

Boy X by Clifford Oliver

A theatre performance and workshop programme designed for young people aged 12 and above, focused on gangs, bullying, knife and violent crime.



Boy X by Clifford Oliver - The Programme

Directed by Carole Pluckrose

Story developed by Clifford Oliver and Carole Pluckrose with Jordan Barrett, Troy Glasgow, Lee Vassell and Tendayi Jembere

Four boys stand at a graveside. Boy X is dead. Another 16-year old is murdered. The cycle of revenge begins again.

Boy X is a new play, the third in the acclaimed **Stereo Trilogy** by Clifford Oliver, following **Stereo** and **To Die For**. The characters and initial story ideas were developed through workshops drawing upon real experiences of living on gang-dominated estates.

The play, written for young people aged 12 and above, powerfully explores the pressures and influences on young people to get involved. Whilst there may be no easy solutions for knife crime and gang violence, **Boy X** is a story of hope, personal responsibility, imagination and the power to change.

Project Brief

1. About Arc Theatre

Arc Theatre 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*.

Over the past 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.

2. Boy X by Clifford Oliver

2.1 Project Scope

Boy X is a powerful performance piece and workshop programme focused on knife and violent crime and its impact on individuals, families and communities. The project is designed for young people aged 12 and above and can be delivered in a range of settings from schools to youth centres and special events. It works excellently as an intervention to complement and support local strategic approaches to tackling knife crime. Live drama has a unique ability to engage young people at a personal and emotional level, offering

them an insight into experience through the eyes of immediately identifiable characters. Arc has been working for over ten years to write and produce new performance-based projects with and for young people about the causes and impact of violent crime. **Boy X** was conceived in late 2008 as a direct response to the tragic number of young people who have lost their lives to knife crime. It was developed through workshops with a group of young professional actors who themselves have direct experience of living on gang-dominated estates and have been touched personally by the impact of knife crime. All of the actors are personally committed to direct involvement in prevention projects, and understand the value and importance of their roles as slightly older peers in positively influencing young people.

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. As at June 2010, **Boy X** has been performed over 110 times and seen by over 13,000 people in this wide range of settings, including ground-breaking public performances at Waterloo Station for London Week of Peace in September 2009.

The focus of the play and the follow-up workshop discussion is on the very real and painful impact of the brutal murder of 16-year old Xane. The audience meets his family and friends at his funeral and the subsequent wake at his home, and directly experience their shared suffering. Through the developing story, the piece explores the power and influence of those involved in or at the fringes of crime in encouraging involvement from younger children and teenagers in initially low-level activity. It examines the ease with which some young people are exploited and the fine line some find themselves treading. It touches on the self-created boundaries of different gangs and the potential dangers and impact of straying outside the 'zone' or 'postcode'. The play explores the power of belonging and misplaced allegiance, with the potential consequences played out in front of them.

Boy X is highly visual and physical and uses as its key mechanism the empathy and authenticity of the four young characters, creating the space for a genuine learning process within a safe setting.

Ultimately, the play is one of hope and resolution, which encourages young people to think about and take action to protect themselves and their peers in a positive way.

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

2.2 Optional Additional Workshops

The additional accompanying workshops for smaller groups (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 and knife carrying. It offers 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 **Boy X** team is led and managed by an experienced Education Director and includes four young 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 **Boy X** for young people in nightclub settings etc., and recommend an evening event/performance for the community/family in each area prior to the programme.

3. 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 are all 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.

4. Examples of Feedback from Performances of Boy X

"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

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*"I was fortunate enough to be invited to a performance of **Boy X** at ECI Music Project youth club and I must say I was blown away by it. A young man (ex-offender) who I work with (I was his mentor) came along with me and was moved to stand up and speak at the end and it has made a massive impact on his life."*

Charli Faux - Education Researcher to Diane Abbott MP for Hackney North & Stoke Newington

(In direct response to London Gang Crime, Diane said in a debate at Westminster on 6 April 2010: *“Gangs have become more brazen, less fearful of arrest and we are seeing more girls joining gangs, and as a result becoming victims of crimes such as gang rape. The problem can no longer be ignored. Gangs now exist in some of the richest postcodes in London and are carrying out attacks in broad daylight. I will be pushing for more emphasis on gang crime to make sure we tackle this problem sooner, rather than later.”*)

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“The whole year group was gripped. It also gave the students who are often on the social fringe precisely because they live in more deprived areas the opportunity to become ‘experts’ in something. Lots of these pupils who normally shy away from answering questions or only receive attention for negative things (fighting, getting excluded, being ‘hard’ etc.) were putting their hands up and having their opinions heard and validated by their peers and by adults. It was really encouraging!”

Teacher, The Cherwell School, Oxford

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“I was privileged to be in the audience last evening and to experience such a powerful drama, performed by four compelling young men.

I really hope that engaging with our young people at risk through such drama, complemented by the standing up of good role models, in homes, wider families, and the community, will see a way out of the descending spiral of senseless activity, violence and killing.”

Robin Field-Smith MBE - Retired HM Inspector of Constabulary (Personnel, Training & Diversity)

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*“And your drama, your theatre, is theatre for change. **Boy X** holds a mirror up to us and shines a light, making us see ourselves and the need for change. It shakes our complacency and moves our hearts.*

What could be more valuable than that? It is truly inspirational work, coming from the community and working directly with the community. It sets up the meaningful dialogue we desperately need if yet more young people are not lost to us.“

The Rt Hon The Baroness Scotland of Asthal PC QC

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5. How to Book Boy X by Clifford Oliver

5.1 Tour Dates

The **Boy X** programme tour is available for bookings from **September 2010 - March 2011**.

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

5.2 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.

5.3 Venue

Boy X 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 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.

5.6 Technical Requirements

Boy X 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 also 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.

5.7 Timings of Performance Session

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

*Subject to timetabling

5.8 Fees

Single performance and facilitated discussion (Maximum 90 minutes)	£1,800 plus VAT
Two performances and discussion sessions on the same day in the same venue (Maximum 90 minutes per session)	£2,400 plus VAT
Five consecutive week days of performances and discussions (10 performances)	£9,500 plus VAT

Ten consecutive week days of performances and discussions (20 performances)	£17,500 plus VAT
Stand-alone additional extended workshops sessions for a maximum of 30 participants (Maximum 90 minutes)	£600 plus VAT

NB All fees are subject to a capped travel and accommodation supplement outside M25:
£350 where a single day event and one night accommodation is required
£1750 per week (i.e. five nights accommodation for five cast members)

For further information or to enquire about booking the **Boy X** programme, please contact
Education Director, Natalie Smith at nat@arctheatre.com or call 020 8594 1095.

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