

## ***Echoes Through Time: The Story of Care***

### **PRODUCTION GUIDE**

When *Echoes Through Time: The Story of Care* was first performed at Hoxton Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2024, it was staged with the direction of a professional director, Vicky Moran. Whilst Coram hopes that the play will be performed by schools, youth groups and theatre companies throughout the United Kingdom, we know that many will not have access to professional support. We hope this guide enables theatre groups with a limited budget to make considered and effective decisions.

#### **The characters**

There are several key distinctions between characters, or groups of characters, within the script, which should be sufficiently distinguished by the director's decisions. The characters are present-day young people, the Professionals, and real historical Foundlings, who the present-day young people channel.

In the premiere performance, the cast wore their everyday clothes and by default were young people. They wore adornments or changed their behavior in order to take on new roles. To become the Professionals, they spoke into microphones at an elevated point on the stage. When channeling the Foundlings' stories, they wore a number on a ball around their neck (at the Foundling Hospital, each child wore his or her unique number on a necklace). This device enabled the young people to swap in and out of the Foundling roles readily, as they passed the ball to other performers on stage. Different decisions might be made by other groups, but any directorial concept should complement the characters, and ideally tie in with the history of the Foundling Hospital (see the Foundling Hospital Fact Sheet in this resource pack).

Throughout rehearsals, performers should be encouraged to burrow into their characters, and to have fun whilst doing so. How is a Foundling likely to talk or move? The director should look out to see what performers are already bringing to the role, and support them to elevate and refine it. Should a gesture be made bigger, or an exclamation sound more worried?

#### **Assigning lines**

The script is written as an ensemble piece, meaning that lines are not attributed to individual characters. It is split into two forms of text: (1) lines of dialogue starting with a hyphen (-), where successive lines should be read by different performers, and (2) blocks of text, each of which is to be read by an individual performer until the next dash appears (although these can also be split amongst different performers).

In order to assign lines, the director should lead a table read, where each performer successively reads an element of the script (a line or dialogue or block of text – whichever is next). Whilst performers alternate lines, the director should listen and determine which young people are best suited to specific roles. Who

might best work as a Professional? Who might best work as a social worker? Who as a young person who gets annoyed? Lines should then be assigned to performers, but can be swapped around during rehearsals.

## Staging

Coram had only three days of rehearsals before presenting the premiere performance. For this reason, the play was blocked before the rehearsals began. The director had a pre-determined vision for where performers should stand when delivering lines.

Full use was made of the space, including the balconies and an elevated section at the back of the stage, from which the Professionals delivered their lines. During the choir scene, the cast stood in the aisles, surrounding the audience. Theatre groups are encouraged to make full use of their space, but to ensure that the stage is visually balanced – be careful not to overcrowd any one area.

There are various sounds in the piece, including electronic beeps, a bell ringing and a thunderclap. All of these sound effects can be found on free online sound effects banks. Tech should be integrated into rehearsals as soon as possible so that the cast can get used to responding to audio cues.

## Props

Listed below are the props used in the first production of *Echoes Through Time: The Story of Care*. The 'recommended' props are those specified in the script. The 'suggested' props were chosen by the director Vicky Moran in order to elevate or clarify the play. Theatre groups are encouraged to use additional props, but ensure that they enhance rather than distract from the performance.

### Recommended

- Tombola filled with white and black balls (figure 5). If you are unable to acquire a tombola, consider a box or a bag.
- Cloth bags filled with red balls. The balls should open to reveal heart-shaped tokens inside, on which messages can be written (figures 8 and 15).
- A backlit cloth with objects pinned to it, including the heart-shaped tokens (figures 4 and 15) and other objects mentioned in the script. The cloth should be obscured at the beginning of the play. The script specifies that a curtain is drawn back to reveal the cloth, but at the premiere, the cloth was secured to the edges of the stage and then released to fill the back of the stage.
- Personal objects, such as blusher, ticket stub, photo from a photo booth. Performers will hold out these objects to the audience. You might encourage performers to bring in two or three objects that are important to them – this could be an opportunity to discuss objects and their meaning.
- Quotes from petition letters and character references: these are reproduced on the final pages of this guide. Print them and cut them up to hand out to audience members to read aloud.
- Official-looking paper and pen.

### Suggested

- Springback binders (figure 14). Since the premiere was a script-in-hand performance, the decision was made to conceal the scripts in formal-looking bindings. You may also choose to do this.
- Numbers to be worn around neck (figure 9). In the premiere production, these indicated the 'trying on' of Foundling identities. These necklaces doubled as the white balls, which performers could pick from the tombola during the play. An item of clothing or a lighting cue could achieve the same impact.
- Microphones hanging from ceiling. These were used to distinguish the Professionals from the young people and Foundlings in the play. Another choice could have been to have the Professionals stand behind a lectern when delivering lines.

## Indicative images



Figure 1. Foundling boys and girls.



Figure 2. Token from the archive.



Figure 3. Token from the archive.



Figure 4. Backlit cloth with tokens – premiere performance.



Figure 5. Tombola with black and white balls.



Figure 6. The Foundling Hospital chapel.



Figure 7. Token from archive.



Figure 8. Cloth bag filled with red balls, and a red ball opened to reveal a token – premiere performance.



Figure 9. Numbers worn around performers' necks – premiere performance.



Figure 10. Engraving – Ballot Day.



Figure 11. A token from the archive.



Figure 12. Foundling boys and girls.



Figure 13. Foundling Hospital Court Room.



Figure 14. Spring back binder – premiere performance.



Figure 15. Tokens – premiere performance.



Figure 16. Foundling Hospital dormitory.

See other images of the Foundling Hospital here:

- Coram Story: [Coram Story - Discover Coram's history as the Foundling Hospital](#)
- Wellcome Collection: <https://wellcomecollection.org/images?query=founding+hospital>
- Wikimedia: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Foundling\\_Hospital](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Foundling_Hospital)
- Foundling Museum's art collection: [Art UK | Discover Artworks](#)
- Maps on Layers of London: <https://www.layersoflondon.org/map/search/results?q=Foundling+Hospital>

**Petition Letter 1**

Honored Gentlemen and Governors of the Foundling Hospital,

I, Mary Hall, humbly beg you will be so good as to take into your charity a child born October 6th 1776 that I had the misfortune to have by a young man.'

---

**Petition Letter 2**

Your petitioner was promised marriage, but when her time came near, the man left her in a very deplorable condition with a young child which she is quite incapable to maintain, having sold most of her clothes for the support of herself and her child. She has no other prospect but must perish for want of common necessities.

---

**Character Reference 1**

The unfortunate young woman is sister to my wife. As soon as we discovered her to be in the family way I desired her to leave, and never see us again.

---

---

### Character Reference 2

Mrs. Mayhew would gladly retain her but it would be a bad example to the other servants. The circumstances of her fall raised the suspicion that she was somewhat of a loose character...

---

### Character Reference 3

The conduct of the Petitioner previously to this event was exceedingly correct – in fact, a better girl never lived. I would swear that the child is her first – the affair has been kept a profound secret. Should the petitioner be relieved of the child she will remain with us. My wife and the petitioner take in needlework.

---

This Production Guide is part of the resource pack for the play *Echoes Through Time: The Story of Care*, produced by Coram in 2024 as part of the Voices Through Time: The Story of Care programme, made possible by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Find out more at the [Coram Story website](#).

Copyright © [Coram](#). Coram licenses this Production Guide under [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0](#) (CC BY-NC).