

INFORMATION FOR AUDIENCES

INSPIRED BY THE TRUE STORY

PUNCH

BY

JAMES GRAHAM

**BASED ON THE BOOK *RIGHT FROM WRONG* BY
JACOB DUNNE**

**DIRECTED BY
ADAM PENFORD**



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Welcome to this production guide for *PUNCH*. This resource is designed to support audiences in their understanding and exploration of the production. You can also find the Audience Guide [here](#), which offers more information about your visit to the theatre including accessibility, and self-care suggestions for watching the play. There is also an FAQ section which answers questions about the story and the real-life events that took place.

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You can also find out more information about the production in our [two education resources](#): Learning Guide: Staging *PUNCH* and Learning Guide: PSHE. These have been created to support students and educators but all audience members are invited to explore the resources.

This guide was written by Susie Ferguson and commissioned by the West End production of *PUNCH* which played at the Apollo Theatre from 22 September - 29 November 2025. *PUNCH* was produced in the West End by KPPL Productions, Mark Gordon Pictures and Eilene Davidson Productions, in association with the Young Vic and Nica Burns.

PUNCH was commissioned by and premiered at Nottingham Playhouse in May 2024, and transferred to the Young Vic in March 2025.

With special thanks for their input into this guide: Alec Boaden, Alexandra Fay Braithwaite, Robbie Butler, Jacob Dunne, Anna Fleischle, Nicola Fowler, James Graham, Julie Hesmondhalgh, Tony Hirst, David Hodgkinson, Gavin Hudson, Shalisha James-Davis, Emma Pallant, Adam Penford, Leanne Pinder, Joan Scourfield, David Shields and everyone who made the production.

All production photography by Marc Brenner.



PUNCH is dedicated to the memory of James Hodgkinson and all victims of one-punch. James dedicated his life to the helping and healing of others. His 28 years were a testament to his outlook and values - a volunteer, a mentor, a paramedic. He was loved by his family and friends, and gave love in return.

Theatre can and should be a restorative space of empathy, and increased understanding. We hope to honour and do justice to the man James was.

James Graham

TRIGGER WARNINGS

PUNCH is a visceral, high impact production which deals with a number of sensitive subjects. The information below is designed to help you prepare for your theatre visit.

CONTENT WARNINGS

- Strong language.
- References to violence, death, bereavement, alcohol and substance misuse, and mental health.
- Knives on stage.
- Based on real life people and events.



Photography by Marc Brenner

PRODUCTION WARNINGS:

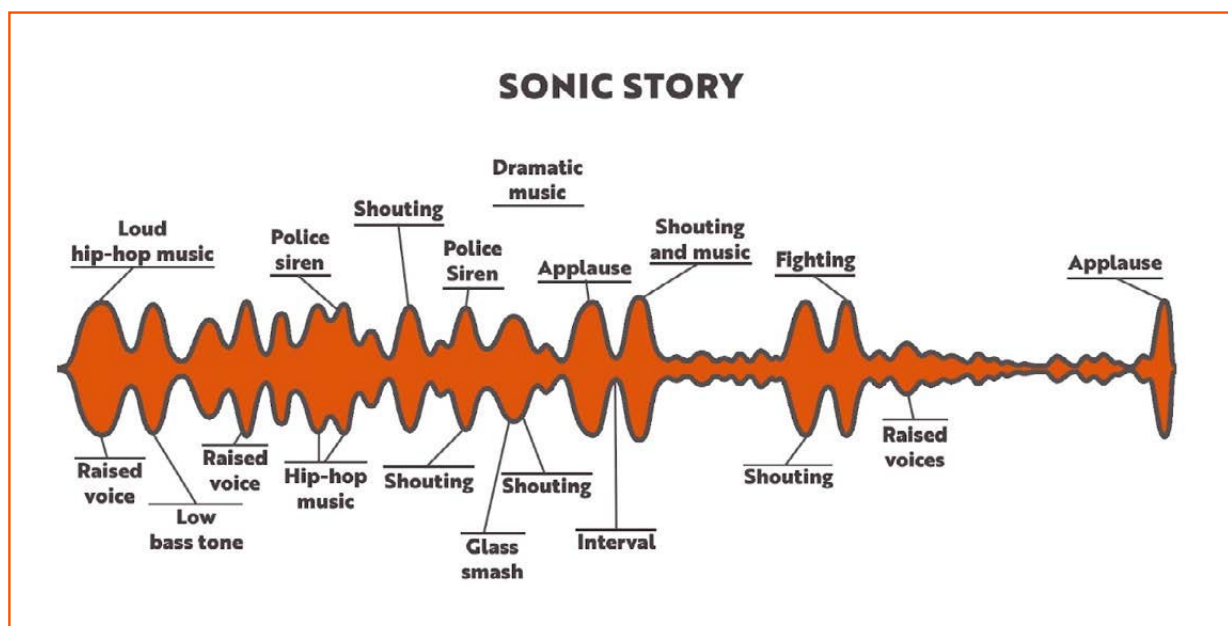
**Loud
music
throughout**

**Flashing
lights
throughout**

**Strobe
lighting**

**Sudden
noises**

**Theatrical
smoke and
fire/flames
effects**



THE STORY OF *PUNCH*

PUNCH was written by James Graham, and inspired by Jacob Dunne's book *Right From Wrong*. In 2011, Jacob was sentenced to 30 months in prison for the manslaughter of James Hodgkinson. James was in Nottingham with his father, brother and friends to watch a cricket match at Trent Bridge. Following an encounter between his group and Jacob's friends, Jacob punched James, who fell to the floor. James died nine days later.

James' parents, Joan and David, sought answers about what had happened that night and pursued the route of Restorative Justice (RJ) - a process through which victims of crime and its perpetrator communicate. Although the process cannot undo harm, it is a way of moving forward and providing an opportunity for healing. The process is voluntary and is carefully facilitated by skilled and highly trained RJ practitioners, and participants can withdraw at any time. The organisation involved in this particular case is [Remedi](#).

After beginning the RJ process, Jacob returned to education, eventually gaining a degree in criminology. He is now a public speaker, educator and campaigner. You can hear his podcast *Right From Wrong* [here](#), and his BBC Radio 4 series *The Punch* is available [here](#).

THE STYLE OF THE PRODUCTION

PUNCH is based on a true story. Many of the characters are based on real people, whilst some others are combinations or representations of other people who were involved in some way. It is also important to remember that, for dramatic purposes, the timescale in which events take place is reduced. For example, the time between Joan and David asking to take part in RJ and their meeting that took place with Jacob took over two years, during which time facilitators from Remedi worked with both parties intensively.

In the play the character of Jacob often uses direct address - a way of speaking straight to the audience. He is the narrator of his story. However, *PUNCH* is about more than one person. David, Joan and their son James are also important characters in this narrative which examines a range of themes such as class, violence and masculinity, criminal justice and the importance of communication and belonging.

The play is non-naturalistic - it does not try to depict events realistically, including the physical violence within the story. Instead, the lighting, sound, music, costume and performance all invite the audience to engage their own imaginations as they watch.

Nicola Fowler, the Deputy Director of Remedi who is represented in the play says, "The simplest way of explaining Restorative Justice is that it's about communication. It's about helping people who have been affected by crime to have the opportunity to talk about what happened and hopefully find some way forward. RJ gives them a chance to ask questions and explain the impact of what's happened to the person who is responsible and get answers to those questions that only that one person can answer."

You can see the cast of PUNCH talking about Restorative Justice [here](#) and you'll find details of a range of RJ organisations and other support on the next few pages of this information pack. You can also find out more about Restorative Justice in our Learning Guide - PSHE.



The production is a visceral and emotional piece of theatre. Audiences often have strong emotional reactions, sometimes audibly. The production has offered opportunities for adults and young people to engage in important conversations about the issues it raises. We encourage you to talk about and discuss your thoughts and feelings with friends and family, but recognise that some audience members may wish to pursue additional support. You can find a list of organisations and sources of information below.

SUPPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE & THEIR CAREGIVERS

- [Just For Kids Law](#) advocates for young people to ensure that their rights are respected and their voices are heard.
- [The Mix](#) is an organisation which supports young people with support and information including issues such as relationships, drugs and alcohol, education and mental health.
- For young people living with a parent who is dependent on drugs and/or alcohol, [The Children's Society](#) provides a list of sources of support.
- [Barnardo's](#) provides support for young people who have a parent or relative in prison.
- [The Runaway Helpline](#) can help young people who are thinking of running away, who have already run away or who are away from home because of gang involvement. They have a comprehensive range of resources to help, as well as having a confidential helpline.

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

- [Frank](#) is an organisation which provides information about drugs and can be contacted by phone, via online chat, text or email. Frank can also signpost to sources of support in your local area.
- [Alcoholics Anonymous](#) supports people in their recovery and sobriety.
- [Narcotics Anonymous](#) is a group in which its members help each other to become and stay drug free.
- For those affected by a loved one's use of substances, and those bereaved as a result of drug use, [Addiction Family Support](#) can provide help and guidance.

MENTAL HEALTH

- [Young Minds](#) fights for a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health. Use this link to find help and information for dealing with emotions and supporting positive mental health.
- [With You](#) is a mental health, drug and alcohol charity. Their website hosts a wide range of information as well as signposting local services.

LAW, RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND VICTIM SUPPORT

- [Victim Support](#) is an organisation which supports people who have been the victims of crime. Their website provides information and guidance about their services. The [website](#) also has a 'leave this website' feature which redirects to the Google homepage should users be concerned that someone else may see them looking at the website.
- [PACT](#) is an organisation which works with prisoners, people with convictions, and their families, throughout the justice process. This includes court proceedings, imprisonment, and the subsequent release and reintegration into the community.
- [The Longford Trust](#) provides scholarships to serving and former prisoners to study at university and provides mentoring and employability support.
- [Oasis Restore](#) is a youth justice organisation which focuses on restoration and therapeutic approaches to improve the life chances of young people in custody.
- [The Common Ground Justice Project](#) is creating space for a new kind of conversation on crime and justice. By listening to voters, victims and communities, the project bridges divides and invites people from all walks of life to help shape a safer, fairer Britain.
- [The Forgiveness Project](#) collects and shares stories from victims or survivors of crime, and those of perpetrators, focusing on how they have rebuilt their lives after experiencing hurt and trauma.
- [Why Me?](#) is a national charity which delivers Restorative Justice.
- Remedi, the organisation involved in the Restorative Justice for Joan, David and Jacob can be found at their [website](#). You can also email enquiries to them at rj@remediuk.org.
- The [Restorative Justice Council](#) is the independent membership organisation for Restorative Justice.
- [Appeal](#) is a charity and a law practice that fights miscarriages of justice.
- [Catch 22](#) works with both young people and adults providing intervention, rehabilitation and victim services in prison and in the community.
- [Calm Mediation](#) is a London-based organisation which provides mediation services in a variety of settings including the education system, residential neighbourhoods and for families.

POSITIVE INITIATIVES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

- [Support Through Sport](#) use sport to engage young people, empowering them to develop positive lifestyles and avoid influences which will be detrimental to their wellbeing.
- [Growing Against Violence](#) work to safeguard young people and prevent youth violence.

- [Football Beyond Borders](#) is an education and inclusion charity which uses the power of football to change the lives of young people.

DOMESTIC ABUSE AND SOCIAL CARE

- [Refuge](#) provide help and support for women and children experiencing domestic abuse.
- [Change Grow Live](#) supports a range of different issues including justice, physical and mental health, and substance use.
- [St Giles Trust](#) is a charity which helps people who have been held back by abuse, the criminal justice system, homelessness and poverty.

ORGAN DONATION

- Full information about NHS Organ Donation can be found on [this website](#). You can find out about the law surrounding donation, and how to opt out of the scheme, as well as information and guidance regarding faith and funeral arrangements. It also provides information about blood donation and how to be a living donor for donations such as tissue, bone marrow and platelets.

FURTHER RESOURCES

- Jacob's TED Talk which is referenced in the play can be found [here](#): Transformative Justice | Jacob Dunne | TEDxYouth@Bath.
- A Guardian article about Joan and Jacob's relationship can be found here: [My son's killer and me: grief, pain and the power of forgiveness after a one-punch death | Theatre | The Guardian.](#)
- A Guardian article about Jacob's book, Right From Wrong can be found here: [The man who killed a stranger with a single punch, and then turned his life around | Youth justice | The Guardian.](#)



Photography by Marc Brenner