

Pre-Show Information

An Oak Tree



Written and Directed by Tim Crouch

Contents

Page 2: Introduction

Page 3: Show information, including running time and content warnings

Pages 4- 5: The auditorium, including access information

Pages 6-9: Show summary

Introduction:

This document contains detailed information about the show in order to describe what you should expect when attending.

This includes information about the content warnings, plot, space, lighting and sound, audience participation, and further access information.

All of the information in this document was correct at the time of publishing.

More information will be available closer to the time of performance.

Please note that by discussing the content of the show, **the below information will contain key plot points and descriptions of what happens in the performance.**

If you would like to receive elements of this information **but avoid these spoilers, please do not read the section at the end of this document entitled 'Show Synopsis'.**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our Box Office team:

E-mail: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: 020 7922 2922

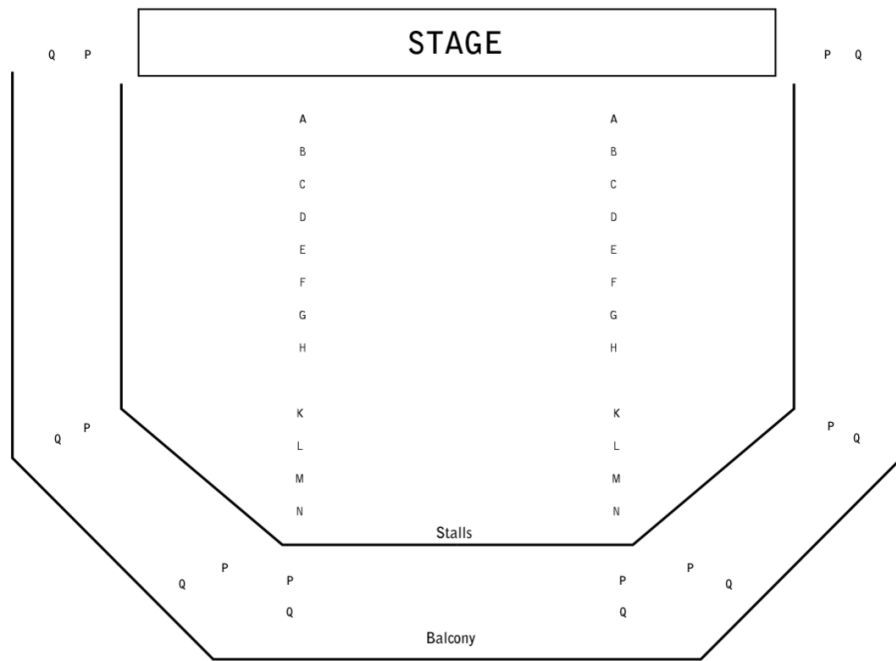
Show Information:

Running Time: 1 hour and 15 minutes

Content warnings:

- Death of a family member / child
- Grief
- Strong language
- Discussions of suicide

The Auditorium



An Oak Tree

This show will take place in our main auditorium, which is the larger of our three performance spaces.

For this performance, the space will be in an “end on” arrangement, meaning there will be seats on one side of the auditorium facing the stage.

Access to the main auditorium is via the upstairs doors (rows K - Q) and downstairs (rows A – J) via the main doors. Rows S & T are in the gallery also accessible via the upstairs doors. Our ushers are on hand to help you, they wear red t-shirts and jumpers with our logo.

Please arrive at the Young Vic with your ticket ready on your phone. You could also print your ticket in advance of your visit, or you can collect your ticket from our Box Office.

Facilities:

There are toilets located on the ground and first floor at the Young Vic, via The Cut Bar. We have gender-neutral and accessible/baby changing toilets. Sanitary bins are available in all.

Building Accessibility:

All indoor venues are accessible with lifts & ramps and toilets provided.

Assistance Dogs:

Assistance dogs are always welcome at the Young Vic, if you are planning a visit, please let us know in advance which performance you will be attending by calling our Box Office on **020 7922 2922** or e-mailing boxoffice@youngvic.org and we will be happy to look after your dog during the show.

Access for all:

For full information about our access measures, please visit our Access For All page, on our website here: www.youngvic.org/visit-us/access-for-all

Show Synopsis:

Potentially upsetting themes

Loud noises

Please note that elements of this production are improvised, and therefore we are not able to assure audiences of the full content warnings.

Tim Crouch invites an actor to come out of the audience and onstage. The actor has earphones which they will put in and take out throughout the show. He introduces them to the audience and explains that this actor will be performing a play they have never read before. Crouch will feed the actor lines throughout the show. The two read a short scene where the actor asks how much freedom they have. Tim Crouch explains the script is set, but other than that the actor has total freedom over their choices.

Tim Crouch lays out the scene. His character is a hypnotist in his late fifties doing a show. The actor is playing a father in his mid-forties named Andrew Smith. **Andrew has volunteered to be a part of the hypnotist's act, three months after the hypnotist hit and killed Andrew's daughter Claire with a car.** Crouch explains that his hypnotist character will not recognise the father, as they have both changed a great deal in the 3 months. Tim Crouch establishes the audience are on the actors' side. Crouch then addresses the audience, letting them know he is going to ask for audience volunteers, but they should not respond. The actor returns to the audience, and the play begins.

Loud music plays while Tim Crouch sets up the stage with multiple chairs in a line. Crouch then enters as an extravagant hypnotist character doing a show. He promises them that there will be no lies in the show, and there is no one planted in the audience to be volunteers. He continues by saying the volunteers will not be asked for any secrets or asked to do anything sexual. He explains there are a few people that cannot be hypnotised: those who are pregnant, under 18 or

“mentally unstable”. He puts some music on and dances while he waits for volunteers. Eventually the actor he spoke to at the beginning of the show comes up in character as Andrew and sits onstage on a piano stool in the centre of the chairs.

Crouch changes the music to street sounds and sits down next to the actor. He describes the scene for them as Andrew; he is sat on the side of the road at the site of where Claire was killed. He calls his wife Dawn and his younger daughter Marcy picks up. Crouch performs the lines Andrew would say, filled with grief for their lost child.

Crouch returns to the flamboyant hypnotist character. He asks the actor questions and feeds them answers as they pretend to be multiple different volunteers. Crouch jokes with the different volunteers.

Crouch asks the actor to return to the piano stool in the centre and put on the earphones they are wearing. He changes the music to street sounds. He speaks into his mic, and only the actor can hear through their earphones. The actor begins to act on what Crouch is telling them, moving their arms. Crouch changes character back to the hypnotist, giving the actor instructions aloud which they act on. Crouch begins to remove other imagined volunteers from the stage who are not successfully being hypnotised. He then gives the actor and his remaining imaginary volunteers an instruction which the actor does not do. He begins to antagonise the actor, while simultaneously feeding them lines like “please help me” and “I can’t move my arms”.

Crouch once again speaks to the actor in low tones so the audience can’t hear. Crouch goes to the back of the stage. The actor walks forward and lays down on the floor. We hear a passing vehicle. Crouch removes 2 more chairs from the stage, miming to the audience as if he is speaking.

Soothing music begins to play, as Crouch returns to his hypnotist character, telling the actor to imagine they are relaxing on a sandy beach as they remain laying on the ground. Crouch then asks the actor and the 2 other imaginary participants to get up and return to their seats. Crouch tells the 3 participants that when he plays the next track, they will think they are playing the piano onstage at the Royal Albert Hall. The music begins, and the actor mimes playing the piano. Crouch tells them to only stop when they hear the word “sleep”. Crouch returns to his

hypnotist character and sends the two remaining imaginary volunteers offstage. He begins to insult Andrew, who is still pretending to play the piano, swearing at them and telling them to stop.

Crouch says “sleep” and turns off the music. The actor stops miming playing the piano. Crouch’s hypnotist character is angry, convinced that Andrew has been sent up as a joke. He begins to use his hypnotic suggestion cruelly, telling the actor’s character that they will believe they are naked, have soiled themselves, and have killed a little girl. Crouch then breaks character and tells the actor to follow the hypnotist’s instructions and only stop when they hear “sleep”. Crouch’s hypnotist character then makes the actor act out the events that led to the car crash that killed the little girl. He has the actor repeat the phrase “I wish I were dead” over and over, until Crouch finally says sleep. The hypnotist confronts Andrew, asking him why he is here, and Andrew admits to being Claire’s father. The hypnotist finally recognises him and falls to his knees.

Crouch breaks character and tells the actor it is the end of Act 1. He gives the actor a piece of text to perform alongside him. The duologue is from the perspective of Andrew and the hypnotist, both recalling the night Claire was killed.

Crouch thanks the actor and gets them to return to the scene before the break with Andrew and the hypnotist. The actor now has a script to follow. In character, the hypnotist apologises to the audience, telling them the performance is over. Andrew is still hypnotised, thinking he is naked and has soiled himself, and the hypnotist tries to explain and apologise but Andrew won’t believe him. The hypnotist goes along with Andrew and pretends to clean him off and dress him.

Andrew then reveals that he believes he killed a girl driving. The hypnotist tries to explain that it was them who killed someone. Andrew seems confused, telling the hypnotist that Claire is still alive, and he needs help with something.

Music begins to play, and Crouch breaks character, speaking to the actor in their earphones again. The actor delivers a monologue as Andrew, explaining his experience of dealing with grief at his daughter's death. Andrew describes the experience of going to the site of the accident which we saw at the beginning of

the show. He explains that he feels he turned the tree by the roadside into Claire, keeping her alive.

Crouch returns in character as the hypnotist and goes to get Andrew a drink. Street sounds begin to play, signalling to the actor they are once again to be Andrew at the roadside where Claire died. Crouch comes back on stage out of character, gives the actor a glass of water and asks them to sit on the piano stool at the centre of the stage. He has a quick chat with the actor out of character, asking them what they think will happen in the plot of the play. The two return to their characters. **Andrew is still asking for help and admits he has thought about committing suicide.**

Loud music plays, breaking us out of the scene.

Andrew then performs a scene with Crouch acting as Andrew's wife Dawn. Andrew delivers a calm guided meditation speech, while Crouch as Dawn simultaneously delivers an angry speech full of grief and blame.

Piano plays. We return to Andrew and the hypnotist character. Andrew still believes the hypnotic suggestions, for example that he can play piano. Crouch breaks character and takes the script from the actor.

Street sounds play as we return to the site of Claire's death at the roadside. Crouch is playing Dawn, Andrew's wife. Crouch performs both Andrew and Dawn's lines. Dawn wants Andrew to come home and accept that Claire is dead.

Crouch goes back to the character of the hypnotist and gives the actor a script for Andrew. Andrew is now feeding the hypnotist lines. Andrew tells the hypnotist to say he is sorry, and then to say he must pack up his show. The hypnotist tells Andrew there was no piano, but Andrew stubbornly insists it was real, clearly unable to accept reality.

Crouch breaks character, giving the actor their final script. The two deliver a final duologue. Crouch's speech is from the perspective of the hypnotist, and the actor's from the perspective of Claire.

If you would like any further clarification or have any questions, please do get in touch with our Box Office team.

Email: boxoffice@youngvic.org

Phone number: **020 7922 2922**

See you soon!

Welcome Team