THEATRE503

Ameena Hamid Productions & Theatre503 present

Zombiegate

Written by **Matthew Gabrielli**
Directed by **Julian Bruton**

CARE PACK

1 – 19 NOV 2022

WHAT IS ZOMBIEGATE?

Sophie and Jamie have just been cancelled, a misplaced selfie has gone viral, and the pair have been accused of mocking a dead child. But their troubles are only just beginning. As the real and digital world collide, their lives and friendship are ripped apart by algorithms, online mobs and an obsessive troll called Mr Punch.

Zombiegate is a witty and empathetic debut play that gets behind the headlines and hashtags of internet trolls, scrutinising mob mentality and myths around cancel culture, and asks us to empathise with the people we find it hard to agree with. Zombiegate was a winner of Theatre Royal Haymarket's Masterclass Pitch Your Play 2018.

WHAT IS A CARE PACK?

A care pack is designed to give you information to know if you will be affected by any of the themes covered throughout the show, and suggestions as to where to get help and resources. We will highlight potentially difficult subject matters, and point you towards resources that will be able to help or provide further reading. We will also highlight our accessible performances.

CARE PACK CONTENTS:

- Self care
- Content warning overview
- Resources and help breakdown
- Accessible show information
- Full play synopsis
- Acknowledgements

SELF CARE

Some of the topics covered in Zombiegate might be distressing for some audiences, and looking after yourself is always the first priority.

Reach out to someone – if you are struggling reach out to a friend, family member, or see below for contact information for confidential and anonymous support 24/7.

Ground yourself – If you are able to, place your feet on the floor to help ground you.
Take deep, slow breaths in through your nose for four counts, hold for four, then release your breath slowly out of your mouth. Repeat this exercise a few times.

Take care of yourself – Drink a glass of water. If you are able to, take a walk outside in nature. If possible, turn off your phone and take five minutes for yourself.

When we panic it can be easy to spiral. A simple exercise to follow is tune in to your senses:

- Notice 5 things you can see around you
- Notice 4 things you can touch
- Find 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Finally, you are the expert on you! If something isn't right for you, you are always able to walk away. Put yourself first, and do what's right for you.

CONTENT WARNING OVERVIEW

ZOMBIEGATE deals with issues around internet trolling and online abuse, there is inflammatory language, references to abusive messages characters have either sent or received including misogynistic comments, racist abuse, references to rape and sexual violence, death and suicide.

ONLINE ABUSE	
THREATS OF VIOLENCE	
REFERENCES TO FAR-RIGHT POLITICS	
REFERENCES TO RAPE	
DEATH THREAT	
ALCOHOL REFERENCE	
TRAUMA OF DEAD CHILD	
HOLOCAUST DENIAL	
ABLEIST ABUSE	
RACIST ABUSE	
DOMESTIC ABUSE	
REFERENCE TO ABORTION	
ANIMAL CRUELTY	
PARENTAL GRIEF	

RESCOURCES AND HELP BREAKDOWN

CYBER HELPLINE

We provide free, expert help for victims of cybercrime & online harm. Chat to our chatbot and get immediate advice on how to deal with your cyber security issue. If our chatbot thinks you need more help, it will pass you onto one of our volunteer cyber security experts.

STOP HATE UK

Stop Hate UK is a charity that provides independent and confidential support to people affected by Hate Crime. They provide confidential Hate Crime reporting services in various areas of the UK, including a 24 hour helpline call 0800 138 1625.

RAPE CRISIS CENTRE

Rape Crisis England & Wales is the charity working to end sexual violence and abuse. We provide specialist information and support to all those affected by rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and all other forms of sexual violence and abuse in England and Wales. We are also the membership organisation for 39 Rape Crisis centres. Together, we aim to educate, influence and make change. Call 0808 802 9999.

CRUSE BEREAVMENT SUPPORT

We offer support through our website, national helpline, live chat, group, zoom, telephone or one-to-one in person support. We want to make sure everyone grieving gets the help they need in a way that works for them. We have a specially trained dedicated team of 4,000 bereavement volunteers. Call 0808 808 1677.

ACCESSIBLE SHOW INFORMATION

Running time: approx 90 mins (no interval)

Age guidance: 14+

Saturday matinee performances are Pay What You Choose, and there are six £6 tickets on offer in the front row for every show after Previews.

1 November & 2nd November 7.30pm
WRITERS NIGHTS: A chance for writers to enjoy a discounted ticket and meet our literary department and the writer of the show.

16 November 12pm
PARENT & BABY: Provided as an opportunity for parents and/or guardians to enjoy a spot of theatre without the need to hire a babysitter. Please note, we do not exclude other audience members from booking to see this performance.

PLAY SYNOPSIS

✖ Sophie and Jamie are waiting at a bus stop on their way to a Halloween party dressed as zombies, Sophie convinces Jamie to have a selfie despite his protests, behind them is a floral tribute to a teenager who was killed in a hit and run a week earlier, they don't notice this and upload the photo. Following an argument about how much time they spend online both agree to turn off their phones as they get on the bus.

☰ A puppet of a Town Cryer enters the space and in rhyme introduces Mr Punch. Punch enters and talks to the audience and complains about his dislike for the millennial woke crocodile. A phone goes off and Punch tells the audience off before realising it's his phone. He reads on his phone how Sophie and Jamie's selfie was taken in front of a floral tribute, he and many other people online believe this is deliberateand he begins to send abusive messages, one of which he reads out to the audience.

◯ ✖ The next morning Sophie and Jamie wake up, hungover Jamie who is secretly in love with Sophie is about to tell her how he feels when they discover the selfie has gone viral and they are at the heart of an online shaming.

Sophie goes online to apologies but in the process only reveals her identity to the growing online mob, she becomes the victim off horrible trolling and a petition is circling the internet to have her fired. Jamie doesn't believe he has done anything wrong and refuses to apologise.

◉ Punch explains his approach to trolling encourage Joey the Clown to also be a troll, he uses examples from his abusive messages to Sophie as an example of good trolling.

☰ At Sophie's work, Wishing Well, a charity for terminally ill children, where she is greeted by her manager Stephen and Danielle from HR. They explain that they are under a lot of pressure and that her actions have embarrassed the employers and that given the overwhelming public pressure they have no choice but to fire her.

☰ ⬠ ⊖ A classic Punch and Judy routine is acted out by the puppets where Judy asks Punch to look after the baby, Punch complains and when the baby starts crying he stamps on it to death. Judy returns and a fight ensues which Punch wins. Sophie enters and challenges Punch on his behaviour towards her, quoting his abuse, Punch and Judy find the messages funny until Sophie reveals the scale of the abuse Punch has been sending her. Punch reveals that when Jamie was a teenager he sent racist abuse. Sophie leaves and Judy decides she has had enough of Punch's behaviour and also leaves.

⬠ ◯ ! ◆ Back in her flat Sophie confronts Jamie about racist tweets he made as a teenager, Jamie refuses to say sorry. Sophie doesn't feel safe in their flat anymore and goes back to her Mum's to get away from the pressure. Jamie posts a video online and takes a stance that everyone is overreacting and that he shouldn't have to apologise for his actions, the devil appears and tells Jamie how much he likes his video he complains about woke culture and ends up directing him to a Holocaust denial website.

❖ — ► ◆ Jamie's video goes viral and he starts to produce more which are ableist and encourage violence towards protest groups. Different puppets debate the merit of these videos whilst Judy tries to get the police to help her with Punch's behaviour and is harassed by the adverts from the Devil.

► Several months pass and Jamie has become a successful social media influencer. He now has a podcast where he champions free speech and decries cancel culture. He meets with his agent Marcia who wants him to invite a notorious Neo-Nazi on to his podcast. Jamie is reluctant but Marcia thinks it would be good for him as he has a strong following in the Alt-Right. Jamie wonders if there's another thing he can do to improve his podcast listenership.

⋈ Crocodile is listening to Jamie's podcast, Punch enters with sausages and tries to act out their old routine when Crocodile refuses Punch kills the crocodile.

◯ ✚ Meanwhile Sophie is living with her Mum Jennifer. She hasn't found another job and rarely goes outside. Jennifer feels that Sophie has so much potential but worries that the online abuse (that is still continuing) is holding her back. Punch calls the landline and is abusive to Jennifer, Sophie works out that everything time Jamie post a new video or podcast she gets abuse from Punch.
Jamie is being interviewed on another podcast and ends up lying and saying that the Zombie selfie was done on purpose to make fun of woke millennials. Punch hears this and believes it confirms what he has known all along.

◯ ◉ ❖ ► Sophie hears this and is furious, meeting him at his flat and telling him that everything he does online results in her getting abused, Jamie refuses to believe the two are linked. Jamie reveals that he has discovered the true identity of Sophie's troll, Mr Punch is really a man named Tony Monroe. It turns out he's a marathon runner who used to raise money for Wishing Well. Sophie wants to take the information to the police Jamie doesn't see the point and wants to expose him online, Sophie tells him not to but it's too late he's already released it to his followers. Sophie goes to leave, and Jamie finally tells her how he feels but it's too late.

[⋈ ◆ ⊖ ◯ Judy is still trying to get the policeman to take her complaints of abuse seriously, but they are not interested, Punch's true identity is revealed and he is chased by the policeman, though they the policeman seems more concerned about breaches of copyright infringement.

◯ ☰ ▼ ◆ Sophie goes to visit Tony in prison, in an attempt to try and make sense of everything. Tony explains his philosophy for trolling and sees himself as some kind of noble freedom fighter, challenging an unjust world. He doesn't believe anything he's done has done any real harm, Sophie probes him about his link to Wishing Well, and he reluctantly reveals his daughter was supported by the charity when she was dying.

► Jamie is recording a live version of his podcast at an alt-right rally and is going to interview the Neo-Nazi that his agent suggested. Meanwhile Sophie decides to volunteer with a women's charity abroad.

END OF PLAY

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This care pack was directly inspired by the Self Care Guide created by Clean Break for the play Typical Girls, which ran at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre, which inturn took inspiration from 20 Stories High and Resources & Research.

If you have any suggestions about how we can improve this care pack and help us evolve it for future productions, we'd love to hear what you think. Please email producing@theatre503.com