

# Stereo

written by Clifford Oliver

directed by Carole Pluckrose

workshops facilitated by Joss Bennathan

## support notes for teachers

arc  
theatre for change



# about the Stereo programme

**Stereo** was commissioned in 2004 by the criminal justice agencies of Avon and Somerset. The programme consists of a performance of the play and a participatory workshop which explores the themes and issues provoked by the play.

The main objective of the programme is to use the performance as a catalyst for engagement, debate and conversation with and between young people about personal responsibility, motivation, decision-making and choices. They do this through examining the decisions and choices made by the characters in the play, and this in turn offers opportunity for reflection about their own choices and decision-making process.

## play synopsis

**Stereo** tells the story of Carlton, a 16 year-old black teenager who, increasingly disconnected with school, begins to play truant and subsequently gets involved in gangs, drug dealing and violence. This in turn leads him to murder a boy from a neighbouring gang in a turf war. The play follows Carlton's journey through the Criminal Justice System where he is eventually charged and given a custodial sentence in a YOI.

For Carlton, fitting in and belonging are very important and he searches for this through his involvement with the gang. In the absence of a father, Carlton is also unconsciously looking for a replacement in the older men of the gang. He is also affected by the desire for immediate gratification through consumables; clothes, mobile phones, cars etc., which have come to symbolise his identity at an unconscious level.

**Stereo** deliberately exposes and confronts the stereotype of the young, black 'gangster' and asks questions about the roots and impact of this experience. It looks at what can happen when people are labelled and how often people unconsciously live up to the label and fulfil the expectation. The play shows the way in which each action leads to a consequence that Carlton may not have chosen, had he known the effect.

**Stereo** also looks at themes around knife-carrying and attitudes to this amongst young people. It challenges commonly held beliefs among some that it is acceptable to carry weapons as a form of self-defence.

## about the workshops

The workshop that accompanies the performance uses participative drama techniques and introduces a range of explicit communication skills enabling young people to devise alternative strategies that Carlton could have used to interrupt the cycle of cause and effect that he is caught in. This process also gives participants the opportunity to see the situation from a range of perspectives, which in turn can impact on their own lives, choices and decisions. The drama allows them to become advisers and take on the mantle of the expert.

Taking place in the same space as the performance, the **Stereo** workshop is led by a senior Arc facilitator and may involve discussion, re-playing some key moments and hot-seating some of the characters in the play. The precise format will vary according to the size of the group (100 being the maximum for effective work). Teachers are required to be present throughout the programme.

## learning objectives

- ◆ Personal responsibility
- ◆ Strategies for conflict resolution
- ◆ Understanding of cause and effect
- ◆ Insight into the Criminal Justice System and the agencies within it
- ◆ Intervention strategies
- ◆ Understanding and respecting difference
- ◆ Understanding of the impact of their actions on other people

## think again

On the following pages are some questions raised by students who have watched a performance of **Stereo**.

Now that you've had some time to think about the play, what are your opinions and thoughts?



**Did Carlton's mum do enough to help him?**



**Is Carlton's mum strong enough to deal with Carlton?**



**Does Carlton's mum listen to him?**



**Is Carlton bad?**

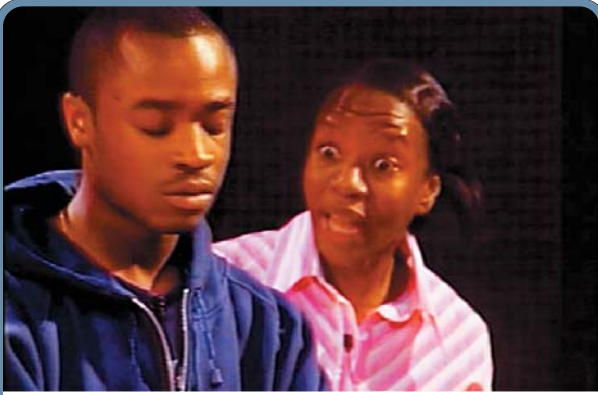


**Imagine you are Carlton. Why are you so aggressive and confrontational?**



**Imagine you are Carlton's mum. Why do you keep on comparing Carlton with his younger brother? Is that a good thing to do?**

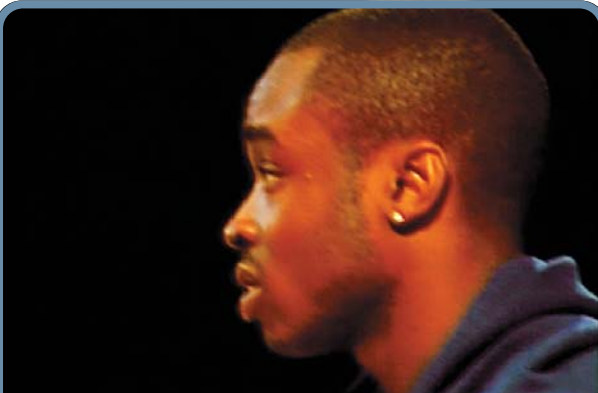




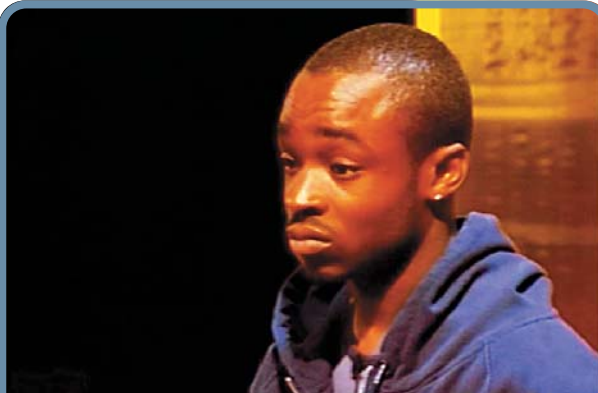
**Imagine you are Carlton.  
Do you listen to your mum?  
Explain yourself?**



**What made the author  
write the play?**



**Why does Carlton feel he  
needs to join a gang?**



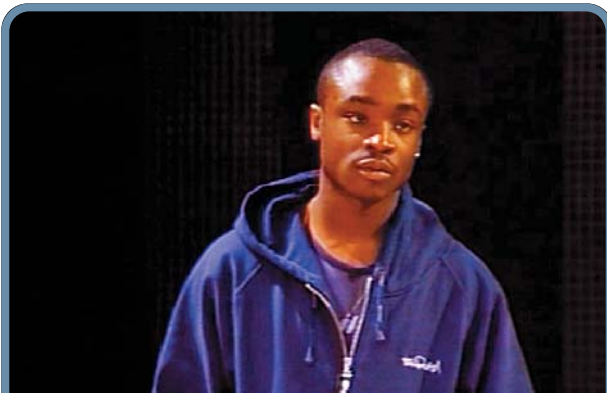
**Why does Carlton go back to  
the gang after going to prison  
the first time?**



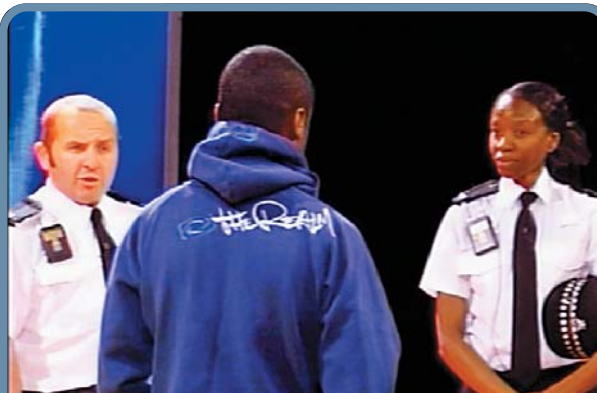
**Imagine you are Carlton's mum.  
Why did you work so much?  
Perhaps you should have been  
at home more?**



**Imagine you are Carlton.  
Are you sorry for what  
you have done?**



**If Carlton's father was like the electrician do you think he would still have turned out bad?**



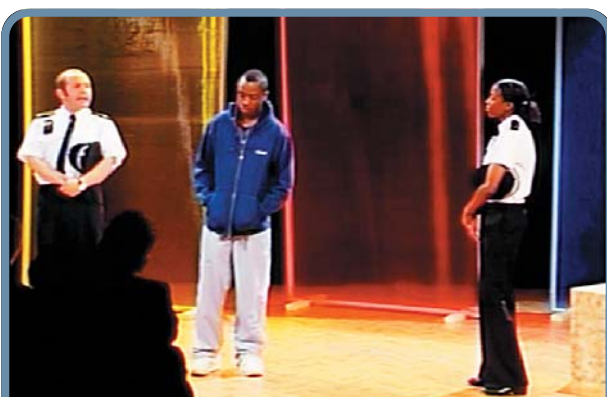
**Are the police officers in the play realistic?**



**Why do you think Carlton started bunking off school? Is that where it started to go wrong?**



**Does the policeman see Carlton as a stereotype?**



**Carlton tells the police that his youth worker Mike Miller is useless. Do you agree with that?**



**Can the police do anything to help Carlton?**



What do you think about Carlton's attitude to the police?



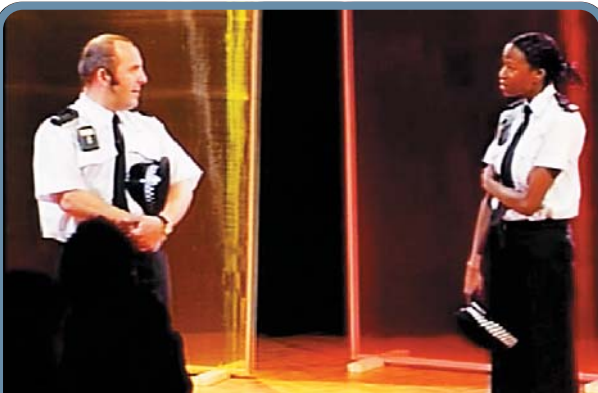
What do you think the policeman means when he says that "Eugene is a nasty piece of work"?



Imagine you are the policeman. What do you secretly think about your colleague?



Imagine you are the policewoman. What do you secretly think about  
a) Carlton?  
b) your colleague?



Do you think that Carlton's attitude of 'no grassing' under any circumstances is right?



If the electrician had had more time with Carlton, could he have turned him around?





**Imagine you are the electrician.  
What do you really think  
about Carlton?**



**Would Carlton have turned  
out different if his father  
had been around?**



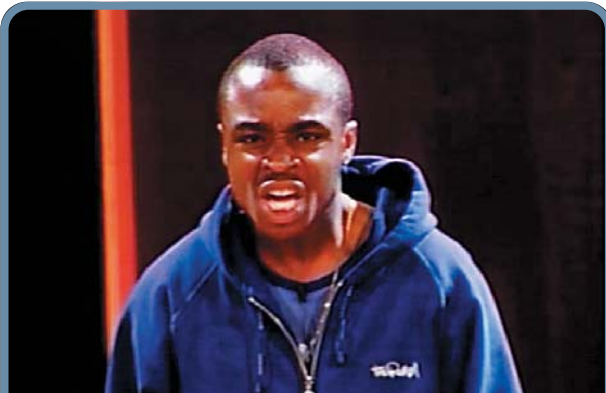
**Imagine you are Carlton.  
Are you right to back up your  
brother if he gets beaten up?  
What else could you do?**



**Should Carlton have been  
helped earlier in his life?  
Who could have helped him?**



**What was the turning point  
in Carlton's life?**



**What does Carlton do next?**



# about Arc

Arc is an educational theatre company set up in 1984 to create powerful theatre and drama based learning experiences with and for young people in schools and non-statutory settings.

For many years we have worked in very close partnership with schools to develop projects that complement their work and act as a catalyst for learning and understanding. During this time we have worked in hundreds of schools and with thousands of young people up and down the UK and abroad. At the heart of what we do is the recognition of the need to create safe places and situations in which young people can explore issues important to them.

Our wide variety of theatre pieces include core themes such as racism, bullying, conflict resolution, interpersonal skills and communication, emotional intelligence and all areas of diversity. You can read more about our programmes for education on our website at [www.arctheatre.com](http://www.arctheatre.com)

## **Carole Pluckrose** - Chief Executive Officer/Artistic Director

Carole is a theatre director committed to creating powerful and emotionally connecting stories through theatre. Carole concentrates on the development of theatre and story-based work into a range of innovative partnerships with public and private sector organisations in a variety of learning environments.

## **Clifford Oliver (Olly)** - Creative Director

Olly is Arc's Creative Director and Lead Facilitator. In 1984 he discovered his passion for storytelling, which led to the co-founding of Arc Theatre, a vehicle through which he could experiment with developing and creating his story-based work. Olly has gone on to write over thirty original plays for Arc, including the highly successful trilogy *The Football Plays* (which Olly created in partnership with the visionary HSBC team).

## **Joss Bennathan** - Associate Director

With extensive experience and a notable reputation in Drama in Education, Joss has devised and compiled many of the learning resource materials that accompany Arc's plays and videos. An Ofsted Inspector, school advisor and former teacher, Joss delivers many of the Company's INSET courses for teachers and often leads Arc's Forum teams. His books, *Developing Drama Skills 11-14* and *Performance Power* are widely used in schools in the UK and abroad.

With thanks to Mike Vance of Hackney Learning Trust for creation of the original resource. **Stereo** support notes and images © Arc Theatre 2006

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