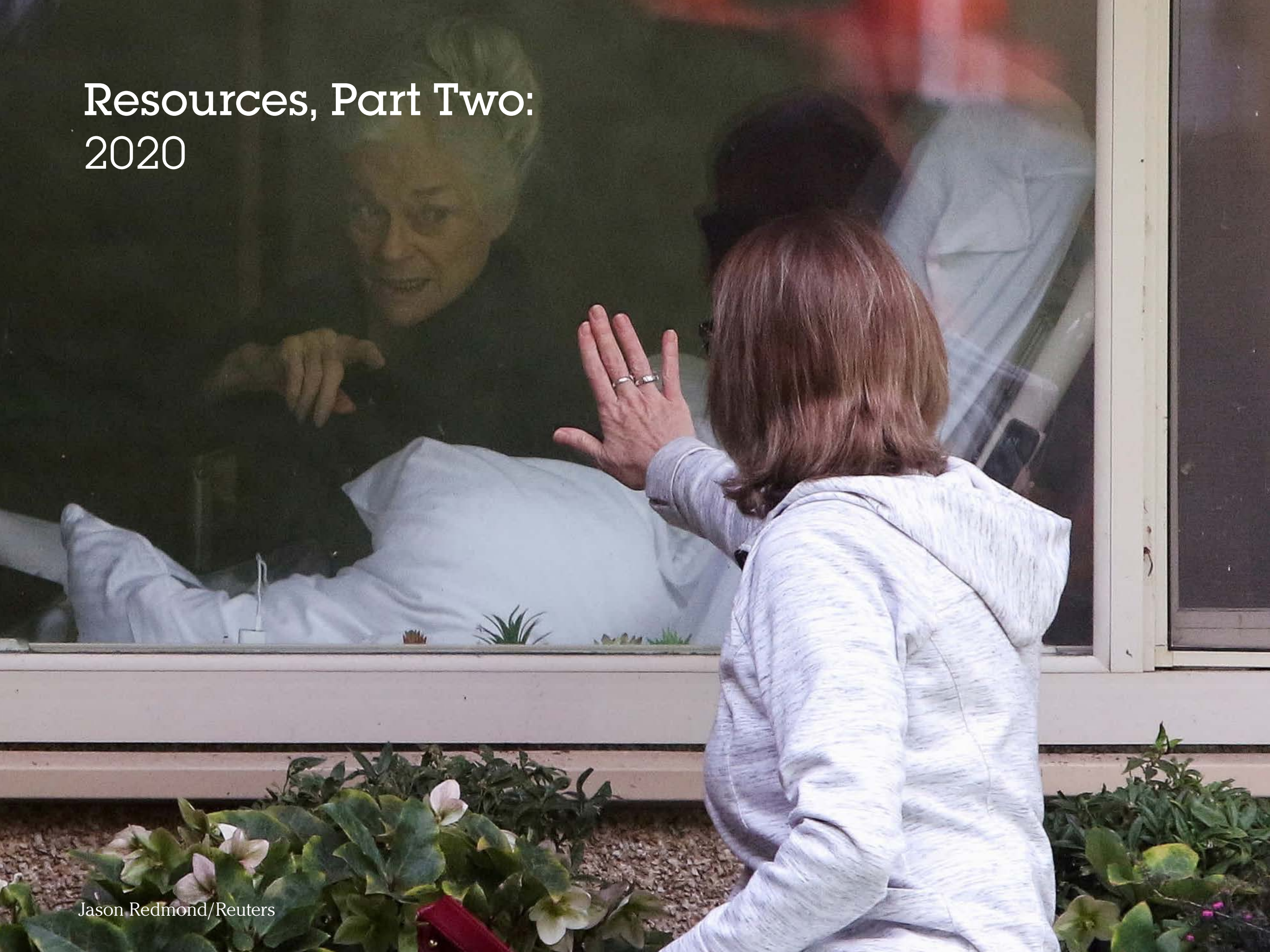
I wonder how those young airmen feel up there in the moonlight, I can see them zooming along all goggled, equipped with every known mechanical device to make killing and destruction efficient. (Three crumps all at once over there in the East, that's a stick of bombs, they unload a complete rack.) I wonder how they feel, I suppose it's all quite impersonal, just doing a job for which they have been well-trained. But, believe me, after these four nights of blitz and listening to that eternal thug-

thug, I shall loathe planes to the end of my days.

This letter was written by a Camden borough resident as the bombs were actually falling on London, during the fourth night of the Blitz, which began 7 Sept 1940 and lasted until 11 May 1941. The writer's name is not on the letter; she wrote it on a typewriter and left a blank space at the bottom, to hand-sign. It was sent to several friends in America and donated to Camden Archives after the war, along with some of the writer's other letters, as her friend felt they "belonged in England".

Courtesy of Camden Local Studies and Archives Centre

Resources, Part Two: 2020





Peter Cziborra/Reuters

Christopher Furlong/Getty Images:
Mountain goats roam the quiet streets of Llandudno, Wales, in March 2020.





ThelainDuncanSmiths
@TheIDSmiths



My brain every time I get a slight headache



4:08 PM · Jan 9, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

93.1K Retweets **3,090** Quote Tweets **625K** Likes





Boris Johnson announces covid lockdown March 2020



Eid 2020 window display featuring 'NHS rainbow' Shabna-B