

Phosphoros Theatre

Remember to send us  
your 20 word poems  
after the show!

# PIZZA SHOP HEROES

A resource for exploring the themes of the play



*WE'RE GONNA TELL OUR STORIES HOW WE WANT TO*

*YOU'RE NOT HERE TO JUDGE WHETHER WE'RE  
CREDIBLE OR NOT*

*WE'RE NOT HERE TO MAKE YOUR CONSCIENCE FEEL  
BETTER*

*WE DON'T NEED YOU TO FEEL SORRY FOR US*

## About Pizza Shop Heroes

PIZZA SHOP HEROES is based on the real lives of the actors in the show. They came to the UK as child asylum seekers without their parents between 2013-15, and are now all adults.

They have had to tell their 'stories' lots and lots of times to interpreters, solicitors, GPs, social workers, Home Office...

This play was made to reject and rethink how these stories are told and understood. Everything in the play is true... or nearly true. As Goitom says: 'we're gonna tell our stories how WE want to'.

## About Phosphoros Theatre

We have been making plays together since 2015. We first began when Kate was the manager of a supported housing project in NW London. Goitom, Emirjon and some of our previous actors lived there, and said they wanted to tell British people their stories, and so Phosphoros Theatre was born. We started making performances that represented the experiences of our actors, in doing so challenging the way refugees and asylum seekers are represented in the media.

Our name comes from Greek mythology; 'Phosphoros' represents the Morning Star, or Venus, the bringer of light. We make work to 'bring the unseen to light'.

## Developing the show

We made Pizza Shop Heroes in 2018. We did a research development phase with our company and friends from the refugee and human rights sectors, exploring themes we hadn't covered before like fatherhood, colonial histories and the people left behind after displacement. Our Artistic Directors turned these ideas into a play, and then Dawn wrote it.

Our play is created from friendship, love and activism. We're not politicians, journalists or lawyers, but we can still make a difference to how refugees are seen. Theatre is our resistance.



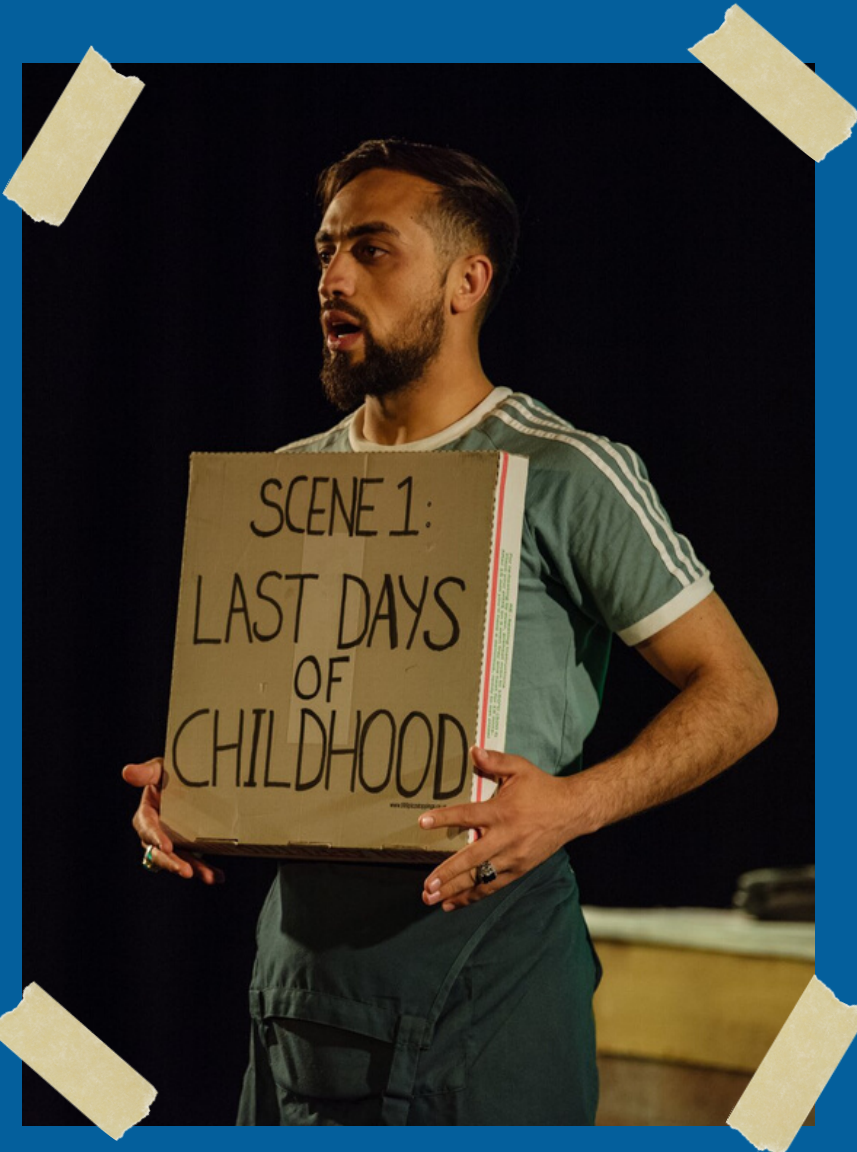
# *We hope you enjoy the show!*

Lots of people who come to see our play have never been to a theatre or seen a play before. You might watch this on your sofa or in your bed, so you won't have the experience of being one of many audience members. Make yourself comfortable and enjoy the show!

We have made a list of the different sections of the play (we call these 'scenes') and you will notice the actors start each new scene with a pizza box with the number and title written on it. If you get confused you can check what the scene is about in the list in this pack.

Some bits of our play are sad. Our actors talk about leaving their families, going on long and difficult journeys and feeling worried and lonely in the UK. These times were sad, stressful, scary, unfair and unjust for our actors, and if you also experienced similar things you may recognise their feelings. It's ok to feel sad when you watch our play. We imagine you will feel happy, excited, impressed, proud and surprised, and we think you will laugh lots too. An important emotion lots of people feel when watch the play is HOPE.

If you are someone who has left your country to live in the UK, we hope you feel seen and heard by our play.



# The actors

**Syed Haleem  
Najibi**



Syed is from Afghanistan and is passionate about human rights. When he's not acting he works with refugee young people, does public speaking and training around refugee issues. He is a 2nd year Sustainable Energy Engineering student at Queen Mary University of London.

**Emirjon  
Hoxhaj**



Emirjon is from Albania and is the joker of our company. He has been a part of Phosphoros Theatre since he arrived in the UK in 2015 and frequently represents Phosphoros in TV and radio interviews. As you'll hear in the play, Emirjon dreams of being an electrician and being the next James Bond!

**Goitom  
Fesshaye**



Goitom is from Eritrea and a talented musician. He plays his krar at events all over London and impresses the crowds with his beautiful voice and melodies. He's training to be an electrician at college and is very active in his London church community.

**Tewodros (Teddy)  
Aregawe**



Tewodros is from Eritrea and is heavily engaged with Eritrean and Ethiopian arts and culture in London, performing in English and Amharic languages. As well as being an actor he is a poet and stand-up comedian, and regularly performs at comedy nights in London.

**Kate  
Duffy**



Kate is from the UK and is one of the directors of Phosphoros Theatre. She has worked with hundreds of refugee teenagers in the UK, including Goitom and Emirjon when they were younger! When she's not working with Phosphoros she teaches in universities about theatre and migration.

# The Story

## Scene 1: Last days of childhood

Emirjon's Uncle teaches him how to hunt rabbits. Syed and Tewodros swim in a lake before school. Then they find out it is time to leave their homes for the UK.



## Scene 2: Escape across Tekilo mountain

Goitom leaves his home in Eritrea and crosses the mountains to Ethiopia. Emirjon doesn't understand why Eritrea and Ethiopia have been fighting for so long, so Goitom gives him a history lesson.



## Scene 3: The Sea of Sand & Scene 4: The Sea of a Thousand Souls

Tewodros crosses the desert in a car, and the sea in a boat. He ends up in a prison with men with no souls. Kind people help him escape.

## Scene 5: The prison of no escape

Syed ends up in a detention centre that feels like a prison. He presses his fingers into ink and the guards let him out, but he didn't realise his fingerprints would get him into trouble later.



# Scene 6: The New Land

Emirjon hides in a lorry and gets to the UK. The actors move their bodies to show what it felt like to hide in a service station.

Back in the pizza shop, the actors make bread and remember all the different names for bread in their countries.

Their teacher phones to order a pizza. Tewodros wants to give it to him for free. Syed thinks this is a bad idea.



# Scene 7: Things you need to know about coming to the UK

The actors give advice about the weather, English people, clothes, food and the police. They make jokes about how English people behave, and remind the audience how it feels to be seen as different.



# Scene 8: Things you need to know about working with new arrivals

Kate shows some of the questions people used to ask her when she was a key worker. The other actors pretend to be different characters and ask her judgemental questions that show their stereotypical views about refugees. Kate is annoyed and frustrated about their silly questions.

## Scene 8 continued

There is a phonecall from Home. The actors find out that their brother is coming to the UK too, because he's not safe anymore.

They use their bodies to show their feelings and their memories.

Kate doesn't understand what the phone calls said, and she asks the other actors what their families know about their lives in the UK.

They pretend to be Aunties and imagine what their communities back Home think about them.



Syed imagines having an argument with someone in his family about how he feels. Kate pretends to be his Mum or Auntie and responds to him.

Then, Syed imagines what he would do if he was the president of Afghanistan.

The actors think about what advice they would give to their brother.



## Scene 9: Things you need to take with you

The actors fill a bag with everything they brought with them to the UK, to advise their brother. They add bread, clothes, a Bible, a prayer mat, coca-cola and many more things.

They think of all the other things they need. Like papers and certificates and letters. 'Be strong. Brave. Try to make friends. Don't worry about being dirty.'

The actors perform a poem called 'When is a child not a child?'

The actors make bread again. Kate asks them about their feelings and they answer with their movements, not their words.



## Scene 10: When we are men

The actors look into the future.

Tewodros is a famous actor. He finds out his girlfriend is having a baby! The actors do a dance to show them ALL having babies and becoming fathers.

Each actor says what they want to be.

Emirjon wants to be an electrician.

Tewodros wants to be an actor.

Goitom wants to start a krar band.

Syed wants to foster boys who come to UK on their own.

Kate wants to finish university.

They decide what names they will call their sons. Syed will call his son Kareem. Emirjon will call his son Asgan. Goitom will call his son Abraham. Tewodros will call his son Dagmawe.



# *What can you and your group do?*

We hope you will feel inspired after seeing Pizza Shop Heroes. We are inviting our audience to write a very short poem (just 20 words!) to share their feelings after seeing our show.

Your poem might be about our actors, the stories they shared, your own experiences or how you hope refugees will experience life in the UK. On Sunday 21st June Tewodros will read out all the poems on our social media, so make sure you send yours to us via Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or email!

## *Things you need to know*

Think about what new refugees in the UK need to know. Write a letter with your ideas, just like in scene 7 in our play. Think about which pieces of advice stood out to you.

Your letter should be helpful, but it can be funny or serious - think about the food, the weather, the people, anything you like!



To share it with us, tag [@phosphorostheatre](#) on Instagram, tweet us at [@WeArePhosphoros](#) or email it to us at [hello@phosphorostheatre.com](mailto:hello@phosphorostheatre.com)

# How do you feel?

We would love to hear what you thought of Pizza Shop Heroes.  
Here are some words that might help you discuss the show.

INTERESTED  
ENJOYABLE  
FUNNY  
SAD  
SURPRISING  
BORING  
WEIRD

PASSIONATE  
HEARTFELT  
HOPEFUL  
JOYFUL  
SCARY  
DISTRESSING  
SIMILAR

EMOTIONAL  
STRONG  
IMPRESSED  
PROUD  
WOW  
LIKE ME  
SYMPATHY

MOTIVATED  
EXCITED  
PERSONAL  
ENTHUSIASTIC  
CREATIVE  
TALENTED

LOVELY  
HAPPY  
UNSURE  
IMAGINATIVE  
DIFFERENT



# Who am I really?

1 Draw a body like this:



Choosing a character from the play, think about their needs, such as shelter or food, write this around the outside of the body. Think about the parts of their personality they show to the world, are they loud and outgoing? Are they funny? Write this around the outside of the body.

Think about what others think of them: what impression do they make? What might people assume about who they are? Write this around the outside of the body.

2

Now think about their values. They may not have mentioned this in the play so you can make this up based on what they said.

Write these on the inside of the body.

Think about the people they love, their friends and family (hint: we may not have met everyone in each character's life during the play so you can be creative).

Think about any talents they have, any skills or hobbies. Write this inside the body as well. Think about the parts of their personality that are less obvious, are they more nervous than they seem? Are they always the joker in the group? Remember, this is hard to know as it's hidden deep in a person so it might help to think about your own inner self. Write this inside the body.

Add any other labels you can think of, inside or outside the body. Create one of these for yourself and you might be surprised by what you discover!

# When is a child not a child?

## (Poem from Pizza Shop Heroes)

When you are sixteen and in blood to  
your neighbour  
Because your grandfather took the blood  
of his son  
You sit in your house  
Walk  
Five steps to the wall  
Five steps back  
Keep away from the window  
Never answer the door  
Never breath the air  
Even when your friends are playing  
Your sister is crying because she hurt her  
knee  
Your mum drops bags she cannot  
carry  
Because your father is gone

When you sit in the rubble Of your  
broken farm  
After the planes have  
left  
And the sky has ripped open  
Your  
father places brick on brick  
So you don't  
see him crying  
As your mountain burns.

When you tell your mother goodnight  
When it is really goodbye  
Because there are no words.  
You fall asleep, as she wakes  
Her tears  
in your dreams  
Her face in your heart

But you can't look back.

You make your feet move forward  
To  
the time you will see her again.

When you have no place to call your  
own  
Learning languages and  
checkpoints  
In your father's arms  
His voice in your ear  
Whispering memories of Home

When you are the man of the  
house  
Who cannot be a man  
A shadow of the boy who went to  
school  
Helped friends with their homework  
Your freedom already running out.

When you look at your Home and you  
see beauty  
The curve of the hills  
The valleys soft with grass  
The fields  
filled with flowers  
While a nation far across the ocean  
Looks through their televisions and  
sees a terrorist cell

When you call the new place your  
home  
Made the language your own  
Tried hard to belong.  
You run home from school  
Kicking a ball down the street

Practicing for a match you will  
never play.

As you move from the sun-light to  
the shadows

You can tell without being told  
That everything is different

The world has changed

No noise, only silence

In your heart – a hole.

You pack your bag and face  
another ending

Only this time there are no arms to  
hold you up

Nobody to watch when you sleep

You are one of millions

But you are alone.

When your deaths are  
invisible  
Bloody body carried  
tenderly  
Buried in war  
No  
flowers  
No toys

No crowds holding candles

No two minute silence

No messages from leaders

No Facebook pictures of my flag

No pray for me

No Je Suis Kabul

Or Asmara

Assab

Or Keren

The bombs hurt the same

The blood is the same

The tears are the same

The love is the same

And the child comes from this

Carried in his heart and in his  
nightmares

The ache of loss

He buys his first English coat and  
thinks it will get better

But he waits and waits

To be interviewed

Assessed

Placed

Judged

The child who has faced soldiers,  
agents, kidnappers, thieves

But cannot get the Home Office  
to see him

We will not be ignored.

We have a right to life

To liberty

Equality

To freedom from torture

We are illegal because you made  
the rules

# Company

**Pizza Shop Heroes was written by Dawn Harrison**

**Directors: Dawn Harrison and Pavlos Christodoulou**

**Producer: Juliet Styles**

**Participation and Development: Kate Duffy**

**Actors: Tewodros Aregawe, Goitom Fesshaye, Emirjon Hoxhaj, Syed Najibi**

**Movement Director: Sean Hollands**

**Tour Manager: Liam Duffy**

**Marketing: Charlie Ensor**

**Film: Michael Lynch**

**Design: Caitlin Abbott**

**Set Builder: Ryan Chandler**

**Participation Assistants: Syed Najibi and Becca Prentice**

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# Refugee Week

**We are big supporters of Refugee Week (15-21 June 2020). Have a look at their website for resources and further accessible information for all ages.**



[www.refugeeweek.org.uk](http://www.refugeeweek.org.uk)