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MEDIA RELEASE
For Immediate Release
4 March 2010

New play explores true stories of older people in Britain today

"Everybody's lumped together once you're a certain age. You almost lose who you are. It's very important that we keep our originality, we keep ourselves as being people..." Elizabeth, aged 86.

Acclaimed theatre company **iceandfire** are launching a new documentary script, **Getting On: true stories of growing old in 21st Century Britain**, in London and Bristol in March 2010. The play, part of iceandfire's Outreach project, Actors for Human Rights, tells the true stories of older people from around the UK who have struggled to retain their identity and dignity in a youth-focused society.

Born-and-bred Bristolian, Stanley, 67, worked all his life, but after a random attack he was unable to work and debts began to pile up:

"I never paid me council tax. The letters what used to come through the door, I never used to open them. I've got that, what do you call it, dyslexia. They sent the bailiffs. They declared me bankrupt so I couldn't pay me bills. They shut the electric off, they shut the water off. Then I got myself to a point. Let's put it this way. I looked at that river and I thought, yeah, I can do it. I weren't afraid. It's easy enough."

Stanley's story is weaved in amongst Amelia and Peter, a couple who fought age discrimination after she was sacked from her job as a fitness instructor; Elizabeth, whose education and privilege don't stop her from feeling marginalised and disrespected; and Elsie, whose late husband was forcibly taken from their family home and put into a nursing home.

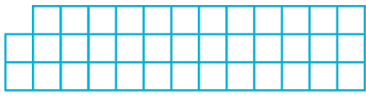
The prestigious cast includes Michael Cronin (*Wolf Man, Merlin*), Barbara Kirby (*Inspector Morse, Pygmalion* with the York Theatre Royal), Michael Bertenshaw (*Criminal Justice 2, Doctor Who*), Audrey Ardington (currently filming the new *Dr Who*), Stephanie Faverman and Ruth Posner (both Royal Shakespeare Company regulars).

Co-Artistic Director of iceandfire, Sara Masters, wrote the script based on interviews she conducted with the protagonists:

"It's ridiculous that we lump this huge, diverse group of people together and call them 'older people' as though it is a one size fits all. How can this label describe a group that ranges from sixty-year-olds holding down full time work, to 100-year-olds who live in residential care? There are many issues about how we treat people who fall in to this group in the UK, I hope Getting On humanises some of them."

Age Concern and Help the Aged assisted in the collection of testimonies. Andrew Harrop, Director of Policy & Public Affairs at Age Concern and Help the Aged, says using performance and drama to approach these issues can be exciting:

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"There is low awareness of the value of the Human Rights Act among the general public, yet it has brought very real benefits to older people. It is great to see projects such as this finding new and creative ways to communicate the importance of human rights to different audiences."

After the launch, the script will be available as part of iceandfire's Outreach project. Groups can request a rehearsed reading of any of their Outreach performances, for little or no cost. For more information, go to www.iceandfire.co.uk

WHAT: Launch of *Getting On*, by iceandfire
WHEN: 2:30pm, Fri 12 March (London)
8:00pm, Sun 14 March (Bristol)
WHERE: Almeida Theatre, Islington
Tobacco Factory, Bristol

Interviews are available with Stanley, as well as the actors and writer Sara Masters, from iceandfire. Supported by the Funding Network.

BACKGROUND NOTES:

iceandfire explores human rights stories through performance. Over the last six years they have become a theatre company with a distinct, contemporary voice creating work of excellence across our four work strands: production, outreach, education and participation.

www.iceandfire.co.uk.

Age UK is the new force combining Age Concern and Help the Aged. They help people enjoy a better later life – within the UK and in 70 other countries – by providing life-enhancing services and vital support.

www.ageconcern.org.uk/

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