

Cracked

The insanities of modern Britain laid bare

Written by
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For Collective Encounters' Transitions Project, from material and ideas developed in workshop rooms across Merseyside; and drawing on contemporary documentary materials.

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THE BLURB

Stark, exciting, important theatre for the twenty first century; the latest offering from Collective Encounters is not for the faint hearted.

Visually stunning, with a unique physical language and steam punk aesthetic, Cracked wants you to sit up and take notice. Loud music, shocking stories, powerful performances. The insanities of modern Britain laid bare, the casualties of austerity and inequality speak out. And it's harrowing. But when things are at their worst, there's only one place they can go...

THE SETTING AND COSTUMES

Traverse or Thrust staging. Upstage is defined by a scaffold structure; one audience bank is used by company, with the band situated on set. A couple of lanterns, the odd torch or rusty working lantern are attached to them, adding the occasional atmospheric lighting. Two follow spots are operated from behind the audience. A smoke machine is used at appropriate points throughout. A mirror ball hangs somewhere on the set. Perhaps the playing space is defined by a beautifully painted floor cloth, or perhaps simply by a quadrant of police tape.

A bendy scaffold ladder, a battered metal dustbin, an abandoned shopping trolley and one of our soap boxes form the set and offer a variety of heights, shapes and blocking options which can be both abstract and indicative of a range of places within the city. Nothing is quite as we would expect. There is a subtle steam punk aesthetic running through the set: a dystopic present.

This aesthetic continues into the costumes, which include labels, appendages and weights that reflect experiences of the core characters and seem to hinder their ability to tread softly through the world. However, in reality they do not impede movement. Some of these labels etc. can be removed at appropriate points.

SOUND AND MUSIC

Loud, clamorous, persistent. Music is hard, loud, punky. Urban soundscape is used – noisy gulls, traffic, vendors, buskers, shop doorway music etc. etc. Silence, when it comes, is used carefully – peace, quiet, in the mind and the environment. An elaborate steam-punky large hand held mic and stand are set up by the band.

Audio description will be woven throughout and integrated into the action. The signer is located with the band, moving into the playing space as required.

CHARACTERS

THE CHORUS: A small group of actors with one leader. Flexible in size from show to show, but ideally a minimum of 2. The Chorus is a fusion of classical influences (Greek; Shakespearean etc.) with contemporary performance poetry and critical commentary. Sometimes they speak in verse; their language is poetic and lyrical. They set the scene and comment on the action. They also contribute to the physical action of the piece, both as performers and through audio description. They always acknowledge the audience, sometimes directly addressing them, but even when performing ‘a scene’ they don’t pretend to a fourth wall. For emphasis some words and phrases are signed by the chorus as well as spoken; and they have their own physical language – occasional tics/unison movements that heighten the delivery of the words and add visual interest – nothing elaborate, subtle but beautifully executed.

CHORUS LEADER (CL) carries a small hard backed book – small enough to fit in one hand, but large enough to be useful. In it is all his script, but also on the first page is a scene breakdown. If any of the company forgets where they are at any point or are not sure what comes next, they should calmly and in neutral walk to the **CHORUS LEADER** and hold out her/his hand. The **CHORUS LEADER** will pass the book so that the company member can check what they need and then give it back, and return in neutral to their position.

PHIL: Late 40s. Warehouse manager, worked his way up. Separated with 3 kids. Not a bad man, but under a great deal of stress and poised to snap. No criminal record, but a history of getting into fights when he was younger. Been working out a lot since his wife left so is strong and fit.

MICHAEL: About to turn 40. Very vulnerable and utterly lost in the world. No family, lost touch with friends, sleeping rough. No idea where he's going or what he's going to do.

BARRY: Late 50s. Works zero hours contracts in a city centre Tesco Express. Lives for his wife and ten year old twins – married late and treasures them. Keeps his head down and is fearful of the world.

MULTI-CHARACER COMBINATIONS:

SANDRA / MICHELLE

STACEY / TESS / PAULA

DIMITRIUS / JASON/

FRANK / JOE

OTHER CHARACTERS (Gender for all but Nadia may be changed):

TOMMY TAYLOR (Played by THE CHORUS LEADER)

CHARLIE JONES

NADIA CORNWALL

SOURCE MATERIAL

References for all direct quotes and additional source material will be collated for the programme/website.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

SCENE	PAGE	READ TIME	RUN TIME	NOTES
EPISODE 1: Prologue	6	:	:	
EPISODE 2: The City	10	:	:	
EPISODE 3: Falling Through the Cracks	13	:	:	
EPISODE 4: Living Newspaper #1	19	:	:	
EPISODE 5: A Slice of Life	24	:	:	
EPISODE 6: Living Newspaper #2	27	:	:	
EPISODE 7: Crackety Cracked	29	:	:	
EPISODE 8: The Burning	39	:	:	
EPISODE 9: Living Newspaper #3	46	:	:	
EPISODE 10: Epilogue	48			

EPISODE ONE: PROLOGUE

As people arrive they are warmly welcomed by the actors and crew – hands shaken etc., delighted they've joined us and are going to be part of the evening. Audience members have a sense that they are part of something special. Actors just as selves, not as characters, although they are in costume. Each audience member is given a quiz card and asked to fill it in before they go through – a completed card will be collected on entry to the performance space in place of a ticket (the two people on the door will each hold a small 'ballot box' for audience members to post in. The quiz card has 2 questions and will be used later in 'Crackety Crack'. (Crew will analyse data during the show in advance of the scene.)

As the audience enters the performance space they notice the CHORUS LEADER and two members of the CHORUS sitting on a bench in a bus stop (i.e. the bendy ladder) having a great time. They are street drinkers and they are having unmitigated fun. Dancing, laughing. Watching the world go by. Taking their time, enjoying themselves. They are playful and good-natured with the audience as they enter – perhaps some audience members will join in and play along – actors are not intentionally intimidating although some audience members might find them so since they are clearly drunk, drinking and edgy. A cardboard placard (like one a beggar might have) is propped against the bus stop, it reads 'PROLOGUE'.

When the show is about to start (or sooner if needs be) the Stage Manager comes and moves any audience participants along to leave the three street drinkers on their own once more. The audience takes their seats. The CHORUS adopts a gentle tableaux in which they loll and drink until...

A siren is heard. The CHORUS snaps into a new pose: upright, sharp, awake, ready for action; highly stylized. They all turn their heads sharply on a Q to engage a different section of the audience. For the CHORUS LEADER think John Cooper Clarke meets Laurence Olivier!

CL We, ladies and gentlemen, are The Chorus. And we are mightily arrayed.

CHORUS We thank you most sincerely for joining us today.

CL We'll take you on a journey through troubled, dark terrain.

CHORUS But with your help we hope to find a guiding light again.

CL So don't be scared, but do prepare, we need you more than ever.

CL&C The time for change is near at hand, we must all work together.

Drum beat. The 3 stand up in unison. [NB CHORUS perform tiny random movement in unison on the words 'austerity', 'meltdown', 'mad' below.]

CL Ever wonder if perhaps austerity is an ideology and not a necessity?

Drum roll and crash, during the roll the 3 move quickly into the next position (half way to the dustbin). Stop on crash.

CL If maybe the financial meltdown is being used to justify dismantling the welfare state?

Drum roll and crash, during the roll the 3 move quickly into the next position (standing by the dustbin). Stop on crash.

CL Ever thought that maybe the world was mad, and not you?

Drum roll and crash, during the roll The CHORUS LEADER is helped to step inside the dustbin. Stop on crash.

CHORUS *(Announcement)* The chorus leader has climbed into a dustbin.

Drum roll and crash, then into the song. The music is very loud making the audience jump. The song is a punked up, electric version of Inside Out. The lights change, the follow spots swoop. THE CHORUS stand in position by the bin, watching as the singer steps out of the band takes the mic of the stand and walks to centre stage. Two follow spots snap onto her. As she starts to sing, one of the spots moves to light the SIGNER.

SINGER *[She speaks]* A mysterious woman in a fabulous dress takes a mic and walks centre stage. *[Then sings]*

Everyone thinks you just put the drugs down.

If only.

You're always a prisoner in your own mind.

Unhappy.

Walk a day in my shoes if you want to.

Judge me.

Restricted confused isolated and scared.

Tiny.

I'm on the outside looking at life happening
around me.

Loveless and desolate loneliness
crucifies me.

I'm worth more than this I've learnt to say no.

Connecting.

Eyes wide open limitless hear the
birds sing.

I had to change people, places

Playthings.

Celebrating, reconnecting.

Celebrating hear the birds sing.

Celebrating, reconnecting.

Celebrating hear the birds sing.

The song crashes to its end and the singer returns to the band, full lights come back up. CL is reading from a small hard backed battered book, as a preacher delivering his sermon, still standing in the dustbin.

CL Shall I paint you a picture, ladies and gentlemen, of a land full of grace and beauty; diverse in its ecosystem and its people, its ideas and opportunities? A land full of hope and potential.

Or shall I paint you a picture of a land blighted by inequality? Where the rich are getting ever richer and the poor, poorer. Where divide and conquer politics set the “have-nots” against their neighbours; and the needy and vulnerable fight for the scraps.

In short, a land of opportunity for all?

CHORUS Or a land of privilege for the few?

CL A land where all walk tall?

CHORUS Or a land where the many get screwed?

A pause while he considers which story to tell

CL Let us walk forth my friends into a land of despair, alive to its unpalatable truths. Let us confront its demons. But let us walk forth with hope in our hearts. For who knows but that beauty may be hidden in the shadows.

EPISODE TWO: THE CITY

Music snaps in and the stage erupts into action. Actors move onto the stage in a wave from their audience bank. CHORUS members join in. The 'Prologue' sign is replaced with a 'The City' one. Sound wise it is overly loud and disorienting. The soundscape sets the time for the scene, which should be no more than 3 mins. The piece kicks in with the opening of the Arctic Monkey's song A Certain Romance playing up to 0:37 ish at which point it melds into a sound scape of the city – the music/sound scape gives a timing structure to the piece – the sound scape tells the time of day and builds in all the noises of the busy city. At the appropriate moment the end sequence of A Certain Romance emerges from and overpowers the soundscape, but the soundscape continues beneath – almost a fight between them (kicking in at 3:51 in). The whole thing becomes an overwhelming cacophony that continues to just before the end of the song at which point a siren pierces the air and then hangs in the silence.

Punctuating the soundscape and rising above it is occasional audio description of the physical action. A female voice, exaggeratedly whispered – a stage whisper but amplified - as if trying to speak intimately to one individual – a person audio describing to someone close without wanting to disturb anyone else. But the voice has an effect on it (hint of loud hailer a la Sgt. Pepper's).

The scene is a visual feast, which communicates the speed, pressure and constant switched on-ness of modern life; the violence and isolation of the city; and the changes in the city during the course of a day/night. It makes the audience feel dizzy, they don't know where to look. Strong, powerful physical imagery and choreographed movement. Upstage centre and visible to all sits MICHAEL in his sleeping bag, unmoving throughout the non-stop busy physical action. Head nodding. Half asleep. A plastic cup in front of him with a few coins in it. Everyone else plays many different roles. Both PHIL and BARRY are included (but these are the last characters that those actors play in the sequence). Different characters reactions

to MICHAEL are incorporated into the physical narrative. As day turns to night the place changes from a street full of busy, isolated, screen-focused office workers with sounds of gulls and traffic to a sex-in-doorways, vomiting-in-gutters, verge-of-violence place with a disorienting cacophony of sound. Different physical effects, techniques and tempos are used. Props and appendages may be used to differentiate between characters. At the sound of the police siren the company freezes in a tableaux.

We will later realize that this is the opening tableaux for THE BURNING. Phil is weaving through the crowds, drunk and staggering. He is carrying a large bottle of vodka 3/4 full (occasionally drinking from it) and is on his phone listening to Coxy. It is clearly a very difficult phone call. BARRY stands downstage right silently eating a bag of curry chips, waiting for the bus. He's wrapped against the cold. He is a good distance from the action. Other actors fill the spaces between, creating a powerful snapshot of the city at night turning ugly. A sense of urgency, panic.

The following V/O is fragmented and broken up throughout the action, inserted as appropriate. It may at some points describe actual actions/things that we see, and at others enhance the action.

V/O We're in the city. Early morning.
 Sad, tired faces on buses to the minimum wage.
 Streams of people filling spaces.
 Swiping, pinging, talking.
 Shopping, working, walking.

 The day wears on, the flow continues.
 One man blows bubbles.
 A kid kicks a dog.
 A woman throws pepper.
 A preacher sells god

The city spins and races.

But time stops for one man. He sits in his sleeping bag, head nodding, on the cusp of sleep. He must be cold.

Passers by pretend not to see or actively sneer; some toss a coin others steer clear. They think they are not like him.

The city whirls around him.

Later and later.

Tired now, but racing home – kids to cook, dinner to collect.

Drinking, dancing, distraction, relaxing 21st century style.

The bump and grind of the late night city

Dante's Third Circle of Hell.

When the siren's after-sound has finally left us, the company move simultaneously, at a 6, so that the stage is quickly cleared with actors moving to next positions. During this process a solitary drum beat (like a death march) gives an underscore. 'The City' sign is replaced with 'Falling through the Cracks'. Michael alone does not move.

EPISODE THREE: FALLING THROUGH THE CRACKS

CL sits/kneels in a shopping trolley on a battered cushion. Michael remains in the same place. Three other actors are dotted around the space, and one is in the audience, each engaging particularly with a different bank of audience and sitting in a tableaux that is illustrative of the physical and psychological health/state of their first character (Sandra, Stacey, Frank, Demetrius).

CL Now we'll meet some people who've fallen through the cracks
 The vulnerable and voiceless, the ones who can't fight back
 So please give your attention to their tales of woe and strife
 And see if you would wish for them a better kind of life.

A musical flourish. Lights are up full, but the CHORUS LEADER carries a torch, which he uses confidently in his dramatic introductions of each of the characters. The CHORUS LEADER'S smooth tones and lyrical introductions contrast sharply with the images we see.

V/O The Chorus Leader is sitting in shopping trolley on a battered cushion. He reads from his book.

Musical notes, flourishes or phrases reappear throughout to punctuate and support the narrative, but not too much – informed by the song at the end of this episode.

CL adopts a persona - for inspiration www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Z0FEzE5AJs - the bit I'm talking about comes in at 2:10, but it's all worth a watch for choreographic moments and general fabulousness throughout – imagine it with a steam punk aesthetic!

CL At twenty Stacey's lost it
 Her baby girl's been taken.
 And Frank has took to drinking

The army's left him shaken.
Demetrius is lost at sea
It's not the dream he'd hoped for.
But Sandra's doing better,
She's safer now she's dirt poor.

The multiple characters we meet below retain the rhythm of the lines, but do not deliver 'poetically' – instead they are all very honest, making truthful disclosures, feeling all of the emotions for real. Michael engages the audience directly in his naturalistic monologue. All actors except Michael, CL and the actor who has just shared their story speak in unison as part of the CHORUS. They shift from being in character to being upright in posture and clipped in delivery. As soon as the line is spoken they adopt the physical posture of the character they are next to play. Lines come in quickly on their Qs.

Sandra has a northern but not Scouse accent.

SANDRA However bad this gets

CL She says

SANDRA It's not as bad as that.
 He put me hand in't' chip pan fat.
 He hit me wi' a baseball bat.
 He called me stupid. Ugly. Slag.
 I can't go back. I can't go back.

CHORUS Intentionally homeless!

CL No help for you.

V/O (as from THE CITY) And still the man sits in his sleeping bag. He is Michael.

MICHAEL I worked in a warehouse straight from school. It was a bit boring, but we had a laugh. I lived at home to help my dad look after my mum - which was alright.

FRANK Got back from Afghan, couldn't settle.
PTSD. Flashbacks. Drinking to forget.
Wife kicked me out. Mum kicked me out.
Sofa-surfed a little.
Now I'm camping out.

CHORUS Non Priority!

CL No help for you.

MICHAEL I was only paying board, so I'd plenty for pints at' weekend. Mum had me saving a bit. And I had my pride and joy - my red Nissan 200SX. Ten years old when I got her, but nothing on the clock.

TESS I'd my foot amputated and six joint replacements ops.
I've arthritis through and through, so moving hurts a lot.
My car's my life line – for work and for play.
Without it I can't imagine where I'd be today.

CHORUS Under new guidelines you're 'Fit to Move', you'll loose the car.

CL No help for you.

MICHAEL The day before I turned 30 Dad died. Totally out of the blue. Mum had always been the worry so it was such a shock. Hit and run. Killed instantly. And everything changed.

JASON It's all my own fault so fuck off with your pity.
I had it all and chucked it all away.
But I'm not a druggie, I'm not like them scum;
I was a structural engineer me, bright as they come.
A few mistakes, a bit of a flutter
Just need a bit of help to get myself together.

CHORUS Non Priority!

CL No help for you.

MICHAEL I had to give up work to look after mum full time. I got the carers allowance and I'd got my savings so we got by. I missed work to be honest, you know, the messing and the banter. And I couldn't get out really, 'cos mum needed me 24/7. So I lost touch with everyone.

MICHELLE We got evicted 'cos I couldn't pay my rent.
I was working two jobs but the money wouldn't stretch.
Minimum wage just isn't enough
And with the new rules I lost my top ups.
Now the kids are at mums and I'm in a hostel.
Can't see a way out, keep feeling I've lost it.

CHORUS We'll put you on the waiting list, but I wouldn't hold your breath.

CL They've sold off all the housing stock, there's very little left.

MICHAEL And then mum died. It totally knocked me out. It had been a long time coming, but that doesn't make it any easier does it? My world just fell apart.

PAULA I just wasn't coping, it wor all too much.
Crying and lifeless, stressed and anxious.
I was harming myself to try and feel real,
But they just gave me pills and that made me ill.
No coun'ling or support, just more and more pills;
I still couldn't cope, I c'unt pay my bills.
So I slipped through the net and nobody saw.
What's the point? I don't fit. I can't take any more.

CHORUS Nothing we can do. Mental Health Services are stripped right back.

CL Try attempting suicide then perhaps they'll act.

MICHAEL I told the council she'd died, 'cos it was a council house we were living in, and they sent me an eviction notice. Because my name wasn't on the tenancy they gave me four weeks to move out. By this time my savings had run out and when mum died of course they stopped her DLA and my carers allowance. It was just one thing after another. Like getting hit by a train over and over.

JOE I'm on my own with two kids since my wife passed away.
I work full time and I do me best but I still can't pay my way.
It's bad enough just getting by on zero hours contracts,
But since they've cut my benefits you wouldn't believe the impact.
No school trips and no new shoes, breakfast club for t'kids
Food bank every week now, what sort of life is this?

CHORUS Not long now...

CL A few more years and there'll be no welfare state left.

MICHAEL I was living in my car. Keeping myself to myself. Washing in McDonalds toilets. Trying to keep it together. I slept a lot. But then one night some kids knocked the windscreen in with a bat. I was scared to death but I managed to get out the door and run for it. Just kept running til I couldn't run anymore. Started sleeping rough after that. [pause] And here I am. (*Shakes head in disbelief*)

CL Homelessness has doubled and suicides gone up
Benefit cuts have slashed and burned
The poor and weak are fucked
The council's lost half of its budget
So more people fall through the cracks
The human cost of austerity
Its not done yet, you best watch your back.

A beat and then BAND LDR calls One, Two, One, Two, Three Four. And loud punk music deafens us and from the band. The singer stands holding her mic on its stand, using it to effect. Actors move underneath into their next positions. Random physical quirks and dance steps are performed in unison interrupting their flow. The 'Falling through the Cracks' sign is replaced with 'The Daily Profit: a Living Newspaper'.

SINGER You are not safe
It could happen to you
It happened to me
And to her and to him
To Sally, Peter
Stevie and Jim
He was a teacher,
She cared for her mum

He left the army
He's on the run
She escaped violence
He broke down,
She was a care leaver
He had to leave town
He worked at Tesco
She ran out of Luck
All have their stories
But who gives a fuck?

Stops abruptly. A moment, then the music returns keeping a beat underneath the following.

The singer returns to her place in the band; the actors stand.

EPISODE FOUR: LIVING NEWSPAPER #1

CL Echo!

ALL Echo!

The actors move as one to form a tight cluster centre stage: a posse of newshounds/ paparazzi interviewer types. Facing in all directions. They call out their headlines, with voices of news vendors.

1 Rough sleeping's doubled and homelessness up by a third!

2 Disability benefit cuts for half a million people!

3 3% of UK workers on zero hours contracts!

4 80% of homeless report mental health issues!

5 Record number of families evicted by private landlords!

6 Over a million visits to UK food banks last year!

CL Echo!

As CHORUS LEADER speaks the company breaks the tableaux. One actor remains in position (THE NEWSCASTER) but now has a microphone in his/her hand, speaks with a hint of old fashioned newsreels. One actor sits in front of THE NEWSCASTER intently watching the news. The others clear to the sides.

NWSCSTER Inequality in the UK has reached new heights, recent studies show. While the UK is one of the richest countries in the world one in five people live below the poverty line, and more are being pushed into poverty every day. With low pay and poor working conditions, having a job is no longer a certain way out of poverty.

While benefits cuts have saved around 12 billion a year; tax fraud still costs the government 16 billion!

Throughout this the watcher has been completely engaged, becoming more and more incensed by what s/he's hearing and wanting to hear more but at this point music breaks in (the start of Crackety Crack) and four actors rush forward in best 'game show host/celebrity' manner. One heads for the NEWSCASTER the others get in between NEWSCASTER and the watcher – a human barrier. The watcher tries to see round them but they move about preventing him – he calls out 'get out of the way' 'I want to hear what's next' etc. – the celebs are charming but insistent, playing to their audience. The NEWSCASTER tries to continue with the following, but the other actor is taking him/her by the arm and gently, but firmly, escorting him/her away. S/he tries to shout the following over the music but is drowned out and trails off.

NWSCASTER Across the globe, the number of billionaires has doubled since the financial crisis yet almost 800 million people go to bed hungry.

When he realizes it's too late the watcher collapses back defeated and watches the celebs instead – very fast paced, glitzy.

CELEB 1 (Female) Eat like a pig and stay size zero! [*selfie pout*] Read my “how to” bulimia guide, books available now! [*fake smile*]

CELEB 2 (Female) 10 top tips for when you're crawling towards payday! [*selfie pout*] At 10, vacuum pack your used knickers and sell them on Ebay. At 9, work shifts on a sex chat-line. For more, buy the magazine! [*fake smile*]

CELEB 3 (Male) How do I get my kicks, drug fee? [*a smooth come hither glance*] Bi-monthly blood transfusion. Clean blood, no better buzz.

Crackety Crack music returns. After a moment TOMMY TAYLOR's voice is heard over the music.

TOMMY Next up, your favourite girl and mine, the inimitable Charlie Jones...(quieter now, as with royal commentary for instance) she's walking across the stage, shaking hands with the audience, isn't she marvelous ladies and gentlemen

Canned applause and music as CHARLIE walks across the stage greeting her audience.

CHARLIE is Richard and Judy, Lorraine Kelly and Graham Norton rolled into one. S/he speaks direct to the audience. Applause continues. 2 actors hold up 'applause' placards to the audience each time it is required. An auto q system could be used with lines written large on pieces of cardboard, held by two crouching actors if helpful. CHARLIE has possession of the stage, she knows she is beloved. Behind her the actors are as part of a TV crew, getting NADIA into position, touching her makeup up etc. and then exiting to rest positions.

CHARLIE Good Morning! Good Morning! Thank you! Oh, you know how to make a girl feel special! Thanks for joining me this morning. [*applause fades out*] And have we got a lot in store for you! Later on in the programme we'll be asking, at what age is it ok for girls to start enhancement surgery? Giles will be back with some more make-over magic, getting you ready for the party season. And we'll have an update on our breast cancer knit bomb fundraiser, so don't go away!

Applause cards held up and a quick burst of canned applause as CHARLIE takes her seat.

CHARLIE But first up I'm delighted to welcome NADIA CORNWALL. [*she encourages audience in applause*]. Nadia, Its great to have you with us. [*Nadia says: 'Thank you' as Charlie continues.*] Now, you were the government appointed Mental Health Champion for UK Schools, but you were axed after you criticised the government over testing and so on. Is that right?

NADIA We have a very serious situation in the mental health of our young people. The government is engineering a climate where it's really difficult for any young person to enjoy good mental health. Anxiety is the fastest growing illness in the under 21s.

CHARLIE [*Sympathetic but this is not what she wants for happy day time TV*] Well yes, I can see that. But... tell us about getting sacked?

NADIA You know young people today are coming of working age in times of economic uncertainty. They're more likely to experience debt, unemployment and poverty, and they are up against increasing social and environmental issues that affect their well-being. This is a crisis situation.

CHARLIE Well yes, I can see that. But...On a more positive note, I heard on the grapevine that you might be in the running for a visit to the palace....care to comment?

NADIA Not really. I'd rather talk about the massive escalation in self-harm, the alarming rise in attempted suicide. The fact that Mental Health services are at breaking point; that Mental Health cases are swamping the Police.

CHARLIE [*Realises she's getting no where*] Well that's just terrible Nadia, I can see that. And thanks so much for bringing this to our attention. Ladies and gentleman, Nadia Cornwall. [*Applause is encouraged again*] Next up our 'one minute mindfulness' then, 'Nose job for your 16th?' When is it ok to start enhancing? Stay with us, we'll be right back.

Canned applause and a quick burst of Crackety Crack music.

CL Echo!

ALL Echo!

Taking their Q from CL the company enter the stage space at a 6 making their way to their next positions, calling their headlines as they go – a beat beneath as before. While they move the 'Living Newspaper' sign is replaced with a 'Slice of Life' one.

1 UK prescriptions for Anti-depressants double in last decade!

2 Rising global suicide rates linked to poverty!

3 Benefit cuts have devastating effect on mental health!

EPISODE FIVE: A SLICE OF LIFE

MICHAEL, PHIL, BARRY and THE CHORUS end in positions on the stage. Perhaps some minimal underscoring, picking out particular moments etc. The actors address the audience directly, with the intimacy of one-to-one but taking everyone in. A V/O (through a mic with effect) delivers lines as if reading out stage directions. When BARRY and MICHAEL talk about lovely moments, they deliver as though enjoying that moment, not mournful or maudlin. Needs to keep pacy.

PHIL I'd had a rubbish day.

VO Phil stands. Hands in his pockets.

PHIL I'd laid off another five lads. All good lads. All family men. Bosses decide, then it's me that has to tell them. Shave off another few quid so the shareholders don't feel the brunt [*is clearly disgusted*].

I used to love my job. Warehouse manager. I liked the respect, being in charge. Once they were all doing their jobs we'd have a bit of a laugh and some banter. They knew the line. But now everyone's worried for their jobs all the time. There's bugger all laughing anymore.

Bastards'll probably have me sacking every one of them, then they'll get rid of me.

VO BARRY sits. He appears uncomfortable.

BARRY I was waiting for the bus at the top of the street and I could see them down the back alley. Bloody freezing it was. Must have been about midnight. I'd just finished my shift and I'd got a bag of chips. And I was shattered. I'd had loads of shifts that week, which was great 'cos we needed the money - some weeks you might get hardly nothing so you've to take it when you can. So I'd

been on doubles and I just wanted to get home to bed. Kathy's like a hot water bottle in bed, lovely to cuddle up to. So I was thinking about that.

(Affectionate and gentle)

MICHAEL It's coming up to me dad's tenth anniversary. Mad, how in one moment everything in your life can totally change.

VO This is Michael. Remember him?

MICHAEL I've been drinking a bit lately. Keeps you warm and softens the edges you know. It gets cold sleeping rough. Right into your bones. I think about mum and dad's gas fire. Standing on the rug in front of it in my socks, warming my feet when I came in from work cold. And every time, my mum warning me about bloody chilblains! I tell you the warehouse could get cold, but not a patch on this.

BARRY Thinking I'd pop in and have a look at the girls asleep. Twins. They look just the same but they're chalk and cheese. I like to watch them all peaceful. Tucked up.

PHIL So I set off home feeling like shit, and I drove into the back of an Audio Q3. Flaming idiot slammed on his brakes... Insurance is bad enough as it is, now that'll hike it right up. And I'd just finishing dealing with that when Judy rang. Money for the school trip. Money for new shoes. Christ, how fast do kids feet grow?! There's always something.

BARRY I worry about them. There's that much violence. The world's not safe these days. All the internet stuff and the growing up so quick. I'm dreading them being teenagers.

PHIL So I just left the car and went for a drink. I'd had enough.

MICHAEL I keep to myself. Try to stay safe. I don't like the begging. I worry someone from my old work'll see me. Or one of dad's friends. I'd be mortified.

BARRY Crimes right up. The girls don't play out on the street that's for sure. But it's everywhere. You know. Then there's ISIS and all the terrorist madness, and all the refugees, waves and waves of them. It's a very frightening world to be bringing my little girls up in.

PHIL I'd been drinking for about eight hours I suppose. Beer at first, but all sorts. I was truly pissed. I had a bottle of vodka in my hand, no idea where I'd got it. And I was walking home. And bloody Coxy rang me. Crying. [*Phil is feeling the frustration and anger of the moment as he is delivering this; it rises*] Begging me to give him his job back. They'd a new baby and his missus was loosing the plot. Could I put in a special word for him? I told him I'd tried but he just kept going on and on, you know, what was he going to do? They'd a mortgage, how would they manage?

BARRY I just wanted to get home. They depend on me. What would they do if anything happened to me?

PHIL What was I meant to do? Fuck sake.

MICHAEL I mostly sleep in this one particular spot. Away from the noise, nice and warm – tucked in behind a skip – but someone was there before me so I just did the best I could. Found a spot in a doorway.

BARRY I mean it's not like there was anything I could have done. And there were plenty of others who could have stepped in. I didn't realize....I...I just wanted to get home.

MICHAEL Gets frightening after dark.

PHIL Then I saw him. [*looks at Michael*] And I just... snapped.

VO They bow their heads. [*spoken in time with them doing it*]

EPISODE SIX: LIVING NEWSPAPER #2

CHORUS LEADER leans from the scaffold and rings a bell (Town Crier-esque). The CHORUS pop out/up in tandem.

CL Oh yea! Oh yea! Government and media incite intolerance and demonise poor!

A threatening punk beat plays below the following. The CHORUS' physical blocking indicates a page turning of a newspaper or the swiping of a phone. They change the episode placard and each (incl CL) collect cardboard placards, which say 'their name'. It builds throughout gathering in intensity and vitriol.

DAILY EXPRESS Seventy Five per cent on sick are skiving!

UKGOV POSTER Benefit Thieves: It's not if we catch you it's when!

SUNDAY EXPRESS Four Million Scrounging Families in Britain!

CHANNEL 5 On Benefits and Proud!

THE INDEPENDENT One in Ten Local Council's are Criminalising Homelessness.

DAILY MAIL 4,000 Foreign Murderers and Rapists We Can't Throw Out!

AMBER RUDD MP We'll stop migrants from taking jobs British people could do!

THE SUN Twelve Hundred Killed by Mental Patients!

DAILY STAR They've Stolen All Our Jobs!

DAILY MAIL Benefits Rising Twice as Fast as Salaries!

DAILY TELEGRAPH Ship Them Out of Here!

A beat

CL&CHORUS (In unison) Shame! Shame! Shame! Shame!

Called as they move to form a cluster on the periphery of the stage. With the CHORUS LEADER slightly ahead, they walk in step around the periphery. Hands clasped, heads bowed, walking like monks.

CL The poor are lazy.

CHORUS Wastrels!

CL The homeless had it coming.

CHORUS Scum!

CL Those on benefits have no incentive to work.

CHORUS Scroungers!

CL The violent ones are evil.

CHORUS Monsters!

CL The refugees will take our jobs.

CHORUS Bastards!

CL&CHORUS Demonise! Demonise! Demonise!

They exit

EPISODE SEVEN: CRACKETY CRACKED

The theme music blares in along with a shift in lighting; one actor holds a mirror ball and lets it turn slightly, another actor points a torch at it making it dance. A complete change of tone and atmosphere. The CHORUS are transformed. CHORUS LEADER takes the stage – confident and enigmatic; CHORUS support, holding the applause signs. Music, canned laughter and applause kick in, applause signs held up etc. Scene placard now reads ‘Crackety Cracked’. A V/O comes over the music/applause

V/O Ladies and gentlemen welcome to..... Crackety Cracked! And here’s your host..... Tommy Taylor!

Enter TOMMY TAYLOR, the CHORUS LEADER in a different jacket. It’s a slightly absurd and dark quiz show – for the host think Les Denis meets Willy Wonker; Rocky Horror meets light entertainment. It has a punked up game show jingle. He walks through the audience shaking hands, welcoming them all, saying how pleased he is to see them – acting like the king of light entertainment. Gets to centre stage at the perfect time to do a little dance step and adopt a pose (a la Brucie) just as the music finishes.

TOMMY Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! No, really! Settle down now! Well what a show we have for you ladies and gentlemen, I’m so happy you could join us. And without further ado, lets meet tonight’s contestants.

Music back in with v/o and canned applause, contestants entering in character as their name is called, waving at the audience and going to take their position. V/O is typical game show voice – super excited, says everything as its very positive.

V/O First up tonight we have Julia from London! Julia became homeless last year when she lost her job and could no longer pay her rent. Next up Paul from Manchester. Paul's been sanctioned because although he carried out 60 job searches he missed one that matched his profile. Next up let's welcome Elaine, from St Helens. Elaine has lost her employment support allowance because her assessment score plummeted from 30 points to zero with the new criteria. And finally, please put your hands together for Ben, who was sanctioned for missing an appointment – he was at the hospital with his wife who'd gone into premature labour.

Music fades out under the following. While TOMMY explains the rules the contestants each lay out 5 cardboard circles in a line directly in front of them, with considerable gaps between.

TOMMY Now as you know, we start with a quick elimination round to sort the wheat from the chaff, one question each – get it right you're in, get it wrong you're gone! First up Julia... Julia my love, can you tell me how many times greater is the average Chief Executive salary than their lowest paid employee? Is it 25 times greater? 50 times greater? 100 times greater? Or 150 times greater?

JULIA *[Thinks]* I'm not sure, but I know it's a lot. I'd say maybe 50 times greater Tommy.

TOMMY I'm sorry Julia, you fall at the first hurdle, I'm afraid that Chief Executive pay is on average 150 times more than that of their lowest paid employee! You're out of the game. Now Paul, can you tell me what percentage of working days

lost to illness last year were as a result of stress, depression or anxiety? Was it
A) 5%, B) 15%, C) 25% or D) 45%?

PAUL Well everyone seems to be really stressed these days don't they - I think I'm
going to go for 45% Tommy.

TOMMY That's right Paul, you survived the cuts and you're through to the next round!
Now onto Elaine. Elaine, what does the United Nations say about the UK's
Austerity Policies? Is it A) That they are a sound way of tackling the financial
crisis? B) that they are not stringent enough or C) that they are a breach of
basic human rights?

ELAINE I'd have to say C Tommy, I think they're a breach of human rights

TOMMY Congratulations Elaine! You and the UN are clearly of sound mind! And
you've 'made the cut'! Now last up it's Ben. So Ben, two through already so
your chances are slim to nil! But, for forms sake, can you tell me the
difference in £ between the austerity welfare cuts and tax evasion?

BEN That's a hard one Tommy! Well I know they've been talking about making 12
billion in benefits cuts over a few years, but I don't know the other thing...

TOMMY I'm going to have to rush you Ben? I'll ask you again: what is the difference in
£ between the austerity welfare cuts and tax evasion?

BEN I'm sorry Tommy, I don't know.

TOMMY Final answer?

BEN Final answer.

Incorrect answer sound

TOMMY Well Ben, you were right that 12 billion is planned to be saved in the welfare reforms (otherwise known as the benefit cuts) but you didn't know that the government loses 16 billion a year in tax evasion! Looks like if they'd got their taxes in properly they wouldn't have had to make any of the cuts, and they'd have had some left over! Never mind Ben, you're just another casualty! Sorry to see you go.

Ben leaves under a little music

TOMMY So Paul and Elaine you're through to the next round....[applause] lets bring on your helpers – our fabulous volunteers from the audience....[applause] (name) and (name) come on down!

Music and canned applause

TOMMY Let's find out who we have here, our brave volunteers....What's your name my dear? (*repeats name back*) and where are you from? Great to have you with us, thank you. [*repeats for the other, with a bit of banter, very jovial*]. Right then, we'll put you with [name] and you with [name.]

A pair stands on either side of Tommy.

TOMMY Now then, are you ready to play? [they answer briefly]. Earlier today we surveyed our audience and now we're going to ask you what you think the most popular responses to the questions were. First off Paul and [name]: we asked our audience what do you worry about the most? What do you think was the most popular answer – and you may confer - ?

They confer and answer

TOMMY You said *[their answer]* our survey said *[voice over from band with correct answer]*

Correct or incorrect sound and appropriate response from Tommy.

TOMMY Over to Elaine and [name], we asked our audience to name one thing that makes them happy. What do you think was the most popular answer, and again you may confer...?

They confer and answer

TOMMY You said *[their answer]* our survey said *[voice over from band with correct answer]*

Correct or incorrect sound and appropriate response from Tommy.

TOMMY Back to Paul and [name]: we asked our audience should you give money to beggars? What do you think was the most popular answer – and you may confer - ?

They confer and answer – we are interested to hear the points they raise during confereing

TOMMY You said *[their answer]* our survey said

Correct or incorrect sound and appropriate response from Tommy. [if incorrect a v/o says: the correct answer was....]

TOMMY And the last question in this round, Elaine and [name], we asked our audience if they think council tax should be raised to fill the gap in social services funding. Do you think most people said yes or no? And again you may confer...?

They confer and answer

TOMMY You said [*their answer*] our survey said [*voice over from band with correct answer*]

Correct or incorrect sound and appropriate response from Tommy. Fix it so one team wins.

TOMMY Ladies and gentlemen a big round of applause for our losers tonight, [name] and [name]... [*Applause*] Also, a big thanks to [name], you've been a great contestant thank you! You've done your bit, you can take your seat again now

A bit of music and canned applause while Tommy moves towards the remaining contestant and puts his arm around her/him. Music suddenly gets tense...

TOMMY So [name] from [place they're from], did you think you'd make it this far?

CONTEST. No Tommy, I can't believe it.

TOMMY Well, you certainly seem calm

CONTEST. (Laughs) not on the inside Tommy! I'm shaking!

TOMMY You're doing great. Now, lets see if we can get you tonight's big prize...

An undertone of music/chords begins that continues throughout this section (a la Millionaire)

TOMMY Okay, [name], I have four questions here and you need to get all the answers right to win the big prize. You have your two 'Ask the Audience' lifelines; and remember to think carefully about your answer because your first answer is final. You can pass and we can go back at the end if you have time left. So good luck, we're all rooting for you.

The lights go out with only the spots used.

TOMMY Are you ready [name]?

CONTEST. Yes.

TOMMY Then here goes. [*musical flourish*] Question number one: How many Liverpool families are at risk of losing their homes as a result of the latest round of caps and cuts? Is it higher or lower than 800?

CONTEST. [*thinks*] Oh God, I'm not sure. And I don't want to get it wrong. [*thinks*] I think I'll have to ask the audience Tommy.

TOMMY Ladies and gentlemen, [name] needs your help. If you think that less than 800 Liverpool families are at risk of losing their homes shout 'lower' if you think more shout 'higher'; shout.....now!

The audience are encouraged to shout

TOMMY Well, you've heard what the audience think, what are you going to say?

CONTEST. I think higher Tommy.

Correct sound

TOMMY And you're right! 840 Liverpool families are at risk of losing their homes. Now, question two: what percentage of working days lost to ill health were due to stress, depression or anxiety? Was it, a) five percent. B) fifteen percent. C) twenty five percent or D) forty five percent?

CONTEST. I'm not sure about this one.

TOMMY Think carefully now before you answer. Remember your first answer is your final answer. I'll ask it again, what percentage of working days lost to ill health were due to stress, depression or anxiety? Was it, a) five percent. B) fifteen percent. C) twenty five percent or D) forty five percent?

CONTEST. Well everyone seems to be really stressed these days don't they. I think I'm going to go for it Tommy and say forty five percent.

Correct sound

TOMMY And you'd be right!!!!

TOMMY You're doing great. Now, question three: in England, how many years longer does the average wealthy man live, than the average homeless man? Is it more or less than 10 years?

CONTEST. I thought it was probably about ten years, but I'm not sure which side it would fall. Can I Ask the Audience again Tommy?

TOMMY You're sure you want to use your last life line?

CONTEST. Yes, I'll Ask the Audience please.

TOMMY Okay ladies and gentlemen, it's over to you. You know the routine, higher if you think more than ten years lower if you think less. So, do you think the average wealthy man in England lives more or less than 10 years longer than the average homeless man.

The audience is encouraged in shouting higher / lower.

CONTEST I'm going to say more than 10 years Tommy.

Correct sound

TOMMY And you're right! The average wealthy man in England lives a whopping 35 years longer than the average homeless man! Wow, that's quite a number!

Bonus prize sound

TOMMY And you have a bonus prize question – what's the bonus prize tonight Graham?

V/O Tonight's bonus prize is a fabulous food parcel from the Trussell Trust, Tommy! Likely to contain cereal, soup, pasta and even some tinned fruit and biscuits. So a handy tide-me-over!

TOMMY Now for that fabulous food parcel, can you tell me does the average homeless woman die younger or older than the homeless man?

CONTEST I think younger TOMMY

Correct answer sound

TOMMY And you're right!!! The average homeless man dies at 47, but the average homeless woman dies at 43 – how many of you in the audience are over 43? Hands up now come on don't be shy? Wow! That's a lot of you likely to be dead by now if you were homeless! But enough of the fun, back to the game. Now don't forget, whatever happens now you won't go away empty handed, you'll have the food parcel to take away.

Serious music again

TOMMY You're so close now. How are you feeling? It's all to play for the big prize, you're very close now. Only one question left. But you must get this one right. It's all or nothing in this game. Are you ready?

CONTEST. Ready as I'll ever be Tommy.

TOMMY Okay.

Change in light/sound state.

TOMMY Question number four your final question. Which of these behaviours would not make you intentionally homeless? A) leaving a violent and abusive partner [*and three other reasons to be advised by the group – must all be real reasons that you would be considered intentionally homeless*]

CONTEST. This is a tough one Tommy. I don't know. I'm not sure.

TOMMY Take your time, don't rush it.

CONTEST thinks for a while

TOMMY It's a hard one this.

CONTEST. I think I'm going to go for A) leaving a violent partner, Tommy. I don't think you could be considered intentionally homeless if you left because you were in danger.

A suspense sound, held for a moment while everyone holds their breath, then an incorrect answer sound.

TOMMY Oh, I'm sorry! Bad luck! You were so close! I'm afraid that was a bit of a trick question, in fact you would be considered intentionally homeless in all four of those circumstances! So you've missed the jackpot, unlucky. Almost seems like the odds were stacked against you on that one! But don't worry you won't go away empty handed....you've got your food parcel, and well done for being such a great contestant! Ladies and gentlemen....[name]!!!

Applause, and theme music comes in. Tommy and losing contestant wave at audience as music plays, over top of music

TOMMY Thank you so much for joining us ladies and gentlemen, you've been a marvelous audience, and don't forget to join us again next time we play....Crackety Crack!!!
Exits waving. Music begins to fall apart and transform into the sounds of the city at night...

EPISODE EIGHT: THE BURNING

Lights swirl, the sound grows, the actors enter and take up the tableaux that THE CITY ended with. House lights are down, leaving stage lights and follow spots (crossed pointed at the ceiling) only. The scene begins to move, in slow motion at first and then picking up pace until it goes over-fast, then slowly back down to the right speed for the scene. From that point forward the scene is performed naturalistically. If possible (!!) a neon light flickers. An almost filmic musical underscoring beginning with the soundscape of the city at night rises and falls in volume as the scene dictates. Woven through the soundscape, and helping to inform the choreography of the piece, is a voice over – fragments of sentences/words are stitched in as appropriate – they pick out moments of the physical action both for the purposes of audio description and for heightening the moment and adding to the audience's sensory experience. A little smoke. The voice is the same as in THE CITY.

VO We're back in the city, late at night.
People stagger, shout, piss, flirt, laugh.
The city seethes.
Splendid exhibitions.
Michael sits in his sleeping bag, head hung low.

Phil stumbles, vodka bottle in hand.

Barry waits for the bus eating curry chips.

It's cold and raining. The world turns.

PHIL *(At the end of a long and painful conversation. Frustrated, at the end of his tether, angry because he can do nothing and very drunk.)* For fuck sake Coxy, there's nothing I can do. How many more times? Stop fucking crying! *(Hangs up)*

Stops and steadies himself. Takes a long drink then, fumbling, takes out his cigarettes and lighter. Goes as if to light one then notices Michael

PHIL *(Slurring but threatening)* Fucking druggie scum
He steadies himself and notices the audience. He is suddenly sober, in the moment with the audience, puts the fag back in the packet and them back in his pocket during the following. Really feels the emotion of what he's saying, and although he is 'narrating' we feel a dangerous edge off him, rising

PHIL There's good lads like mine loosing their jobs, and then there's these scroungers thinking the world owes them a living. Everyone's struggling, it's really fucking hard, and these lazy bastards just sitting about.

[A change of tone.] I don't know what happened. I just saw red.

Aggressively loud punk music mixed with night time city sounds exaggeratedly swollen, disorienting the audience and making them wince. The following is very short and very intense. There are shouts, grunts and cries but we cannot distinguish words in the madness.

PHIL lays straight into MICHAEL with a hard single kick, which doubles Michael up, he grunts, badly winded. Another kick. Michael is trying to get away but is trapped inside his bag. Totally unable to fight back, tries to defend himself as best he's able, but he's terrified

and weak. He is beaten from the first, but the beating is drawn out and relentless. He continues to try to get away for as long as he is able but at some point gives up and tries to cover his head but is clearly beaten. Phil completely loses the plot. In this moment Michael represents all Phil's own frustrations, disappointments, failures and fears. He uses Michael like a punch-bag. When Michael goes limp Phil remembers the Vodka and pours it all over the sleeping bag. When the bottle is empty he throws it down. An almost balletic physicality to the actions, arms flailing, feet kicking; very, very realistic. It pushes the line and makes the audience feel extremely uncomfortable.

Throughout BARRY looks on. His responses are subtle (we don't want to distract from the main focus of the scene, but when we do glance at BARRY he is completely in the moment) he is clearly uncomfortable. He's at a safe enough distance not to be scared for his own safety, but wouldn't in a million years put himself in the way of such violence. He shares the audience's absolute discomfort in watching, with the added shame of not intervening.

Occasionally, at moments where we flinch the most, the Voice Over makes an audible response – a sharp intake of breath, for instance.

Eventually, and after what seems like a very long time, PHIL collapses – totally worn out – out of breath, hands on his haunches, hunched over trying to breathe, coughing. Turns and urinates in Michael's face (hidden inside the bag) [this is staged so we see liquid and it looks realistic]. Walks away. Reaches into his pocket and takes out a packet of cigarettes and a zippo. Throughout this the soundscape has been reducing until it is barely there – a hum, a sound of almost silence – an abeyance. Phil lights a cigarette. An amplified zippo click as he lights it. Audience feels that it's over and relax. A barely audible groan comes from the sleeping bag. Phil looks at the sleeping bag in disgust and tosses the zippo at Michael.

Immediate snap to black [though it's not a full black, it will be enough to ensure people are unable to see properly for a brief moment during which a heavy grey blanket is thrown over Michael]

On the snap to black we hear the sound of something highly flammable going up in flames immediately followed by the soundscape kicking back in louder and more disorienting than ever. Over the top of it (and woven beautifully into the scape) the voice over 'eye witness' is almost hysterical but attempts to retain the whisper

VO Oh Jesus, oh Jesus, no. It's on fire. He's set him on fire. It's just gone up.
 The sleeping bag. [makes swallowed sound of horror, splutters]

The sound of vomiting is heard for a split second then is consumed by the soundscape. A siren cuts through the air. Sound stops, house lights come on.

PHIL is frozen in tableaux. BARRY clutches his chips

BARRY *(Very much in and experiencing the moment while describing it to the audience).* It was the smell that got me. Burning flesh. I'd never smelt anything like it but I knew. [pause, shell shocked] But what could I do?

A moment and then THE CHORUS enter performing 'officials'

CL Move along now.

CHORUS Nothing to see here.

BARRY and PHIL leave in character. The body in the sleeping bag remains.

CL Move along.

CHORUS Just some collateral damage.

CL Move along now.

CHORUS Entirely disposable.

EPISODE NINE: LIVING NEWSPAPER #3

A drum roll and a crash. THE CHORUS form a tableaux – an intimate cluster – and drop the ‘official’ act

CL The news passes swiftly through the space. Homeless man burned alive

CHORUS Homeless man burned alive

Actors move quickly into their next positions. During the business the actor in the sleeping bag is disguised getting out. Perhaps the vocals are augmented/enhanced by the band/pre-recorded elements. Snappy, no lingering. No repeats here. Dotted around the space directly engaging different banks of audience, using different levels and creating an interesting stage picture.

Vendor 1 Thug stamps on homeless man’s head

Vendor 2 Homeless used as ‘target practice’ by gang with crossbows

Vendor 3 Horrific hammer attack on homeless man

Vendor 4 Homeless man has 85 stitches after face slashed

These voices cut each other off, as though switching the channel

NWS 1 In the early hours of this morning 39 year old Michael Patterson was burned alive in his sleeping bag as he slept rough in the city centre. Sources suggest a middle aged man was responsible for the attack, but no arrests have yet been made. Police are asking witnesses to come forward. You can / call 01.....

NWS 2 Last week the body of 23 year old Daniel Smith was found in a burning tent in Manchester. The same day, 32 year old Christopher Sever was found dead in a

derelict house in Hull. Two weeks before that a 50 year old man's body was discovered in a car park in Swindon. Three tragic deaths in the space of a fortnight, each from different causes but with one thing in common, they were all homeless.

NWS 3 In recent years attacks on homeless people have been on the increase. From low level verbal insults to serious assaults and even murder, crime directed against the homeless has escalated. But too often these crimes see little police action and remain invisible. Campaigners argue that rough sleepers experience levels of personal victimization that would not be tolerated across a wider community and many believe that these attacks should be classed as a Hate Crimes.

TOMMY'S voice is amplified, disembodied. CHORUS in an on-stage cluster, in unison.

TOMMY Going Up

CHORUS Homelessness. Attacks on the vulnerable. Hate Crimes.

TOMMY Going Down

CHORUS Welfare support. Working conditions. Happiness.

Sudden overwhelmingly loud sound of static and black out.

EPISODE TEN: EPILOGUE

Lights up. The CHORUS LEADER is back standing in the dustbin, flanked by the CHORUS.

The episode placard has been changed.

CL Dark tales for dark times.

CHORUS Conscious cruelty

CL Brutal policy

CHOURS Broken Britain

CL Forced Austerity

CHORUS Fear, in the face of anger.

CL Anxiety, in the face of uncertainty.

CHORUS Dark tales for dark times.

CL So is that it? Can we leave it thus? Accept the world is just unjust?

Lie back and take it blow by blow; look on as violence takes its toll.

The cruelty of the rich mans greed,

The blindness of the selfish creed,

The loneliness of true despair,

Are we to take it? Or do we dare to stand apart?

To just say no?

What if *that* story should take hold?

The company enters one by one filling the space, entering on a line, engaging all parts of the audience and forming an interesting stage picture.

V1 I've never laughed so much as I do now

V2 I feel optimistic about the future

V3 I've stopped using material gain as a measure of success

V4 I've a sense of purpose for the first time in my life

V5 I've got a better perspective on everything now

V6 I feel really, deeply content

V7 I feel valued and respected, and good about myself

ALL I feel safe

A moment of silence

CL A better story you'll agree, perhaps next time that's one we'll see.
But first a few things have to change, our system must be rearranged.
Please don't sit back in bleak despair

CHORUS Shout out

CL And say that it's unfair

ALL Shout out

CL And say that things must change, we know that there are other ways.
Please get involved, we'll show you how

[the company all produce A5 flyers out of their pockets and hand one individually to the audience members nearest to them until everyone has got one – these are 10 things to do]

CL The need is great, the time is now.

So ere you go we'll share a song, to warm our hearts and make us strong;
And then farewell and on your way, we hope you have enjoyed our play.

After a beat THE BAND snaps in with a punked up version of the introduction to William Blake's Jerusalem. When the actors have finished distributing flyers they re-take their positions. Just as the lyric is about to come in, the singer walks forth out of the band and stands in the middle of the company on stage. They all sing in unison, with all their hearts and voices, the melody is pure. While their bodies remain still their faces become animated, they believe passionately in what they are singing.

ALL And will our world in times to come
Shelter us from the cold and dire?
Will we be safe and free from want?
With time and grace to be inspired?
If we will hold in great esteem
Compassion, kindness, peace and fun,
We will walk forth with dignity
A bold new future has begun.

THE END

The company take their bows. They then move out into the audience and mingle and chat as people are leaving.