

Chalk Line Theatre Presents
The Chaos That Has Been And Will No Doubt Return
by Sam Edmunds

"I swear if this town gave out a collective breath of exhaustion, buildings would shake across the whole of England."

About the Play

Set in one evening and unfolding in real time, CHAOS crackles with linguistic vigor which hurls at a rapid pace. Following protagonists VOICE and Lewis, two 16 year olds just out of school, CHAOS aims to capture the beauty of youth against the harshness of the environment. Set against the backdrop of the post 2008 financial crisis, in a time of austerity, depletion in housing and the rise of immigration, we follow these boys on one chaotic adventure that patrols in real time through the underbelly of Luton. Lewis lives with his single mum, a nurse who works nights, and he has ambitions to go to university and give her a better life. VOICE however can't see a future for himself beyond Luton, *"we are about three steps from knocking at poverty's door"*. He is destined to work in his parents garage in order to *"keep a roof over their head"*. All the adults in these boys' lives want to *"live better than this"* but times are tough, and they live in a place curdled by disappointed dreams: *"People round ere walk as if they are being held back"*.

The future looms large and it's scary, but at the forefront of that journey is a party, the moment VOICE has been waiting for that can only happen if underage booze is secured. A series of madcap events unfold as we dive into this odyssey set in the underbelly of Luton and often underscored by Nicki Minaj or Sean Paul. The story aims to capture the beauty and nostalgia of growing up in the early noughties, the discovery of youth from first kisses, to crappy shots of gin, whilst honing in on the celebration of brotherhood between two boys who are desperately optimistic and hopeful about what the future could hold. Their environment however seems to pin them back, which is highlighted in the narrative climax when one of the boys is eventually stabbed at the house party by an antagonist who has been stalking the boys throughout the story. He doesn't die though. He goes on to chase his dreams, whilst his attacker lives in severe remorse for his actions. After all *"no one is built to take a life, it's the environment we are born into that makes us do that, and it's about time that changed"*. It's based on Sam Edmunds' lived experience and the stories of those he grew up with. It's an uplifting tale that uses hope as a radical art.

CHAOS analyses how easily young people can be drawn into challenging and conflicting circumstances, when they are surrounded by issues, such as hostile county lines and personal austerity in the face of a lack of government support. The show simultaneously is an entertaining hilarious evening at the theatre set to an early noughties soundtrack that contrasts the exhilaration of youth to the very real dangers of gang violence and knife crime. It focuses on how a life full of potential and that's bursting with energy, can all come to an end in an instant if the wrong decisions are made. It aims to speak for young working class people across the UK.

The story will continue playwright Sam Edmunds' vital work interrogating the pressures young people from disenfranchised communities experience. Following the success of his debut play Testament made in collaboration with the charity CALM, Sam hopes to shine a light on a sudden re-ignition of knife crime that seems to be rising amongst working class communities across the UK, now labeled as a national epidemic. As of the latest study into knife crime violence in March 2023, offenses involving knives have risen by 6% totalling to 47,300 cases across the UK, 26% of which took place in/around London alone & 18% of these convictions were for people aged 10-17.

About Chalk Line Theatre

Chalk Line Theatre is a multi-award winning company based in Luton which tours nationally and internationally.

Chalk Line's work is both thematically and visually ambitious, receiving great critical acclaim on their approach to contemporary theatre-making.

As a company they look to experiment with form, by tackling socio-political subject matters in an innovative way that is ultimately challenging yet entertaining. Chalk Line's work is often the result of lots of research and development and periods of devising with playfulness at the heart of the company's approach. Their shows combine physical expression, ensemble narratives and intricately bold designs, and are often multi-disciplinary drawing from theatre, film, music and dance.

Beyond the stage Chalk Line deliver workshops on devising political theatre, writing and producing in schools and youth theatre groups, whilst also providing discounted theatre trips for young creatives to see their work. They have collaborated with Artsdepot, NGYT, Hat Factory Luton and NT connections, among others on their outreach programmes.

Play Information:

Running Time: 1 hour 20 minutes.

No interval and no re-entry. We strongly advise that you arrive early and take your seats in advance of the start time as there is a no latecomers policy.

Age Guidance: 13+

Content Guidance:

This production contains explicit language, descriptions of physical violence and knife crime, references to alcohol consumption and underage drinking, some sexual references, brief depiction of a non-consensual sexual act, strobe lighting and haze. To ask any specific questions about the content, please get in touch and we will provide you with the necessary information.

Workshop Plan

This is the 2 hour version of the workshop that can be condensed according to the group. The timings given for each exercise can be adapted according to the needs of the group. The sessions will be lead by facilitators Vikesh Godhwani and Nina Ndwaba (who is also a trained drama therapist). When Nina isn't available for a workshop, Vikesh will also take on a pastoral role after being advised by Nina. The need for this is due to the sensitive nature of certain themes in the show.

Ice-breakers/Improv Exercises - 30 minutes

1. Fun game to get the group energised (Zip Zap Boing)
2. Walking around the space exercise - Up, Down, Jump, Stomp and Opposites - get some movement going and concentration
3. What Are You Doing? Improv exercise where someone is in the middle of the space and has to do an action. The next person asks them what they're doing and they say the next thing so the second person does that action. It can be as imaginative as possible eg. "feeding my pet giraffe".

Play Discussion - 30 minutes

1. Elicit the characters from the play and write them down on a flipchart/board
2. Elicit the plot points from the class and write them down on a flipchart/board
3. Elicit how the story was told and discuss that with the class - Multi-roling, direct address, the set and the different compartments, the actors' energy, the dancing, the music, the party etc.
4. Elicit the different themes that emerged from the play and what they could relate to as young people. Here talk about the climax of the play and about the incident in the play and what the characters could have done differently. Here we can talk in depth about violence and the harder topics in the show. Talk about the theatrical devices used to depict the incident and why it was done in that way.

There might be an additional section of using sculpting and tableaux work before the devising exercise if it's seen that the group need more guidance.

Devising Exercise - 20 mins

In groups the participants will be prompted to reimagine events from the situations in the play where things could go differently that will allow them to enact scenes in relation to avoiding violent situations such as how to advise your friend not to carry a knife or how to tell a friend to avoid conflict at a party. Vikesh and Nina will go around and guide the class as they work on the pieces.

Sharing of scenes - 10 mins

Here the class will share the scenes they made and we will talk about what struck us from the pieces with the class. Maybe we can make links to the play here as well.

Knife Crime Resource Discussion 15 mins

Here we will share the knife crime resource made by Ben Kinsella with facts regarding the law and the implications of carrying a knife and discuss it with the class. We might discuss what actions might you take to prevent a hostile situation? How do you remove yourself from danger? What steps can you take to avert danger away from you? How do you support a friend in a moment of crisis? How do you deal with anger?

Check Out

15 mins for a check out where everyone says how they felt about the workshop/watching the play and any questions the class may have about knife crime, the play, the process, the themes discussed etc.