

STORYHOUSE

DNA

BY DENNIS KELLY

20 & 21 JULY 2024

PERFORMED BY STORYHOUSE YOUTH THEATRE (AGES 14-17)

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is my
Microphone
ON?



By *Jordan Tannahill*

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Care Pack

What is a care pack?

A care pack is designed to give you information to know if you will be affected by any of the themes covered throughout the show, and suggestions as to where to get help and resources. We will highlight potentially difficult subject matters, and point you towards places of resource that will be able to help. We will also highlight our accessible performances.

Please note there are plot spoilers throughout this document.

Access information

These shows will be in the format of a double bill.

DNA will be performed first (60 minutes), there will then be a 20 minute interval, followed by a performance of Is My Microphone On? (50 minutes).

Captions will be available throughout the performances either on a TV screen (DNA) at the front of the stage or projected onto a large screen situated at the back of the stage (Is My Microphone On?).

Venue Information

Storyhouse is located in the centre of Chester – just next door to New Chester Market and Chester Cathedral – within easy reach from local transport hubs and just a short walk away from all city centre locations.

Our building is open for all, 7 days a week – and we pride ourselves on creating an accessible and welcoming hub for our local community to work, study, socialise and collaborate.

The performance will be located in the Garret Theatre on the fourth floor of the building.

For a visual guide of Storyhouse, please visit:

storyhouse-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/uploads/2023/07/SH_Storyhouse-Access-document_V3-002.pdf

DNA by Dennis Kelly

What is DNA?

DNA is a play by Dennis Kelly, written in 2007. The story follows a gang of teenagers as they struggle to cover up their involvement in the death of their classmate.

Age Rating

This play is recommended for PG 13+

Production Warnings

Loud noises and moving/flashing lights.

Content Warnings

Bullying

In part I, the character, Adam is severely tormented and tortured by the characters Jan and Mark as part of a cruel hazing ritual. This includes verbal and physical abuse (physical abuse of Adam is depicted using shadow silhouettes).

Gang membership

Throughout the play there are themes of gang membership, including peer pressure, threats, illegal activity, shouting and violence.

Youth Violence

In Part I, Leah commits self-strangulation.

In Part III, we see a character covered in fake blood.

In Part III, Cathy slaps Brian across the face.

In Part III, Phil puts a plastic bag over Brian's head (with Brian's consent) for several seconds and Brian begins to suffocate then Phil removes the bag.

Attempted Suicide

In part I, Leah asks Phil "*sometimes I wonder what you would do if I killed myself, right here in front of you. What would you do?*" and then she tries to suffocate herself with a pillow and strangle herself with her hands and cardigan.

Bereavement

From the beginning of the play, it is assumed that the character of Adam is dead. The word dead is used frequently. In Part III, the character Phil instructs the character Brian how to kill someone, he demonstrates by putting a plastic bag over Brian's head for a several seconds.

Sexual language

In Part I, Phil and Leah watch a nature documentary about Bonobos. The voice over recites in graphic detail all the different ways that bonobos have sex; "*Partner-swapping, men and women, women and men, women and women, men on men, fathers, mothers, oral sex, group masturbation, sub-dom, inter-racial, bestiality*"

Swearing

Swearing and profanity occurs throughout the play.

Summary

The play is divided into 4 parts, below is a detailed description of what happens in each part (contains spoilers!)

Part I

Mark and Jan, warn Leah and Phil, a couple, that their group needs to get together and talk. The anxious, existential Leah and the silent Phil follow Mark and Jan to a small woodland area where they all meet up with Lou, John Tate, and Danny.

John Tate is clearly the leader of the group and the others seem terrified by his influence. Danny is a strait-laced student who worries that whatever has happened will impact his plans for his future. Lou is a pessimistic character who's certain they're all doomed.

Soon Richard, Cathy, and Brian join the group, and Richard announces that one of their schoolmates—Adam—is dead. As the story of what happened to Adam unfolds, it becomes clear that Mark, Jan, and several others tormented and tortured Adam as a kind of hazing ritual after the boy expressed interest in being their friend. The group's pranks escalated in intensity and danger until Adam fell into a mine shaft at the edge of town. The others now assume he is dead and begin devising ways to cover up their inadvertent murder of their schoolmate.

Phil speaks up and rolls out an elaborate plan to make it look as if Adam has been kidnapped. The others are shocked by the specificity of Phil's plan, but he seems confident it will work. As the scene ends, however, Leah worries that their group is in big trouble.

Part II

Leah's existential thoughts intensify, and she wonders what the purpose of human life on Earth is. She reveals to Phil that she killed her pet, Jerry, for reasons she can't determine, even as she admits that in the four days since Adam's disappearance, things at school have been better socially.

Elsewhere, back in the woods, Danny reports that the man their group described in their false police report as Adam's kidnapper has been detained and brought into custody. Cathy reveals that she has secured DNA evidence against the man by going to a local post office and looking for a man matching the description Phil urged them to provide. Lou and Leah are outraged, and Danny insists they can't let an innocent man go to jail.

Brian, who made the original police report, is terrified of having to go back to the station to identify the "suspect," but Phil warns Brian that there will be serious consequences if he doesn't do as he's told and go confirm the man's identity.

Part III

Mark and Jan come upon Leah and Phil. Leah is reminiscing about Adam's memorial service, which was held recently. Leah expresses her worry for Brian, who has been so upset that he's been heavily medicated, and for John Tate,

who hasn't been seen in weeks. Mark and Jan bring Leah and Phil to the woods—there has been more news. In the woods, Cathy, Brian, Phil, Leah, Mark, Lou, and Jan stand around a boy with a horrible head wound. Phil instantly recognizes the boy as Adam and greets him. Brian explains that he and Cathy found Adam living in the woods with no memory of what has happened to him. Adam explains that he's been living on leaves and raw rabbit for several weeks. He is clearly in physical and mental distress and has no idea who he is or where he comes from. Phil asks Adam if he wants to come back to society, but the boy doesn't answer. Phil orders Brian to take Adam back to the place he's been living, then orders everyone else to go home and keep quiet about what they've seen. Leah begs Phil to get Adam some help, but Phil warns her that their lives will be ruined if they expose what they've done. When Brian returns, Phil instructs him to take a plastic bag and go play a “game” with Adam—he shows Brian how to effectively strangle Adam and kill him for real this time. Leah begs Phil to stop, pointing out that Adam is alive. Phil retorts that if everyone already thinks Adam is dead, it doesn't make a difference if they kill him “again.”

Part IV

Characters discuss Leah's disappearance—they haven't seen her in a long time and have heard rumors she's switched schools. Richard and Phil, meanwhile, sit together in a field and discuss how their school's social environment has changed. Their conversation seems to suggest that Phil has left school. Richard begs Phil to come back, but Phil doesn't answer his friend. Richard describes a “big wind of [dandelion] fluff” he saw earlier that day and says it made him think about life on other planets and the purpose of existence. Phil sits silently, unable to respond.

Sign posting & Resources

If you have been impacted by the content or themes of DNA, please seek the below resources or organisations who can support you.

Young Minds offers practical support and advice for young people being bullied. [Mental Health Support For Young People | YoungMinds](#)

Cam Crisis Messenger text service provides free, 24/7 crisis support across the UK. If you are experiencing a mental health crisis and need support, you can text CAM to 85258.

Support Messenger can help with urgent issues such as: Suicidal Thoughts, Abuse or Assault, Self-Harm, Bullying, Relationship issues

[Announcing CAM Crisis Messenger - Cameron Grant Memorial Trust \(camgrant.org.uk\)](https://www.camgrant.org.uk)

SafeCall is a confidential service to support young people on the edge of gang activity or who might be involved in gang activity. SafeCall is open 9am – 11pm, 7 days a week. Simply call or text 116 000 to be put in touch with our SafeCall Team. SafeCall will give you a non-judgemental, safe space to talk about their experiences in confidence.

Samaritans runs the largest UK based helpline for people experiencing a mental health crisis. Samaritans can be called free any time, from any phone, on 116 123 for free.

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

Bereavement Help Point at Storyhouse is a volunteer led support group for anyone who is bereaved or supporting someone who is bereaved.

[storyhouse.com/whats-on/bereavement-help-point/](https://www.storyhouse.com/whats-on/bereavement-help-point/)

Mind offers signposting for a variety of Bereavement Support Organisations who can best support you if you are grieving a friend, parent, sibling or other loved one.

[Support and self-care for grief - Mind](#)

Is My Microphone On? by Jordan Tannahill

Written in 2021 and performed by youth theatres across the UK as part of the National Theatre Connections Festival, *Is My Microphone On?* is a chorus of

performers holding the audience to account and inviting them to experience a new world together.

Content Warnings

The climate emergency

Swearing

Adult themes and strong language

The use of a homophobic slur.

Discussions of intimacy, mental health, sexual references, and reference of addiction.

Production Warnings

Loud noises (such as sirens) and flashing lights.

Age Guidance

13+

Synopsis

Young people cannot avoid the consequences of climate change. In this urgent and lyrical play, they reckon with the generations who have come before them. They hold the audience to account for the broken world they have inherited, questioning the choices that have been made, and the ones that they will yet be forced to make. *Is My Microphone On?* is both a declaration of war and a declaration of love, a play in the form of a protest song, in which a chorus of young performers reckon with the generations who have come before them, questioning the choices that have been made, and the ones that they will yet be forced to make

Sign posting & Resources

If you have been impacted by the themes or content of the play, please refer to the below organisations who can offer support.

Climate Psychology Alliance offers space to discuss the climate emergency through their in-person or virtual climate cafes; a simple, hospitable, empathetic space where fears & uncertainties about our climate & ecological crisis can be safely expressed.

[Climate Psychology Alliance Events - 10 Upcoming Activities and Tickets | Eventbrite](#)

The Proud Trust and Chester Pride provides support for people who might be experiencing discrimination due to their sexual orientation through befriending, group support, one-to-ones and a live chat function.

[Chester Pride | LGBTQ+ Events](#)

[The Proud Trust - Home of LGBT+ Youth](#)

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Support Messenger can help with urgent issues such as:

Suicidal Thoughts

Abuse or Assault

Self-Harm

Bullying

Relationship issues

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phone, on 116 123 for free.

[Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy. | Here to listen](#)

Mind provides a range of services to support with a variety of addictions.
See their website for support

[Drug and alcohol addiction - useful contacts - Mind](#)