

Connections 2020 – Synopses

We are happy to let you have details of seven of the plays that will be part of Connections 2020. Please check back for full details of the final ten.

All parts can be played by actors of any gender or ethnicity, except where the playwright states otherwise, and by D/deaf disabled performers.

If you have any questions about the suitability of the plays for your group, please contact Kirsten on connections@nationaltheatre.org.uk.

Wind / Rush Generation(s) by Mojisola Adebayo

Cast size: minimum ensemble of 8 (with a core group of 6) or up to 30, ideally with a mixture of genders.

Most suitable for ages 15+.

This is a play about the British Isles, its past and its present. Set in a senior common room, in a prominent university, a group of 1st year undergraduates are troubled, not by the weight of their workload, but by a 'noisy' ghost. So they do what any group self-respecting and intelligent university students would do in such a situation – they get out the Ouija Board to confront their spiritual irritant and lay them to rest – only to be confronted by the full weight of Britain's colonial past – in all its gory glory. However, if you think you know about British history, Empire, slavery, economics, racism and humanity, then this play might get you to think again. As the planch on the Ouija Board skates from letter to letter at an ever-increasing breakneck speed, the students are catapulted through space and time, witnessing the injustices, incongruities and inhumanity of the past. This is a smorgasbord of genres and styles. Fusing naturalism, with physical theatre, spoken-word, absurdism, poetry and direct address – this is event-theatre that whips along with the grace, pace and hypnotic magnetism of a hurricane.

Tuesday by Alison Carr

Cast size: 8 – 50, any gender.

Suitable for all ages.

Tuesday is light, playful and nuanced in tone. And a little bit sci-fi.

The play centres on an ordinary Tuesday that suddenly turns very weird indeed when a tear rips across the sky over the school yard. Not only that, but it starts sucking up pupils and staff while at the same time raining down a whole new set of people. But then, that's what happens when parallel worlds collide!

Confusion reigns as the 'Us' and 'Them' try to work out what is going on. How are Ash and Magpie identical? Can Billy cope with having his sister back? Who is Franky?

Eventually, though, cracks appear between the two groups. As the air here starts to disagree with the 'Them', the race is on to try to get things back to how they were and safely return everyone to the Universe they came from.

The play touches on themes of friendship, sibling love, family, identity, grief, bullying, loneliness and responsibility. And in the process we might just learn something about ourselves as well as some astronomical theories of the multiverse!

A series of public apologies (in response to an unfortunate incident in the school lavatories) by John Donnelly

Cast size: 8 – 100, any gender.

Recommended for ages 14+.

This satirical play is heightened in its naturalism, in its seriousness, in its parody and piercing in its interrogation of how our attempts to define ourselves in public are shaped by the fear of saying the wrong thing. Presented quite literally as a series of public apologies this play is spacious, flexible and welcoming of inventive and imaginative interpretation as each iteration spirals inevitably to its

absurdist core. This is a play on words, on convention, on manners, on institutions, on order, online and on point.

***THE IT* by Vivienne Franzmann**

Cast size: 8 – 100, 1F and all other characters any gender.
Suitable for all ages.

THE IT is a play about a teenage girl who has something growing inside her. She doesn't know what it is, but she knows it's not a baby. It expands in her body. It starts in her stomach, but quickly outgrows that, until eventually it takes over the entirety of her insides. It has claws. She feels them. Does it have teeth, skin, and hair as well, or is that feathers, or spikes she can feel, butting up against her organs? What is it? It makes a noise, like a lizard or a snake. No one must know about it. She has to keep its presence, its possession of her, concealed. She pulls away from her friends. She refuses to speak in case The It is heard. Then the It tries to escape from her body. She can't let that happen. She cuts an isolated weird figure at school, trying to live her life 'normally'; but battling to keep The It inside of her. But she can't contain it forever, sooner or later something's got to give...

Presented in the style of a direct to camera documentary, this is a darkly comic state of the nation play exploring adolescent mental health and the rage within, written very specifically for today.

***The Marxist in Heaven* by Hattie Naylor**

Cast size: 20 speaking parts, plus unlimited non-speaking parts, any gender.
Suitable for all ages.

The Marxist in Heaven is a play that does exactly what its title page says it's going to do. The eponymous protagonist 'wakes up' in paradise and once they get over the shock of this fundamental contradiction of everything they believe in.....they get straight back to work....and continue their lifelong struggle for equality and fairness for all....even in death. Funny, playful, provocative, pertinent and jam-packed with discourse, disputes, deities and disco dancing by the bucketful, this upbeat buoyant allegory shines its holy light on globalization and asks the salient questions – who are we and what are we doing to ourselves?.....and what conditioner do you use on your hair?

***Look Up* by Andrew Muir**

Cast size: 10, characters are 4F, 5M and one gender fluid, but can be gender swapped as necessary.
Recommended for ages 15+.

Look Up plunges us into a world free from adult intervention, supervision and protection. It's about seeking the truth for yourself and finding the space to find and be yourself. Nine young people are creating new rules for what they hope will be a new and brighter future full of hope in a world in which they can trust again. Each one of them is unique, original and defiantly individual, break into an abandoned building and set about claiming the space, because that is what they do. They have rituals, they have rules, together they are a tribe, they have faith in themselves....and nothing and no one else. They are the future, unless the real world catches up with them and then all they can hope for is that they don't crash and burn like the adults they ran away from in the first place.

***Crusaders* by Frances Poet**

Cast size: 10 – 100, ideally with a mixture of genders.
Recommended for ages 14+.

A group of teens gather to take their French exam but none of them will step into the exam hall. Because Kyle has had a vision and he'll use anything, even miracles, to ensure his classmates accompany him. Together they have just seven days to save themselves, save the world and be the future.

And Kyle is not the only one who has had the dream. All across the globe, from Azerbaijan to Zambia, children are dreaming and urging their peers to follow them to the promised land. Who will follow? Who will lead? Who will make it?