THIS LITTLE EARTH

by Jessica Norman

SAMUEL FRENCH

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

THIS LITTLE EARTH was first produced by 3 hearts canvas and Izzy Carney, and was first performed at Arcola Theatre on 22 October 2025. The cast and creative team were as follows:

HONEY ..... Fanta Barrie
CHRISTOPHER ..... Ross O'Donnellan

Playwright ..... Jessica Norman
Director ..... Imy Wyatt Corner
Producer ..... Izzy Carney
Producer ..... 3 hearts canvas
Set and Costume Designer ..... Cat Fuller
Light and Projection Designer ..... Hugo Dodsworth
Sound Designer ..... Jamie Lu
Movement Director ..... Hamza Ali
Stage Manager ..... Hannah Gillett
Production Manager ..... Daniel Steward
Development Director ..... Jess Edwards

Arcola Theatre produces daring, high-quality theatre in the heart of East London. We commission and premiere exciting, original works alongside rare gems of world drama and bold new productions of classics. We work with creatives from across the globe, acting as a platform for emerging and established artists, providing them space to grow, explore and refine their craft. Our socially engaged, international programme champions diversity, challenges the status quo, and stages trailblazing productions for everyone.

As part of our commitment to supporting the diversity of the theatre ecosystem, every year, we offer 26 weeks of free rehearsal space to culturally diverse and refugee artists; and our Participation department creates thousands of creative opportunities for the people of Hackney and beyond. Our community companies include Arcola Mental Health Company, Arcola 50+, Queer Collective, Sawa our refugee and migrant company, Arcola Academy and Arcola Youth Theatre. Our pioneering environmental initiatives are award-winning and aim to make Arcola the world's first carbon-neutral theatre.

Arcola has won awards including the UK Theatre Award for Promotion of Diversity, The Stage Award for Sustainability, the Off West End Award for Special Achievement, and the Peter Brook Empty Space Award.

The Team

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3 Hearts Canvas is a London-based theatre production company dedicated to creating high-quality, socially-conscious work that pushes the boundaries of creativity within the entertainment industry.

Founded in 2019, we have produced a range of acclaimed shows, including *The Actor's Nightmare* (Park Theatre); *Smoke* (Southwark Playhouse), *SPIN* (Edinburgh Fringe – Gilded Balloon & Arcola Theatre) and C*assie & The Lights* (Southwark Playhouse & Theatre Royal Plymouth). Beyond production, we actively fundraise and manage research and development periods for bold new writing. We are passionate about championing diverse voices, treating artists with respect, paying freelancers fairly, and building creative teams that reflect the rich, dynamic communities that make the UK thrive.

CAST

FANTA BARRIE | Honey

Fanta Barrie graduated from Rose Bruford in 2018. Her theatre credits include *The Ministry of Lesbian Affairs* (Kiln Theatre); *The Loved Ones* (Ireland Tour); *I F*****d You In My Space Ship* (Soho Theatre); *Belly Up* (Turbine Theatre); *The Loved Ones* (Gate Theatre); *The Lovely Bones* (UK Tour); *The Amber Trap* (Theatre503) and *The Cereal Café* (The Other Place). Her television credits include *My Lady Jane*, *Mrs Sidhu Investigates*; and for film, *The Entertainer*.

ROSS O'DONNELLAN | Christopher

Ross Donnellan's theatre credits include *The Beacon* (Everyman Cork); *Luck Just Kissed You Hello* (Abbey Theatre); *Julius Caesar* (Bristol Old Vic), Crave (The Wardrobe Theatre); and *Our Town* (Circomedia). His film credits include *Belfast*.

CREATIVE

JESSICA NORMAN | Writer

Jessica Norman is a writer for stage and screen. She's an alumnus of the Hampstead Theatre's Inspire Writers Group, Oxford Playhouse Playmakers and Soho Theatre Writers Lab.

Her other plays include: *Wilding* (long-listed for the Women's Prize for Playwriting); *The Healing* (written on attachment to the Hampstead Theatre); *The Stones and Vitriol* (Theatre 503 International Playwriting Award Longlist – developed with Oxford Playhouse).

For screen, she is developing a slate of projects including an original series with James Norton's Rabbit Track Pictures. In 2020, her short film *Embraceable You*, written and filmed during lockdown, won Best Isolation Short at the LA Motion Picture Festival.

Before becoming a writer, Jessica worked as a producer and creative associate in the West End, with development credits including *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child*.

IMY WYATT CORNER | Director

Imy trained on the Drama Directing MA at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School.

Direction includes *The Last One* (Arcola Theatre); *The Maladies* (Kiln Theatre- Kiln Youth Theatre); *Duck* (Arcola Theatre, Jermyn St Theatre,

South East tour with Farnham Maltings); *Passing* (Park Theatre); *Scarlet Sunday* (Omnibus Theatre); *BEASTS* (Fringe First Award Winning – Zoo Playground); *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Grove DIY Skatepark); *Gaslight* (Playground Theatre); *Walk Swiftly & With Purpose* (Theatre503, North Wall Arts Centre); *Baby, What Blessings* (Bunker Theatre, Theatre503) and *Happy Yet?* (International Theatre, Frankfurt).

Associate direction includes *The Dance of Death* (Theatre Royal Bath & Arcola Theatre UK Tour).

Assistant direction includes *Private Lives* (Ambassador's Theatre); *Relatively Speaking* (Theatre Royal Bath UK Tour); *The Lonely Londoners* (Kiln Theatre); *Shanghai Dolls* (Kiln Theatre); *Pins & Needles* (Kiln Theatre) and *The Purists* (Kiln Theatre).

IZZY CARNEY | Producer

Izzy is a theatre maker based in London. This is her debut as a producer, having worked as a director and dramaturg. Her credits include *Don't Ask Don't Get, Baby* (Off Comm Commended, The Space, Edinburgh Fringe 2023) and *Helium* (The Space 2023). She is passionate about new writing and stories that encourage empathy and share new perspectives. Currently working in the New Work Department at the National Theatre, Carney is also the Co-Founder of Happy Accident Theatre Company.

CAT FULLER | Set and Costume Designer

Cat is a Set and Costume Designer working in Theatre and Performance. She graduated with an MA in Performance Design from Bristol Old Vic Theatre School and was a winner of The 2021 Linbury Prize.

Design credits include *The Constant Wife* (Co-Costume Design) (RSC); *Churchill in Moscow*, *Testmatch* (The Orange Tree); *Red Speedo* (Costume Design & Associate Set) (The Orange Tree); *The Maids*, *Owners* (Jermyn Street Theatre); *Scarlet Sunday* (Omnibus Theatre); *Snail* (VAULT Festival); *Flies* (Boundless Theatre & Shoreditch Town Hall); *The Sweet Science of Bruising* (The Egg, Theatre Royal Bath); *Romeo and Juliet* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Three Seagulls* (Set Design) (Bristol Old Vic); *Kyoto* (The Wardrobe Theatre); *Falling in Love Again* (Set Design) (Kings Head Theatre).

Associate design include *13 Going on 30: The Musical* (Manchester Opera House); *The Time Traveller's Wife: The Musical* (West End/ Chester Storyhouse); *A Christmas Carol* (Finnish National Opera and Ballet); *Much Ado About Nothing* (National Theatre); *Home I'm Darling* (UK tour); *If You Fall* (Theatre Ad Infinitum).

Awards include: The Linbury Prize for Stage Design – 2021, The John Elvery Prize for Excellence in Stage Design – 2021, Offies nomination for Set Design of Owners at Jermyn Street Theatre.

HUGO DODSWORTH | Light and Projection Designer

Hugo is a Performance Designer working across disciplines of set, lighting, and video design. He trained at Bristol Old Vic Theatre School after reading Italian and History of Art at UCL.

Theatre credits include *Dear Annie*, *I Hate You* (Pleasance Courtyard, Riverside Studios); *Dear Young Monster* (Soho Theatre, Bristol Old Vic); *Night Waking* (Mull Theatre); *Henry V, Catastrophe Bay*, *Babytales*, and *Loam* (Bristol Old Vic); *The Last One* (Arcola); *Mariupol* (Pleasance Courtyard, Cockpit Theatre); *Sensory Cinders* (Soho Place); *The Crucible* (the egg, Theatre Royal Bath); *Machinal, The Machinal*, *The White Devil*, *Mother Courage and her Children*, *Lysistrata*, *The Visit*, and *Between the Roots and Wings* (Royal Central School of Speech and Drama), *Angels in America*, *The Cherry Orchard*, *Balm in Gilead*, and *Darknet* (Tobacco Factory); *Answering Machines* (East Riding Theatre); *Illusion* and *Saint Joan* (Bloomsbury Theatre); *Answering Machines* (East Riding Theatre); *The Telephone* and *La Voix Humaine* (Playground Theatre); *Fame Whore* (Kings Head Theatre); *Not The End of the World* (Cockpit Theatre); *How You Died* (Old Red Lion); *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (The Station); *Girl in the Machine* (Wardrobe Theatre); *Romeo and Juliet* (Redgrave Theatre); *Little Light* (Tower Theatre).

JAMIE LU | Sound Designer

Jamie is a London-based scenographer and an award-nominated sound designer.

Previous work at the Arcola includes: *Utoya*, *Spin*, *Gentlemen*, *The Apology*, *We Started to Sing*, *Broken Lad*.

Jamie's theatre credits as sound designer include: *English Kings Killing Foreigners*, *A Gig for Ghosts* (Soho Theatre); *The Poetess* (EdFringe25); *Big Big Sky*, *The Haunting* (New Vic Theatre); *Puppy* (King's Head); *The Society For New Cuisine*, *Argos Archives*, *George*, *Tiger* (Omnibus Theatre); *Still Here* (Tour and Jack Studio Theatre); *Take the Stage 2024* (Donmar Warehouse); *Autumn*, *Sorry We Didn't Die at Sea* (Park Theatre); *Abigail's Party* (Northern Stage and tour); *Midnight Tattoo* (Drayton Arms); *Foreverland*, *I'm Gonna Marry You Toby Maguire*, *Smoke*, *Tokyo Rose* (Southwark Playhouse); *The Government Inspector* (Marylebone Theatre); *Mother's Day*, *Grills*, *Declan* (Camden People's Theatre); *Ada* (National Youth Theatre); *Transit* (The Space); *Shakespeare's R&J*, *Hedda Gabler* (Reading Rep); *1984* (Cockpit); *Going For Gold*, *Road* (Chelsea Theatre); *Burnout* (R&D, Vault Festival and tour); *Iphigenia* (Hope Theatre); *fester* (Bridge House Theatre); *Paradise Lost* (Shipwright); *The Unicorn*, *What The Heart Wants*, *How To Build a Wax Figure* (Edinburgh Fringe 2022); *The Blue House* (Blue Elephant Theatre); *Dirty Hearts* (Old Red Lion Theatre). *D.O.A.*, *A Report to an Academy*, *Butterfly*, *The Most Beautiful Woman in the World* (Baron's

Court Theatre); *Apollonia*, *Flowers for Algernon*, *Black Mary Poppins* (Focustage/Chinese Tour); *Paper Crown* (Corbett Theatre/Bloomsbury Festival); *Wild Duck* (West Side Theatre, ET Space, China); *The Sound of Music* (Chinese Tour); *Sink* (Courtyard Theatre/Edinburgh Fringe/ Southbank Centre China Changing Festival); *String* (Lion and Unicorn Theatre).

As Assistant Sound Designer: *Henry V* (Donmar Warehouse).

As Scenographer: A Thousand Papercuts Skin Dee*p* (Baron's Court Theatre); A Report to an Academy Live (online).

Sound design for Audio play: *The Dream Machine* (Fizzy Sherbet).

HAMZA ALI | Movement Director

Hamza is a director and movement practitioner with a practice spanning direction, facilitation, and performance.

Credits include *Our Place* (Lyric Hammersmith); *The Maladies* (Kiln Theatre); *Community* (Birmingham Rep) and *Statues* (Bush Theatre). He served a Resident Director for *Kiss Marry Kill* (National Theatre Studios /Tour) and was lead performer for *Waswasa* (Birmingham Hippodrome). He has facilitated workshops for NYT, Kiln Theatre, Lung Theatre, Peut-Être, and SOLT; directed original work for The Place, Edinburgh Fringe and artsdepot; and was a visiting professional/artist at RCSSD, CSM, and University of Cambridge. Hamza holds an MA in Movement from the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and a BA in Drama from Royal Holloway.

CHARACTERS

HONEY
CHRISTOPHER

NIGEL WEST
A GIANT PENGUIN
The actor playing Christopher also plays Nigel West and the giant penguin.

SETTING

A recognisable world of the here and now – and Antarctica.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

A note on the text
— is a change of timeline

,
,
, is a fast-forward/continuation of the same timeline

( ) text in brackets can be left unsaid at your discretion

... is a small pause, shift or beat

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ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

For my grandmother Honey Summers
(who was not a Flat-Earther, for the record).

(Inside a crevasse in Antarctica.)

CHRISTOPHER. I don't believe this…

HONEY. How did we…

CHRISTOPHER. I have to get out of here…

HONEY. I think you broke my fall…

CHRISTOPHER. I have to get out of –

Help!

HONEY. What are / you –

CHRISTOPHER. HELP!!!!

HONEY. There's no one up there.

CHRISTOPHER. PLEASE SOMEBODY HELP ME!

(It echoes all around them.)

HONEY. No one can hear you.

CHRISTOPHER. You're right. I'm going to die down here.

HONEY. You're not going / to –

CHRISTOPHER. Starve to death, unless hypothermia gets me first. And Charlotte, I'm never going to see Charlotte again…

HONEY. Stop, Christopher.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm never going to hold her, I'm never going to –

You…

This is your fault.

Why do bad things always happen to me?

HONEY. If you want to get out of here, stop, for a second and let me think.

*(**HONEY** looks up towards the surface.)*

It must be fifteen meters…

(Checking herself for injuries.) I'm not even hurt…

*(**CHRISTOPHER** starts to feel a twinge of pain in his leg.)*

Where are the ice axes and the crampons?

*(**CHRISTOPHER** points to the surface.)*

HONEY. It's way too sheer to climb…

(She looks around them – at sheer ice, everywhere.)

CHRISTOPHER. My leg, it hurts…

*(**HONEY** hesitates, then moves closer to him. He recoils from her.)*

HONEY. Do you want my help or not?

(He lets her come closer.)

CHRISTOPHER. Be careful.

HONEY. Keep still.

CHRISTOPHER. How does it look?

HONEY. …

CHRISTOPHER. It's bad isn't it?

HONEY. Try putting some weight on it.

CHRISTOPHER. I can't…

HONEY. You have to try.

*(**CHRISTOPHER** slowly tries to get up, but he falls back down hard with a thud.)*

CHRISTOPHER. Argh!

(The sound of cracking ice and falling snow echoes out below.)

It really hurts.

HONEY. Shhh…

*(**HONEY** listens: as her eyes adjust to the darkness, she suddenly sees where they are…)*

Don't move.

CHRISTOPHER. What – what is it?

HONEY. This is a snow bridge.

CHRISTOPHER. What's that mean?

HONEY. It means this crevasse is deeper than it looks – could go on for miles below us and we don't know how thick this snow is –

CHRISTOPHER. Oh that's just bloody perfect, isn't it?

*(**HONEY** goes onto hands and knees and crawls towards the edge.)*

HONEY. I think I can see light down there…

CHRISTOPHER. Light?

(She goes into her rucksack, pulls out: a length of rope.)

HONEY. Yes. This is…if I can get right down to the bottom, there might be another way out.

CHRISTOPHER. Seems like a pretty bad idea to me.

HONEY. Do you have a better one?

(**HONEY** *starts to unspool the rope.)*

Up or down – that's the choice. And we've just established we can't go up.

CHRISTOPHER. I don't think we've explored all the – what about staying here / and.

HONEY. And waiting to be rescued? By – the penguins?

CHRISTOPHER. How do we even know the rope's long enough / to –

HONEY. We don't.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm not going down there, there's nothing you can do to make me.

HONEY. …

…

CHRISTOPHER. Honey…

HONEY. I'm not going to give up and die, not like this.

CHRISTOPHER. You can't leave me…

HONEY. I'm not going / to –

CHRISTOPHER. Try and say it with some conviction.

HONEY. …

CHRISTOPHER. Tell me the truth.

HONEY. My truth or yours?

CHRISTOPHER. Did you ever love me? Or was it all just –

I thought we –

HONEY. It was a story. It wasn't real.

CHRISTOPHER. It was, it was real.

HONEY. I was stupid to believe it.

…

CHRISTOPHER. Please…

HONEY. You can't walk.

CHRISTOPHER. I'm okay, look I'm fine I –

(He tries to get up.)

(But he falls back down again, hard, in pain.)

(The snow bridge shakes under them.)

HONEY. Careful!

CHRISTOPHER. We're dead anyway, so what does it matter?

You did this.

HONEY. No, you did. You're the one who – who –

CHRISTOPHER. I just wanted to believe that it was, that the world wasn't just… But it's not here. We were never going to find it.

—

(Before.)

(Wetherspoons. **HONEY** *is drinking alone. She's reading a well-thumbed book:* The Worst Journey in the World*, by Apsley Cherry-Garrard.* **CHRISTOPHER** *is standing next to her.)*

Good story?

HONEY. Uh… Yes.

CHRISTOPHER. What's it about?

HONEY. It's by this explorer.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh yeah? What did he – or she – do?

HONEY. I'm actually just –

CHRISTOPHER. Of course. Yes. I'll – sorry.

*(***CHRISTOPHER** *looks around, then goes and sits down at the next table. He sips his pint, while* **HONEY** *reads her book.)*

*(***HONEY** *looks over at* **CHRISTOPHER***, who smiles at her.)*

(She goes back to her book.)

(They sit like this for a minute.)

*(***HONEY** *looks back at* **CHRISTOPHER***, who is now pretending not to notice her.)*

HONEY. He went to Antarctica.

CHRISTOPHER. Antarctica?

HONEY. With Captain Scott in 1912. They did this crazy expedition to look for emperor penguin eggs out on the sea ice in the middle of the polar night. He almost died like multiple times.

CHRISTOPHER. What's polar night?

HONEY. In Antarctica, there's only one sunset and one sunrise a year. So night lasts for like six months.

CHRISTOPHER. How do you know that?

HONEY. I'm kind of obsessed.

CHRISTOPHER. What's your favourite thing about it?

HONEY. I guess, it's just so unbelievable that there's this wilderness, a whole continent at the edge of the world covered in ice, with no people.

CHRISTOPHER. No people sounds like heaven, sign me up.

There are penguins right?

HONEY. Loads of them. And – are you sure you want to –

CHRISTOPHER. I'm interested.

HONEY. Sometimes it gets so cold that the water droplets in the air freeze into ice crystals. When the sunlight hits them in a certain way, people say it looks like it's raining gold dust all around you.

CHRISTOPHER. Sounds magical.

HONEY. I'd love to see it one day.

CHRISTOPHER. You can't just go though, can you?

HONEY. It's really expensive. Me and my sister looked into it. Planned our journey and everything: first we'd catch a plane to Buenos Aires, then down to Ushuaia at the tip of Argentina, then get on a cruise ship over the Drake's Passage to the Antarctic peninsula.

CHRISTOPHER. How much does it cost?

HONEY. Ten grand at least… each.

CHRISTOPHER. *(Whistles.)* Well, for what it's worth, I think you'll get there one day.

HONEY. She won't.

CHRISTOPHER. ?

HONEY. She died.

…

CHRISTOPHER. Oh fucking hell, I'm so sorry.

HONEY. It's not your fault.

CHRISTOPHER. And here I was going on like a twat.

I really am / sorry.

HONEY. Please stop saying / sorry.

CHRISTOPHER. Sorry. Sorry!

HONEY. It's insane, she was literally the healthiest person, never got sick, only ate organic, exercised all the – everything you're supposed to do.

CHRISTOPHER. Cancer, was it?

HONEY. (Yes).

CHRISTOPHER. There's something wrong with the world, I tell you.

HONEY. It's her funeral today.

CHRISTOPHER. Oh.

…

HONEY. They played Coldplay. She fucking hated Coldplay.

CHRISTOPHER. What song?

HONEY. 'Fix You'.

CHRISTOPHER. No! At a –

HONEY. *(Half-laughing.)* I know…

She really loved it here for some reason so –

CHRISTOPHER. I get it – it's nice to remember her, in your own way.

Was she older or younger?

HONEY. Older.

CHRISTOPHER. Thought so.

HONEY. You can tell?

CHRISTOPHER. Not really, I'm an only child – well, sort of. I've got a half brother, much older, but we're estranged. And he is actually quite strange to be fair. Anyway –

*(***CHRISTOPHER** *raises his glass.)*

To your sister.

HONEY. Sadie.

CHRISTOPHER. To Sadie.

*(***HONEY** *raises her glass too. They cheers in the air.)*

What would you have played?

HONEY. I had a whole playlist, but…you really want to know?

CHRISTOPHER. I really do.

HONEY. There's this one song. We used to sing it dancing round the kitchen.

It's kind of weird.

CHRISTOPHER. Weird is good. Try me.

HONEY. I can't remember the name, but…

CHRISTOPHER. How does it go?

HONEY. Uh… Okay…

(She hums a bit of a song. A 70s R&B, soul/reggae tune in the style of 'Too Late to Turn Back Now' by Cornelius Brothers & Sister Rose.[*]*)*

CHRISTOPHER. I love that song!

HONEY. Really?

CHRISTOPHER. *(Pretending to sing it, but clearly doesn't know it.)* Yeah! Great choice.

*(***HONEY** *laughs.)*

HONEY. Did you want to come and…

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CHRISTOPHER. I really don't want to impose. Get back to your book.

HONEY. I'd like you to.

*(***CHRISTOPHER** *gets up and sits down next to* **HONEY**.*)*

(A little silence.)

CHRISTOPHER. D'you believe in fate?

HONEY. Fate?

CHRISTOPHER. Sorry, I am genuinely just rubbish at small talk.

HONEY. What are you after here?

CHRISTOPHER. Honestly? Plan was: reel you in with my killer chat up lines, then win you over with my gentlemanly charms.

HONEY. In Wetherspoons? On the day of my sister's funeral?

CHRISTOPHER. Is it working?

*(***HONEY** *laughs.)*

HONEY. I don't believe in fate. Or anything like that. I think we're all just whirling around in the random, senseless chaos of the universe.

CHRISTOPHER. No way. Nothing random about it. No coincidences. Trust me.

HONEY. Why should I do that?

CHRISTOPHER. Because I wouldn't lie to you.

HONEY. Is that right?

CHRISTOPHER. Anyway, you only have to look at the state of the world, the inequality of it all, the pain, the suffering, the chaos…you really think that's all there is? Pain and chaos? It can't be.