

# Hefted

by **David Lane**  
commissioned by **Beaford Arts**

produced by **multi story theatre company**  
available for touring from autumn 2020

accompanying photographic exhibition  
curated by **Beaford Arts**



## what's it all about?

**Beaford** commissioned **David Lane** to find a new way to talk about our lives, our land and our future. **Hefted** is the result: a narrative that sweeps across 600 years, starting in 1475 with a supernatural birth and moving through nine different landscapes to an imagined 2075 in which stories from the past are retold to help heal the present. Some of the stories are fantastical, others dramatise real events but all explore the notion of being 'hefted' or 'leared' – the deep connection we have with the land.

*'We're clay, don't ever say you ain't got no responsibility to the land. You're the earth itself.'*

Having produced a community version of the play with a twenty-strong cast, **multi story** were commissioned to develop, with David, a 'studio' version for a four-strong professional company. We played, rehearsed, sang and re-imagined our way to what we have now: a wryly funny play, emotionally absorbing, interspersed with songs and a spectacular soundscape that brings big questions about our relationship with the land tumbling onto the stage with passion, humour and a huge heart. We have played this version in village venues across Devon and the response has been phenomenal. We're ready now to take the production further afield.

*"Excellent evening. Nine stories collectively mesmerising that tell a story about land that is universal."*

Honiton audience

*"A powerful, intense and gripping production that transformed our village hall into a window onto the landscape."*

Membury audience



## a thumbnail sketch of the stories that make up Hefted

**Prologue.** Thunder and rain. A group of people at odds with each other sing a song over a burial mound as the swans fly overhead.

**1475 – Birth.** A ewe gives birth to a human baby. As she grows up, the little girl understands the land as if by instinct. She is 'hefted' - like the sheep.

**1780 – Childhood.** Three children play truant in the woods at night. But Blanche has gone missing. When a buzzard comes swooping down, the children are convinced that the buzzard is Blanche. The sound of a buzzard haunts the play.

**1861 – Adolescence.** Two brothers are on the train to Staffordshire to learn new pottery techniques. But one of the brothers is plotting to blow-up the opposition while the other finds it physically impossible to leave North Devon.

**1895 – Young Adulthood.** Harnessing the power of the river might bring new wealth to a seaside town. But what's the cost? A family is bitterly divided.

**1944 – Adulthood.** A young wife relates the story of the American GI who awakened her dreams of a bigger world elsewhere. A fatal training-accident put paid to those dreams. She walks into the sea.

**1968 – Middle Age.** A representative of Farmaco fights her way through the undergrowth to serve notice that the agri-business conglomeration she represents is the unstoppable, shining future. One family farm begs to differ and delivers a bloody verdict.

**2005 – Retirement.** Campaigning against the local windfarm seems to be bringing a retired couple closer together. Until she starts hearing stories of old - a ewe-baby, a buzzard, a railway, a river and so on - and premonitions of the future - including a devastating flood - all emanating from the wind-turbines.

**2018 – Old Age.** Grandad has had himself buried in a field up to his neck to await his death. He left the farm to his granddaughter. But the last thing she wants to do is to run a farm. He hasn't long left to persuade her.

**2075 – Death.** Thunder and rain. A group of people at odds with each other sing a song over a burial mound as the swans fly overhead. This small community on an offshore island is trying to find a way back together after the trauma of the great flood that swept so much away. They still have their stories in common. And the play ends with the birth of another ewe-baby, promising a further 600 years of story.

## [YouTube video to show layout](#)

*“The whole performance drew the audience in, in a very emotional way. The connections and contradictions between nature, humans and landscape, past, present and future, are so important and this play reinforced that.”*

Newton St Cyres review

## who are we?

We're Gill and Bill. We're based in North Devon and, as [multi story theatre company](#), have spent the last twenty years creating new work that responds to the times we live in. We have toured our productions both nationally and internationally - including working with twenty different **Rural Touring Schemes** across England and Wales. As theatre creators and as audience members, we're passionate about work that's rooted in the local but speaks of the universal - something that **Hefted** does effortlessly.

*"We're always keen to support innovative artists that are brimming with skill & style, have high production standards, and, above all, have something to say"*

Geof Keys, when Director of Queen's Hall Arts Centre, Hexham



For this adventure we are joined by two younger Devon-based actors who share our passion for Close Encounters of the Village Hall Kind and bring their own more youthful take on what 'hefted' means in their own lives.

*"multi story illuminate their chronicles with intelligence and theatricality. Their approach is spare - there are no wasted movements or empty ideas. And they are marvellous actors."*

Canadian Broadcasting Company



## the setting for Hefted

The audience is placed on two sides of the playing area. People watch each other watching the play. They are both witnessing the event and part of the event.

*"I was so engrossed in the action that I nearly leapt up and joined in - and I've never been on stage in my life!"*

Membury audience

*"Brilliant! You could smell it even though you couldn't..."*

Honiton audience



## and there's more...

In addition to promoting high-quality live arts events in North Devon, **Beaford** is the custodian of an important photographic record of rural life, the work of **James Ravilious** and **Roger Deakins**. This archive was the starting point for David Lane's research which included collecting oral testimony from some of the people in the photographs. Beaford are also proud partners of the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve which opened up other lines of conversation and inspiration.

**Beaford** are supporting the tour with a specially curated display available to each and every venue at least one week in advance of the event. There may be venues that would like to supplement the display with complementary photographs of their own rural hinterland.



photograph by Roger Deakins for The Beaford Archive

## engaging audiences & marketing

**Hefted** has proved to have wide appeal to village audiences interested to see matters close to their hearts represented and anatomised in their community space.

*“A powerful, intense and gripping production that transformed our village hall into a window onto our landscape.”*

Membury audience

key groups who have already shown a particular engagement with the play:

- Farmers, shepherds, agricultural workers - current and retired. NFU, Young Farmers.
- School and college groups attracted by both the form and the content - workshops available.
- The photographic display generated a lot of interest in the venue where we tested it out.
- People engaged with environmental issues – both professionally and as an issue in their lives.

*“We saw people in our audience tonight who had never been to a theatre event before.”*

Honiton promoter

## information for bookers in a nutshell...

- availability:** from Sept 2020 (offering Thursday –Sunday)
- staging:** played in the traverse in the body of the hall. Minimum floor-space, 12m x 8m x 3m height.
- get-in:** 2pm on the day of the performance.
- equipment:** for non-traditional spaces we tour all equipment necessary including lighting and sound.
- show length:** two hours including 15 / 20 minute interval.
- age recommendation:** 14+
- touring company:** four performers on the road
- contact:** Gill Nathanson  
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