

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Friday 26 November 2010

British Transport Police commissions new gang crime drama for young people

You don't snitch - we all know the rules and we all know the consequences. But what if your own future is at stake? What if there's a chance that an innocent person will go to jail? What if that person is your best friend? Ethan faces an almost impossible personal dilemma that will test him like never before...

Pact by Clifford Oliver is Arc's new play sparked by the many discussions that followed performances of Arc's acclaimed production of **Boy X** - the story of the aftermath of the stabbing of a 16-year old. Violent crime and gangs continue as central themes in this piece, which enters the challenging and taboo area of 'snitching' and the walls of silence that can prevent identification and conviction of offenders. Funded by British Transport Police (BTP) and working with BTP's Young People's Advisory Group and Millwall Kickz project, Clifford has developed **Pact** following fascinating, heated and complex conversations with young people about loyalty, trust and the human instinct to 'close ranks'. Performances of **Pact** will offer an opportunity to explore these difficult issues in a safe space.

Superintendent Adrian Young of British Transport Police, said: *"Young people are our future and there is nothing more important for BTP and the police service than getting them on our side.*

"Our work with Arc can help us engage with them both intellectually and emotionally, explain where we are coming from and through interactive drama understand better their point of view. That is a powerful and potentially life-saving combination."

Pact is currently in rehearsals under the direction of Artistic Director Carole Pluckrose, in preparation for touring schools and venues around London, funded by British Transport Police, including a special performance at Millwall Football Club on Saturday 4 December.

A Gala performance for specially invited guests from the police, transport, youth, education and justice services is also being hosted by BTP at Arc's home at The Malthouse Studios in Barking on Tuesday 30 November. The performance will be followed by an open discussion with Panel Members including Assistant Chief Constable Alan Pacey of the British Transport Police and Chief Superintendent Matt Bell, Borough Commander of Barking & Dagenham Police.

Following the BTP tour, **Pact** will then be touring Barking & Dagenham Secondary Schools, sponsored by the Metropolitan Police Authority, in partnership with the MPS and B&D Partnership.

Chief Superintendent Matt Bell, Borough Commander of Barking & Dagenham Police, said: *"Investigations into very serious offences are often hampered when officers come up against a 'wall of silence'. It is important that we understand why young people are reluctant to pass on information to teachers, parents and police officers and what drives these often apparently false loyalties. Research with young people has shown that this issue is not restricted to one particular social, economic or cultural group, but is common to young people from all backgrounds, however well or poorly off they are. **Pact** will enable us to explore these issues and gain a better understanding of how we can work smarter when these situations arise. I hope it may also prompt a change in thinking in some young people and cause them to challenge established thinking and behaviour."*

Pact does not make any attempt to answer the questions that result from violent crime, but rather invites its young audiences into an experience, which presents a set of complex decisions. The play and follow-up discussions (up to 90 minutes in total) are ideally suited for Years 8 to 10.

About **Boy X**

Boy X is a powerful play tackling knife and violent crime, whilst exploring the pressures and influences on young people, families and communities.

Also written by Clifford Oliver and directed by Carole Pluckrose, **Boy X** is the third in the hard-hitting **Stereo Trilogy** exploring weapon-carrying, youth violence and the influence of and involvement in gangs. The play is performed by four of Arc's dynamic young actors, who helped develop the story through workshops drawing upon real experiences of living on gang dominated estates.

During its pilot phase in early 2009, the programme was delivered to over 1,000 young people in London and included a performance at the TKAP Regional Stakeholders Conference in London and at the NHS Data Sharing Summit. In both cases, the performance was showcased as an example of good practice. Since then, the play has gone on to tour nationally to a wide range of audiences, including young people in schools, youth centres, community projects, YOIs and to audiences of professional criminal justice practitioners, including a performance for Borough Commanders at Scotland Yard. To date, **Boy X** has been performed over 125 times and seen by over 16,000 people in this wide range of settings, including ground-breaking public performances at Waterloo Station for London Week of Peace in September 2009 and for the Home Secretary at the 2010 TKAP Conference in Westminster.

"Boy X is a tremendous production, which gets right to the heart of many of the issues affecting young people today. It provides a fantastic opportunity to explore the real challenges that are impacting on their lives and their behaviours, and I highly recommend it to you as a starting point for real discussion and real change."

Commander Matt Bell, Barking & Dagenham Police

Whilst there may be no easy solutions for knife crime, **Boy X** is a story of hope, personal responsibility, imagination and the power to change.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Press photos for Pact can be taken by arrangement at the Gala performance:

Date: Tuesday 30 November 2010

Time: 6:30pm

Tickets: FoC on application - Theresa Snooks on 020 8594 1095

Age Guidance: 14+

Venue: Arc Theatre, First Floor, The Malthouse, 62-76 Abbey Road, Barking IG11 7BT

Arc website: www.arctheatre.com

Based in Barking, Arc is an award-winning theatre company that develops and creates new theatre and workshop projects for young people and the wider community.

For further information contact Theresa Snooks, Communications Manager at Arc on 020 8594 1095 or email theresa@arctheatre.com

Commissioned by British Transport Police



London Borough of Barking & Dagenham school tour funded by the MPA and supported by the MPS and Barking & Dagenham Partnership

