

Evaluation summary for **not in my name**

Merseyside Pilot: 9th–13th February 2010

Co-production between Fuse: New Theatre for Young People and Theatre Veritae

Theatre Veritae’s nationally-acclaimed and award-winning production of *Not in My Name* was commissioned by the **Lancashire Constabulary** in 2007 as part of an ongoing range of activities to develop young people’s understanding of current issues around the national **Prevent** strategy.

The continued success of the play in Lancashire, where it has now been seen by audiences in excess of 10,000 (a mixture of young people and older community audiences in both formal and informal settings), has precipitated demand to adapt the project for new areas. Work on this initiative began in earnest towards the end of 2009, with pilot productions in Cheshire, County Durham, **Merseyside** and Oldham, Greater Manchester all taking place in Spring 2010.

It is Theatre Veritae’s policy to allow each area to shape the *Not in My Name* project in the most appropriate manner for their local communities, rather than adopting a ‘one size fits all’ approach. This is achieved by working in close partnership with other local service providers to ensure the play is delivered where it is perceived to be of most value, as well as encouraging follow-up work as part of a sustainable strategy. The ‘pilot week’ provides an opportunity for an area to begin their own dialogue with *Not in My Name* and functions as a barometer of the extent of local engagement which, if positive, can then provide a stimulus for further personalised development.

The Merseyside production was a co-production also undertaken in partnership with **Liverpool City Council** and **Merseyside Police**, who identified young people within and outside of formal education as their primary audience. One performance was officially designated for VIPs to begin a dialogue with local ‘gatekeepers’ around the potential continuation of this work. The production was performed by a professional cast and hosted by the **Unity Theatre**, Liverpool. This document is intended to provide an executive summary of the quantitative evaluation data collected from these audiences, alongside some key observations and recommendations drawn from this regional pilot.

Over the course of the week in Merseyside, *Not in My Name* was seen by a diverse audience of approximately 1,000 people. A statistical breakdown of audiences is provided opposite; the observational nature of collecting this data should allow for a 5% margin of error. Monitoring forms additionally suggest that a minimum of 0.3% of the total audience had a known or registered disability.

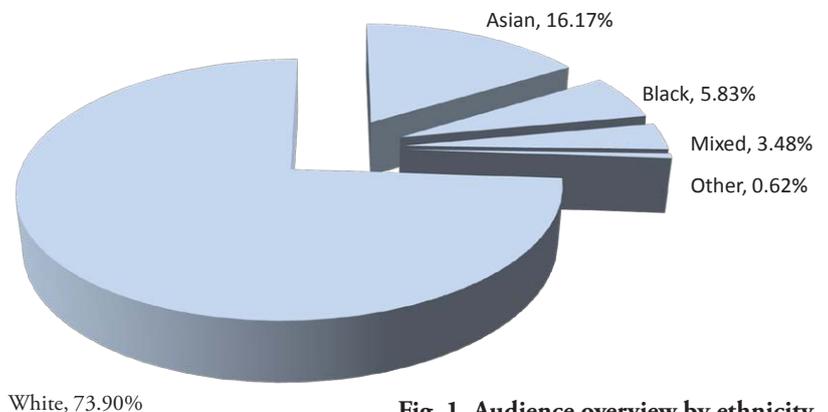


Fig. 1. Audience overview by ethnicity

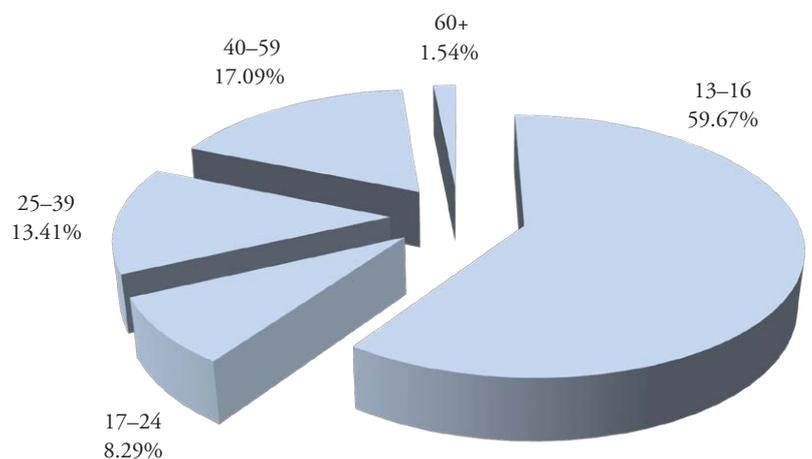


Fig. 2. Audience overview by age

Student evaluation forms were completed by approximately 10% of the total young audience, who were selected arbitrarily. The initial part of the questionnaire asked students to use one of five given options to indicate their personal opinion on three statements relating to their appreciation of the production, as summarised graphically below:

Overall these statistics are extremely encouraging, and generally reflective of the impact of productions of *Not in My Name* on this age-group in other areas.

An agreement percentage of 100% from young people within the play's targeted age-range on their enjoyment of the play rates the artistic reception of this Merseyside production above concurrent productions in other areas, and may be reflective of the perceived empathy between this cast and their audience which has been noted in other areas of both formal and informal feedback.

An agreement percentage in the region of 95% for questions 2 and 3 is exceptional for any theatre project, and this is compounded by the sensitivity of the subject matter.

Despite some initial apprehension in the planning stages of this productions about the 'relevance' of some of the themes prioritised within *Not in My Name* to this area, there is an overwhelming indication from young people surveyed here that the play does address areas of relevance to them. The multiple possibilities for interpretation of the production to audiences from differing demographic backgrounds is discussed at length in an independantly commissioned external evaluation that should be viewed in conjunction with this summary.

Later questions asked respondants to use their own words to discuss their ability to relate to individual characters, elements of the play that they had found surprising, and their perception of the 'message' of the play. Given the comparatively small number of respondants for a 'pilot' week, these responses have been incorporated into our **Comparative Report** exploring reactions to the play across all five areas of its recent activity. All significant regional variances are noted within this.

A small representative sample of 'other comments' follows:

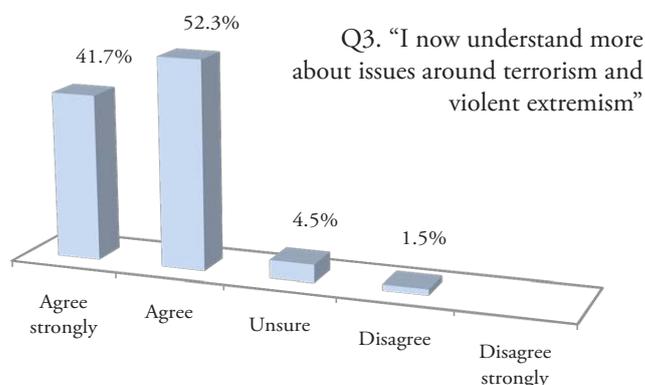
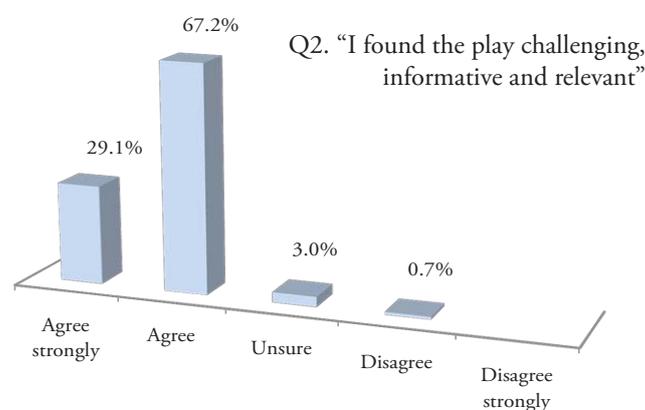
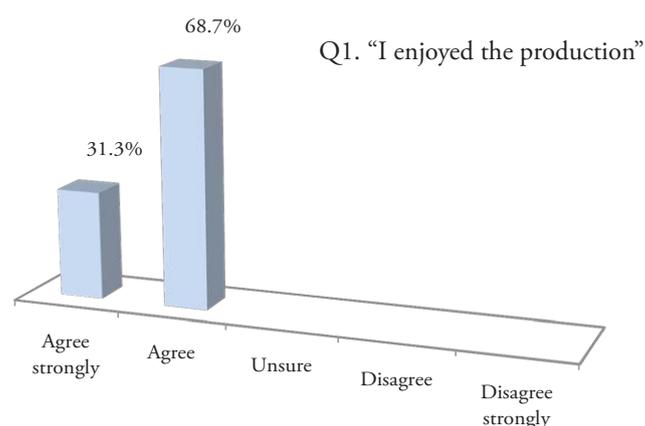
"I enjoyed the play and it was informative and clear. It made me sad when we were faced to what is going on in the world, although we are all aware we put it to the back of our minds and this play made me sit up and listen. Very good." (Claire, 19)

"As a Muslim, I didn't know what to make of it initially. I thought it may be negative, but then I understood it to be a good message of people's assumptions of Muslims. Well done!" (Faiza); *"It kept my interest from start to finish."* (Georgina)

"I thought it was a very helpful play that made me think about the way people are portrayed. Great actors – very real and emotional." (Conor, 18); *"It changed my view a lot."* (Lauren, 16); *"I was shocked at times."* (Lorna, 14)

"The play shows both sides of the story which is good. It helped me understand and sympathise with Muslims and non-Muslims views towards terrorism." (Josh, 14); *"Very good, effects were brilliant. It made me think about religion."* (Amy, 16)

"I think the play was amazing. It has made me understand the depths of how people are discriminated against because of the way they look. Also the vocabulary used shocked and surprised me, but got the point across, showing how people can judge the community on something one person has done. It was a great achievement." (Shaunnagh, 17)



Staff evaluation forms were only completed by two teachers or youth workers (due to an in-house confusion over the distribution of these), so these results cannot in themselves be considered conclusive and should perhaps be viewed alongside responses for this same production in Cheshire. In this respect, more information can also be gleaned from our external report and also detailed personal feedback conducted between cast members and some local teachers in researching an accompanying workshop package (which has been documented separately). As with the young people's forms, our two staff respondents were initially asked to express their opinion using a given scale on a number of statements relating to the production and its perceived impact:

- Q1. The production was appropriate to your group.
- Q2. The play openly, safely and productively explores the theme of preventing violent extremism.
- Q3. Your group will have learned and developed via the production.
- Q4. You will be able to follow up the production with meaningful discussions as part of your Citizenship/ PSHE delivery.

Both respondents either 'agreed' or 'agreed strongly' with all statements, whilst one also completed the more searching reverse side of the form (which can go un-noticed). He stated here that he was a Head of Drama from a local school who had attended the production alone as a "research visit - to see if it is appropriate for our school". The production had accorded with his expectations through its ability to "tackle a difficult issue in a way that would appeal to teenagers" and he concludes that it was "really good - thank you", adding that "I would like to book a production to come to the school".

In addition, feedback on our more generalised audience forms for this production suggests that these may have been given to some teachers/ youth workers. An illustrative selection of these responses is given below:

"I thought the performance was excellent and the pupils will take a lot away from it." (Jill); *"Overall very good – should be taken into schools and colleges."* (Chris); *"The play was very thought provoking and the message was very clearly illustrated and well demonstrated. This is a fantastic, far-reaching way to target young people and challenge stereotypes."* (Vicky)

"I learnt about various aspects of Muslim religion that I did not know." (Penny); *"I have done some work in relation to this subject, but it never surprises me to reflect on what takes place and then reconsider the reality of extremism."* (John)

"Excellent performance to provoke thinking around the need for people to integrate more and have a greater understanding and acceptance of one another's cultures and religions. Important that this production reaches the youth of today." (Lin)

"Inspired to do something to challenge stereotypical views in our schools and to influence this PVE strategy." (Sue)

"The actors should be very proud – it was a very accomplished performance." (Johanne); *"Excellent performances from all the actors – related it to my own children and their friends – weekend jobs!"* (Janma); *"This production should be made national at all levels."* (James)

Due to being unable to present statistics that show overall responses to our specific questions (as has been possible in other areas), in Merseyside further post-performance research was undertaken through interviews with project stakeholders and audience members known to accompanied parties of young people to *Not in My Name*. The following offers some illustration of feedback obtained in this way:

"The boy's feedback was really good, they felt that the play really spoke for them. It said the things they wanted to say and the things that they went through. At some point the kids had experienced what was said or done in the play. They felt that someone was doing their answers for them as well as them. The boys really benefitted from this because unlike the girls their first reaction are more aggressive, so this really beneficial to them to see a different way to approach these issues..."

The show gave them a way to talk to people, before they didn't know how to approach people about it or if they were picked on. Their first reaction would be to throw a punch or start a fight and in that way no one benefits from it. By watching the play they saw that there was a different path that they could take. It gave them an idea of how to defend themselves in these situations. Giving them a platform to talk about it in a calm manner instead of fighting, something that they didn't know how to do until watching the play. Even though it was their own words they were watching, they weren't sure how to express that."

(Doaa Alsoraimi, Al Ghazali Community Centre)

"The thing I like about the performance was towards the end, bringing all the people together, forming a cohesive community which is what my interest is, which is great. And the question and answer section that you did at the end was good as well and is what the teachers and the kids can work on."

(Michael Horlorku, Liverpool City Council)

Reflections

A new and locally-specific adaptation of the script was commissioned for Merseyside, in order to ensure the production's relevance for audiences in this area. The extent of necessary revisions was unknown when work started on this production. However, the recurrent feedback received by the writer and producer prior to rehearsals beginning was that the majority of the content of the play felt as relevant to the cosmopolitan city as it had been to the East Lancashire region where the play originated. Significant alterations focussed on regionalising the play's football subplot and adapting the manifestation of racial hostilities in the aftermath of a violent extremist attack: as in previous productions, new material was taken verbatim from open interviews between the writer and a mixture of informed young and adult contributors. Further changes were made in terms of dialect, casting and the play's setting.

Although this adaptation of the play had originally been intended primarily for schools' audiences, an unexpected (and very welcome) outcome in Merseyside was the uptake of attendance from users of Liverpool's Youth Service, with young people from over 10 youth and community centres attending the production. This unexpected demand led to one performance being switched from a daytime to an evening slot in order to accommodate it.

Part of the Merseyside pilot was the late addition of developing a package of workshops to complement learning from the production. Need for this had previously been identified from a range of sources across all areas where the play has been produced. Sadly, the December confirmation of funds (for delivery in February) proved an inadequate time frame for successful delivery of the workshops. However, funders have agreed that the funds can carry over to support the next phase of *Not in My Name* in Merseyside – allowing the time for the workshops to become an integrated and useful element of the experience, rather than a 'too late' addition to the commitment already made by groups.

Funding from Liverpool City Council for *Not in My Name* was allocated over a period of two years and, following the perceived success of this pilot, plans are ongoing to revive this co-production in Spring 2011. Early consultation has suggested a desire for the second phase of performance to be undertaken by local young people (to be recruited through Fuse's outreach activities) and to adopt a more flexible touring schedule that enables performance in a number of community venues rather than one centralised location.

Company for **not in my name** (Merseyside Pilot):

Actors: Lianne Curtis
Daniel Fitzsimons
Gurkiran Kaur
James Lewis
James McGlynn
Constance Oak
Rafi Usmaan Raja
Jennifer Tan

Writer & Director: Alice Bartlett
Staff Director
& Forum Facilitator: Jamie Rocha Allan
Lighting Designer: Mary Cummings
Producer (for Fuse & Theatre Veritae): Andrew Raffle

For Fuse: Michael Quirke
For Liverpool City Council: Michael Horlorku
Jill Summers
For Liverpool Youth Services: Doaa Al Soraami
Steve Waterhouse
For Merseyside Police: David Sim
Sharon Wright
For The Unity: John Bridge
Graeme Phillips
Rachel Treacher
For Victim Support: John Au

The Merseyside Pilot of *Not in My Name* was co-produced by **Fuse: New Theatre for Young People & Theatre Veritae**:



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Thank you also to the following organisations for their specific support of this phase of *Not in My Name*:

