

Pact by Clifford Oliver

A theatre performance and workshop programme designed for young people aged 12 and above, community groups and CJS staff



Pact - The Programme

Written by Clifford Oliver, directed by Carole Pluckrose

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 was 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. Clifford Oliver 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.

Project Brief

1. About Arc Theatre

Arc is an award-winning professional educational theatre company founded in 1984. The Company has an enduring and passionate commitment to young people, learning and the realisation of aspiration. We actively foster new theatre writing, performance and drama workshop programmes, focused on compelling contemporary issues for young people and society at large. With the fast changing political, demographic and economic landscape in the UK, the Company has worked even more closely within the community and education fields to use the benefits of involvement and engagement in the arts to develop and support social cohesion in an increasingly diverse context.

The Company's operation is run and managed from its base in the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham where its projects are developed, rehearsed and monitored. The Company has a national and international profile and reputation and works regularly with a wide range of partners as diverse as the Olympic Delivery Authority, McDonald's and the British Council. Notably, its ground-breaking projects using theatre to explore diversity; **The Football Plays** by Clifford Oliver, attracted significant commercial sponsorship from HSBC and wide national exposure. **The Football Plays** are studied at GCSE in schools around the UK, and young people's performances demonstrate the ongoing challenges of understanding and managing difference.

The Company has an excellent track record of delivering commissioned projects for Local Authorities, Police Forces, Central Government Departments, businesses and independent agencies. In the area of particular interest to this project, i.e. community safety, knife and violent crime and anti-social behaviour, the Company has created a series of high-impact performance projects, which have attracted national attention, including as an example of good practice in the *London Community Safety Partnership*, *Serious Youth Crime London Summit: Brochure of Promising Practice in London*.

For more than two years, Arc has worked across London and nationally with the **Tackling Knives Action Programme**. This has resulted in a number of new initiatives and workshop projects, actively focused on developing communication and confidence between the Police and young people.

Arc is a member company of the Flavasum Trust, which campaigns for education and diversionary activities for young people at risk of involvement in gangs and crime through participation in the arts. We keep abreast and contribute actively to the discussion around current national policy and thinking.

Arc is recognised as an Investors in People Company. To view our 2011 Report, please visit our website at www.arctheatre.com.

2. Boy X by Clifford Oliver - the Play and its Outcomes

In 2009, the Company launched its new anti-knife crime performance project **Boy X** - the third in the **Stereo Trilogy**, following **Stereo** and **To Die For**. **Boy X** continues to tour into schools and youth clubs and is often performed at conferences and events with a focus on violent crime and its impact and influence on young people. To date it has performed over 150 times to an audience of over 17,000 young people and adults in a range of settings.

Each performance of **Boy X** is followed by a highly engaging dialogue with the audience, made up in most cases of young people aged 13 to 22. The outcome of these conversations continues to clearly highlight a culture prevalent amongst young people in which they feel that the issue of 'snitching' was in many cases a matter of honour. Coupled with a general distrust based both on personal experience of Stop and Search and a historical belief developed through received wisdom, it is clear that there is often little trust in the Police. This emerges as a complex sociological issue, built on a set of beliefs that have become normative and are reinforced daily. Based on this, it is hardly surprising that young people often choose to maintain a wall of silence in a crime investigation. Whilst this impasse continues, it has a serious impact on investigations and the successful conviction of offenders. What becomes clear is that even some of the most law-abiding have a tendency to believe that the Police are by definition the 'enemy'. Clearly the Police still have a significant amount of work to do to challenge this and to rekindle a sense of fair play and legitimate judicial process. There have been huge structural and behavioural changes in policing post-McPherson but it will take time for attitudinal shifts to follow.

This topic of discussion has been at the heart of every event at which **Boy X** has been performed. The play serves as a door opener precisely because it engages its audience both emotionally and reflectively, which in turn encourages a shared platform for honest debate.

3. Pact by Clifford Oliver

Following the highly successful performances of **Boy X** for the British Transport Police, BTP went on to commission a second piece; **Pact**, in the summer of 2010. The play is directly influenced by the themes arising from **Boy X**.

The objectives of the Pact performance programme are to:

- present an emotionally engaging new theatre piece of the quality and impact of **Boy X**
- contribute to a greater understanding between young people and the Police, and to encourage relationships that are built on mutual respect and transparency
- be used as a powerful educational tool for audiences of young people, community and CJS staff, especially Police Officers and trainees
- serve as a doorway to future conversations and actions. By becoming emotionally connected in a shared experience, the audience has a window of opportunity to talk to each other
- break down stereotyping and inform
- create a neutral and safe place to hear and understand young people's perceptions, experiences and beliefs
- create and deliver a meaningful follow-up workshop discussion. This engages directly with young people and explore their ideas, thoughts and feelings
- reinforce commonality of experience, family, friends, community, issues of growing up and shared fears particularly at this time of austerity

- create a safe learning environment where young people feel supported and able to express themselves
- offer curriculum-based support materials for teachers and youth workers to be used before and after the session. To ensure that these support the Citizenship Curriculum

Each performance of **Pact** is followed by an open post-show conversation with the audience (lasting between 15 and 45 minutes, depending on timetable), facilitated by the skilled young actors who draw on their own experiences to further explore the play's content and issues.

3.1 Optional Additional Workshops

The additional accompanying workshops for smaller groups (of up to 30) offer an opportunity to further develop the themes of the play. These include personal responsibility, loss and consequences, bullying and peer influence, gang involvement, snitching and knife carrying. They offer an opportunity to do practical drama work and to think and talk about the issues with the facilitators, all of whom have direct experience of the pressures and demands that can impact on young people's lives, and are themselves powerful role models.

This session explores the students' experiences, thoughts and fears and encourages them to take ownership of their own behaviours and to come up with ideas and solutions for themselves. This is a highly engaging process and complements other learning opportunities at school and elsewhere, offering those who work with young people a rich source of material from which to develop further discussion and work.

The **Pact** team is led and managed by an experienced Education Director and includes four skilled actors who perform the piece and co-lead the workshops.

We would hope to work closely with our partners to signpost alternative arts/creative and other opportunities for young people locally to encourage positive action and engagement.

Additionally, we develop performances of **Pact** for young people in nightclub settings etc., and recommend an evening event/performance for the community/family in each area prior to the programme.

4. Set-up and Logistics

Arc has over 25 years of project management experience and specialises in working closely with schools, youth centres and events organisers.

Our Project Manager works closely with colleagues responsible for delivering the project. They are the key point of contact for all logistics and keep in regular phone and email contact. They report any concerns or issues immediately.

Arc's performance team consists of professionally trained actors and facilitators. They are CRB checked and the team has a dedicated Team Leader who acts as the point of contact at all times.

The project is fully evaluated against objectives through verbal, paper and online surveys.

5. Examples of Feedback from Performances of Pact and Boy X

*“BTP fully supports **Pact**, which has further heightened awareness of the consequences of youth violence. Through its powerful message, **Pact** will go a long way towards educating people, young people in particular, about the risks and implications of staying silent when they witness serious crimes take place. We hope that our work with Arc can help us to explain what we can do to help young people who find themselves in that situation, but equally we hope it will help us better understand their point of view too.”*

Superintendent Adrian Young, British Transport Police

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“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** enables 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.”*

Chief Superintendent Matt Bell, Borough Commander of Barking & Dagenham Police

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“I thoroughly enjoyed the play and felt it really covered all aspects of teaching youngsters to make the 'right' decision, and especially in breaking down the barriers where the Police are involved.”

Cindy Macdonald, PA to Assistant Chief Constable Sue Fish, TKAP, Home Office Violent Crime Unit

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*“(I’ll take away from **Pact**) that family matter, so do real friends, and be honest ‘cos honesty always prevails.”*

Young person, Millwall Youth Club

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*“Really a very enjoyable and informative piece of theatre which entertained and informed students and staff alike. Without doubt **Pact** was one of the most effective shows we have staged for our students in many years. We think that it should be compulsory for all KS4 students in our Borough.*

“We feel that this play was a very strong piece that forced our year 10 students to think carefully about themselves and their actions in relation to the Police as well as considering deeper themes about morality, their attitudes relating to what they think is ‘right & wrong’. Staff at our school agree with my view that this was a very engaging play in which the performers as well as the content stimulated thought and consideration amongst the students. This strongly enhanced our work in school about the issue of gangs, crime, knives and the Police. We would really like the play to be performed in our school again in the near future. The year heads who saw the performance have expressed their wishes to

see a return in the New Year.”

Director of Student Development / Teacher, Sydney Russell School, Dagenham

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“I like how the storyline of the play can relate to events that happen nowadays. I personally know people that have lost family members due to street crime and the moral the play is one of the best ways to get the message across and it's a way to communicate with the youths of today.”

Student, Eastbury Comprehensive School, Barking

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*“**Boy X** was very eye-opening, heart touching and I will never forget the play. I knew knife crime was bad but never as bad as this. Knife crime is devastating for family and friends of the family.”*

Student, Kingston College

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*“(I’ll take away from **Boy X**) the understanding of how getting involved with street crime affects not only short term but long term too. (I will) be a role model to others, to stay away from such menacing activities.”*

Student, Kingston College

6. How to Book Pact by Clifford Oliver

6.1 Tour Dates

The **Pact** performance programme tour is available for booking from **September 2011**.

We will also do our best to accommodate single performance events, subject to availability.

6.2 Audience

The performance and facilitated discussion is designed for young people aged 12 and above in schools, youth centres and other settings. Community and showcase performances are also available.

6.3 Audience Size

The maximum size for an audience where there is no raked or tiered seating (i.e. school hall, large conference hall etc.) is 150. Where raked seating or auditorium is available, numbers are negotiable.

6.4 Venue

Pact is a flexible performance and can be set up in a wide variety of venues from dedicated theatre spaces to small studios, halls and conference rooms. If you have a specific space in mind we will be happy to discuss how it will work for the performance.

6.5 Workshops

Stand-alone additional workshops lasting up to 90 minutes can be booked for up to 30 young people per session. We will need a drama studio or medium-sized room with cleared space for practical drama.

6.6 Technical Requirements

Pact has minimal technical requirements. Our team will need one hour dedicated time in the performance space to set up, and access to 13-amp power source. A seating layout plan will be provided before the event, but can be managed by our team during the set-up. We will need a parking space near to the performance space for access and unloading. The get-out takes approximately 30 minutes.

6.7 Timings of Performance Session

Performance length:	45 minutes
Facilitated post-performance discussion:	15 to 45 minutes*

*Subject to timetabling

6.8 Fees

Single, stand-alone performance of **Pact** with discussion session (when touring schedule permits):

£1,800 plus VAT

Two performances and discussion sessions on the same day in the same venue (when touring schedule permits):

£2,400 plus VAT (£1,200 plus VAT per performance)

Five consecutive week days of performances and discussions (up to a maximum of 10 performances):

£9,000 plus VAT (£900 plus VAT per performance)

NB All fees are subject to a capped travel and accommodation supplement outside M25

Contact Information

For further information or to enquire about booking the **Pact** or **Boy X** programmes, please contact General Manager, Nita Bocking at nita@arctheatre.com or call 020 8594 1095.

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See Arc's **Pact** mini-documentary on **YouTube**: <http://youtu.be/3nrl3wMp6e4>

Watch Arc's **Boy X** trailer on **YouTube**: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iuOull5jKJE>

Contact Arc for the **Boy X** Briefing Document and details of the forthcoming new programme **Girl E** - the third in Arc's **Blade Trilogy** by Clifford Oliver

Pact is commissioned by British Transport Police



and supported by the MPA, the MPS and Barking & Dagenham Partnership

