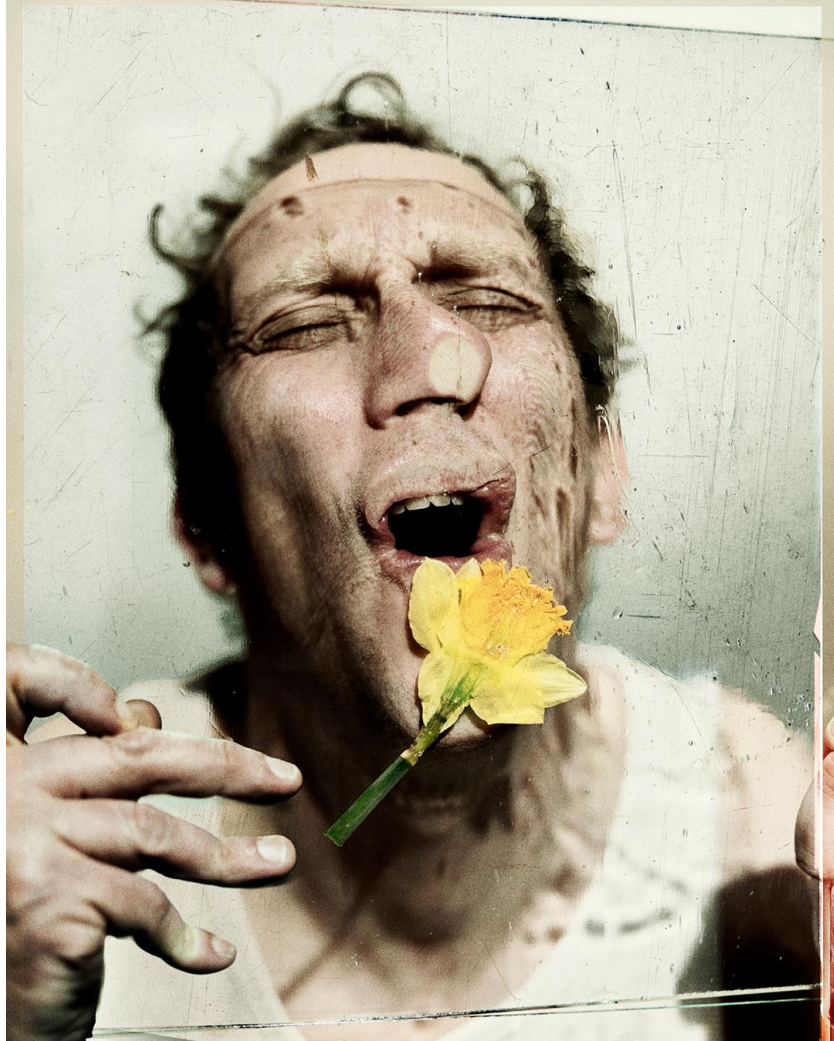


ALMEIDA THEATRE

Access Information Pack



Cleansed

by Sarah Kane

Directed by Rebecca Frecknall

Contents

This document is a visual guide to support your visit to the Almeida Theatre. There are three sections:

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The Production

Overview

Cleansed is an intense play exploring love, identity and human connection within a violent institutional environment. **Sarah Kane's** stage directions place the action within the "perimeters of a university", which, over the course of the play, is revealed to have been repurposed for violent and demeaning acts.

Content Guidance

Cleansed contains:

	Prolonged nudity		Torture, mutilation and murder
	Violence including sexual violence		Sex and incest
	Forced eating		Suicide including hanging
	Drug abuse and drugging		Gender reassignment surgery
	Homophobic and misogynistic language		Blood
	Blackouts		Flashing lights
	Latex		Sudden noises including recorded gunshots

The Production

Performance Conditions:

Relaxed Environment Performances

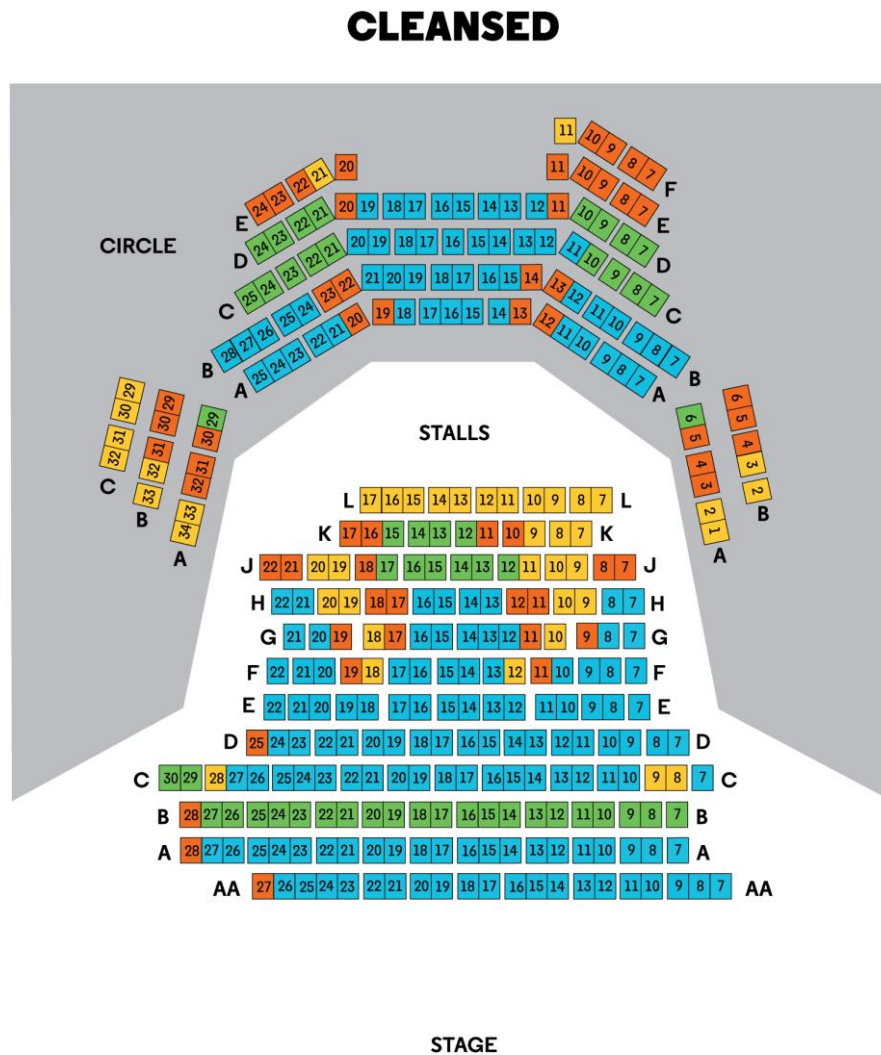
The duty manager will make an onstage announcement before the performance begins to explain what a Relaxed Environment performance is.

They will explain:

- Audience members are free to make noise, move about or come and go to take breaks and access the facilities as needed.
- If you need to step out of the auditorium for a break, there is also a TV monitor in the foyer to watch the performance from, so you don't miss any of the action.

Seating

In this production, the stage is straight across like in a traditional proscenium arch theatre. The seats in the stalls are arranged in rows, with aisles either side. Further seating is available in the Circle level above. There is no step free access to the Circle.



Running time and interval

The running time of the play is 1 hour and 40 minutes, with no interval.

What Happens in the Play?

Brief Synopsis

Grace arrives at the institution following the death of her brother, Graham, and chooses to remain there in an attempt to become closer to him. Around her, several people search for love and connection while being subjected to increasingly extreme physical and psychological violence by Tinker, the doctor who controls the institution.

Setting

The institution is presented as a wide box, similar in shape to a shipping container, directly in front of the audience. It's about 8 metres wide and 3 metres deep, containing a clinical room with a narrow corridor or hallway behind. Multiple doors lead in and out of the two spaces which are separated by four waist height window frames that span the width of the space. The window frames contain no glass, although at times actors mime the presence of glass; while at other times they climb directly through the frames.

The clinical room at the front has a medical couch, as well as a radiator and a token box that is used to operate a peep show. The room and corridor are not fixed locations but represent different areas of the institution, including treatment spaces, a peep-show booth and places of interrogation and punishment.

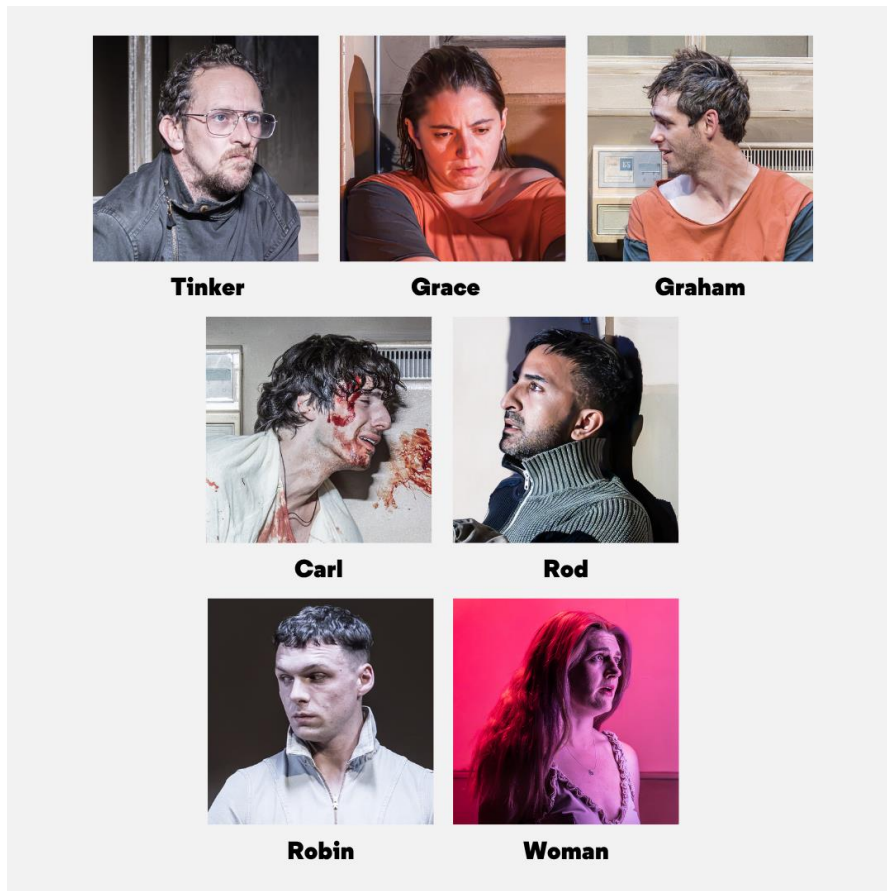
Changes in lighting, sound and the actors' use of the space indicate each new location. The set design uses pale, muted colours and has an aged and worn appearance. Linoleum tiles cover the floor and there are strip lights in the ceiling and above the doors. Together these elements create a cold and unsettling institutional environment.

Later in the production, the box moves back to reveal a broad field of daffodils. From this point, the clinical interior and the flower-filled landscape exist alongside one another.



What Happens in the Play?

Characters



Tinker - The doctor who controls the institution and the people within it.

Grace - Graham's sister, who comes to the institution following his death.

Graham - Grace's deceased brother, who continues to appear to her.

Rod and Carl - A couple who have been together for three months.

Robin - A 19-year-old man who is living in the institution and becomes close to Grace.

Woman - A woman who dances in a peep-show booth at the institution.

Sensory Overview

Sound and Lighting

If you are affected by any of these elements, you are welcome to take breaks at any time.

Sound

- The production is heavily underscored, creating a sustained atmosphere of tension, threat and menace.
- Music frequently becomes louder during heightened moments and scene transitions.
- There are sudden increases in volume and abrupt changes in the soundscape.
- Loud effects include bangs representing blows, gunfire, screams, distressed vocalisations, sudden door slams and the sudden, loud fall of a body from above.
- Some transitions are accompanied by very loud, harsh or sustained sounds.

Lighting

- Frequent abrupt lighting changes mark transitions between scenes.
- There are sudden shifts into darker states and several sustained periods of low light.
- Flashing lighting effects are used during the electrical treatment sequence.
- Some heightened moments become increasingly brightly lit.
- The production ends with a strong, bright light followed by a sudden blackout.

Movement and how physical action is presented

- Physical movement and choreography are used to express emotion, relationships, violence and changes in identity.
- The staging becomes increasingly abstract and dreamlike as the production progresses. Earlier scenes often contain more recognisable physical action, while later scenes make greater use of movement, sound and symbolic imagery.
- Some injuries and acts of violence use large quantities of stage blood and realistic physical effects, while others are represented through movement, red string, plastic bags of stage blood or other theatrical imagery.
- Stylised and contorted movement is sometimes used during transitions, accompanied by abrupt changes in lighting and sound.
- Symbolic imagery includes a sunflower growing through the floor.

Thematic Content

This production contains:

- Repeated and sometimes prolonged depictions of torture and physical violence
- Sexual violence and rape
- Amputation and graphic injury
- Suicide and assisted death
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Forced medical procedures including gender reassignment surgery

- Drug use
- Sexual content and nudity
- Forced eating
- Involuntary urination
- Grief and death.
- Strong language, including homophobic and misogynistic language.
- Large quantities of stage blood are used, and the stage becomes increasingly covered in blood.

Some scenes combine realistic physical action with symbolic or abstract theatrical imagery. The scene-by-scene section below explains how many of the most intense moments are represented.

Plot Synopsis

ACT ONE

Scene One

Content: Heroin injection into the eye, assisted death, suicide, addiction and death.

Sensory information: A tense underscore runs throughout. At the end of the scene, the lighting changes sharply and the music suddenly increases in volume.

What happens: Graham asks Tinker to help him because he “wants out”. After struggling to find a vein, Tinker injects him in the eye with heroin. Graham dies. Tinker leaves and shuts the door.

Scene Two

Content: Kissing, discussion of death and references to suicide.

Sensory information: This scene begins with a snap lighting and sound change. Children can be heard playing in the distance. A door slams suddenly at the end of the scene, followed by an immediate change to darker lighting and louder music.

What happens: Carl asks Rod to exchange their rings as symbols of their commitment to one another. Although Rod is hesitant about making promises, the two declare their love and kiss. Tinker watches them from a distance. The final kiss is interrupted by a sudden door slam.

Scene Three

Content: Full nudity from Robin and Grace, grief, emotional distress, loud vocalising, restraint, sedation and references to suicide.

Sensory information: Grace cries out loudly while overwhelmed by grief.

What happens: Grace arrives in the corridor looking for Graham's belongings. Tinker meets her and leads her to the clinical room to meet Robin, who has been given Graham's clothes. Robin is made to remove all his clothes so Grace can wear them. Grace becomes overwhelmed with grief and cries out loudly. She is then restrained on the couch and sedated by Tinker. She tells him she wants to remain at the institution. Tinker relents and gives her a pill to swallow. After he leaves, Grace tells Robin to put on her clothes and discovers that Robin cannot read or write.

Scene Four

Content: Prolonged physical violence, torture, sexual violence involving anal penetration with an object, sexual threats, graphic injury, tongue removal, the sudden, loud fall of a body from above and large quantities of stage blood.

Sensory information: The soundscape is loud, with repeated bangs representing punches. Rod's body falls suddenly and loudly onto the floor.

What happens: The corridor becomes the "Red Room" where Carl is repeatedly beaten by unseen attackers while Tinker watches. Tinker interrogates Carl about Rod. Tinker inserts a pole into Carl's anus. Carl relents and says, "Rod, not me." At this point, Rod's body falls from the ceiling. Tinker cuts out Carl's tongue, takes the ring from Rod's hand and forces Carl to swallow it.

Scene Five

Content: Full nudity from Grace and Graham, incestuous themes, kissing, explicit sexual content and symbolic imagery.

Sensory information: An underscore runs throughout.

What happens: On the medical couch, Grace is awoken by Graham. They are both dressed in the same clothes. They dance together as Grace begins to adopt his mannerisms and voice. They kiss and become physically intimate. This develops into a simulated sexual encounter represented through symbolic movement and imagery. At the end of the scene, a sunflower grows through the floor and remains there for the rest of the production.

Scene Six

Content: Partial nudity, masturbation and sexual performance.

Sensory information: The lighting remains quite dark and an underscore runs throughout.

What happens: Tinker visits a peep-show booth where he watches an unnamed Woman dance while he masturbates with his back to us. He repeatedly asks to see her face rather than her body. When she complies, he asks if they can be friends and says that he can help her because he is a doctor. The conversation is cut short when the peep-show timer runs out and Tinker has no tokens left.

Scene Seven

Content: Grief, romantic rejection, references to suicide, strangulation and emotional distress.

Sensory information: Classical music plays repeatedly through the tannoy. The scene ends with a sudden change to louder music and darker lighting while the actors contort their bodies as they leave.

What happens: In the transition into this scene, we see Graham climb through the window slowly, stretching his body to fill the frame before landing on the floor. As he lands, the lights come up and we are in the "Round Room". A piece of classical music plays on loop through the tannoy as Grace teaches Robin how to read and write. Graham is also there. Robin develops romantic feelings for her, which she gently rejects. Grace speaks about wishing that her body reflected how she feels inside and expresses her continuing connection to Graham. Tinker, having been listening from the hallway, comes in and burns Robin's drawing of a flower.

Scene Eight

Content: Amputation, graphic injury, stage blood and anguished vocalising.

Sensory information: Low light. The amputation is accompanied by a loud soundscape and Carl's distressed cries.

What happens: Rod confronts Carl about betraying him. Carl, now unable to speak and with a bloodied rag in his mouth, attempts to communicate with Rod by writing on the radiator in pencil. Tinker arrives and, seeing that Carl is attempting to communicate, amputates Carl's hands before leaving.

The amputation is interpreted symbolically using red string and a bucket of stage blood.

Scene Nine

Content: Sexualised dancing and sexual performance, sexual themes and loneliness.

Sensory information: This short scene ends with a sudden loud transition into the next scene, which begins immediately with an image of violence.

What happens: Tinker returns to the peep-show booth, where Woman performs a sexualised dance. He asks her to help him, but she asks him to save her instead. Their brief exchange reveals both characters' loneliness and desire for connection.

Scene Ten

Content: Prolonged simulated beating, partial nudity, homophobic verbal abuse, rape, sexual violence, repeated blows to the face, body and head, prolonged gunfire and stage blood.

Sensory information: Unseen attackers are heard through amplified voiceover. The scene contains repeated impact sounds, distressed voices and prolonged gunfire. The set moves back during the gunfire, revealing the daffodils.

What happens: Grace is thrown into the hallway where she is beaten by unseen attackers whose voices are heard through voiceover. At the same time, Graham is thrown into the room downstage and attempts to comfort her with his words.

The assault includes repeated blows to Grace's face, body and head. During the assault she is raped from behind over the frame of the window by one of the unseen attackers. Graham holds her face throughout. As she slumps, he places his hands on her back and stage blood appears at the same time as Graham's back also begins to bleed.

The voices then proclaim, "Kill them all". Prolonged gunfire is heard while the set moves back to reveal a field of daffodils. As this happens, Grace, who is

nude from the waist down, climbs through the window onto the couch, and Graham climbs on top of her to protect her.

As the voices ask whether Tinker wants everyone dead, Tinker arrives, kneels beside Grace and promises to save her. Graham steps into the field of daffodils as Grace watches from the couch.

Scene Eleven

Content: Nudity, sexual performance and emotional distress.

Sensory information: The lighting is quite dark and a soundtrack runs throughout.

What happens: Robin visits the peep-show booth using his only token. He watches the Woman dance. They both attempt to reach each other through the window, but are cut short when the time on the booth runs out. Robin breaks down in tears.

Scene Twelve

Content: Forced medical treatment, simulated electroconvulsive treatment, psychological distress and hearing voices.

Sensory information: Flashing lights, bright lighting and loud electrical sounds.

What happens: Grace lies on the couch with Tinker kneeling beside her and Graham sitting amongst the daffodils. They both attempt to persuade her to

trust them. Grace is also hearing voices. Tinker subjects Grace to an electrical procedure intended to erase parts of her mind. The scene ends in flashing lights and loud sounds simulating electroconvulsive therapy.

Scene Thirteen

Content: Amputation, graphic injury, restraint, the sound of rats and screams.

Sensory information: Rats are heard moving through the daffodils. The child's singing grows to fill the auditorium. A very loud, harsh sound marks the sudden transition from Carl's dance to his restraint on the medical couch.

What happens: Carl and Rod are slumped on the floor. We hear rats scurrying through the daffodils. Rod reflects on what he would do if Tinker asked him to choose between himself and Carl. Through the tannoy, we hear a child singing Days by The Kinks. Carl stands up and steps into the daffodils to perform a dance for Rod. As he steps into this space, the song fills the whole auditorium and the lights increase in brightness.

The joyful dance of memory gradually becomes a dance of despair. Tinker enters and watches before instructing the unseen attackers to drag Carl back and pin him to the medical couch, where he cuts off Carl's feet as Rod watches.

In this production, the amputation of Carl's feet is abstracted by using plastic bags containing stage blood. Tinker secures bags to Carl's feet with gaffer tape before ripping them open with his teeth, allowing the stage blood to run down Carl's legs.

When Tinker leaves, Rod is heard laughing as Carl tries to stand and falls. As he falls, there is a sharp lighting and sound change into the next scene.

Scene Fourteen

Content: Nudity, coercive sexual behaviour, forced or coerced masturbation, humiliation, shouting, strong language and imposed identity.

Sensory information: Low light within the peep show setting. The scene includes sustained shouting and emotional distress.

What happens: Tinker puts another token into the peep-show booth to activate it. He refers to Woman as Grace and attempts to convince her to accept herself as she is, while simultaneously humiliating and controlling her. He shouts at her and pressures her to touch herself. Their interaction becomes increasingly distressing as she asks for help and he refuses.

Scene Fifteen

Content: Bullying, physical threats, humiliation, forced eating, references to sex work, involuntary urination and fire.

Sensory information: The scene includes shouting, visible flames and the burning of books.

What happens: Tinker finds Robin sleeping in the corner of the room. He goes to stroke his hair before suddenly pulling him up by it and interrogating him about a box of chocolates Robin has. Robin says they are for Grace. Tinker forces Robin to eat every chocolate. After Robin wets himself, Tinker humiliates him, makes him clean the floor and forces him to burn all the books associated with Grace.

Grace enters slowly and watches the fire in a heavily sedated state. She sits warming her hands by the fire while Graham remains near her feet.

Scene Sixteen

Content: Kissing, physical intimacy, simulated explicit sexual content, forcible restraint and dragging, throat-cutting, killing, death, references to burning a body and large quantities of stage blood.

Sensory information: The scene begins with soft music. This is interrupted by a sudden, very loud and distressing sound as Rod and Carl are forcibly dragged back into the room. The throat-cutting is represented more realistically than the earlier amputations and involves a large amount of stage blood.

What happens: Rod steps into the field of daffodils and Carl joins him. They have sex and reaffirm their love for one another. Afterwards, Rod gives Carl his ring by asking him to swallow it. Tinker enters and summons the unseen attackers, who forcibly drag Rod and Carl back into the room. Tinker asks Rod to choose between himself and Carl. When Rod chooses to sacrifice himself, Tinker cuts his throat and orders his body to be burned. Rod's body is dragged away as Carl watches. By this point in the production, the space is increasingly covered in blood.

Scene Seventeen

Content: A prolonged and realistic depiction of suicide by hanging, death, abandonment, hopelessness and grief.

Sensory information: The hanging sequence is sustained and detailed. In contrast to some of the more abstract violence elsewhere in the production, Robin's hanging is represented realistically. He remains visibly suspended as the scene continues, and the sequence contains prolonged emotional distress.

What happens: Robin attempts to engage Grace by showing her how far he has come with his counting. He counts the number of days he believes he has left in the institution. As he realises how long this will be, and that Grace no longer responds to him, his feelings of abandonment and hopelessness increase. He uses Grace's tights, which he has been wearing, to hang himself in the hallway. The action is shown in sustained detail, and Robin remains visibly suspended while Graham comforts him as he dies and Tinker leads Grace away.

Scene Eighteen

Content: Forced surgery, graphic surgical imagery, surgical alteration of the chest and genitals, partial nudity, blood, imposed gender and identity, and emotional distress.

Sensory information: The scene includes bloodied dressings and bandages covering the chest and genital area.

What happens: Grace wakes on the medical couch after surgery. She is wearing a hospital gown while Carl lies underneath the couch with a bloodied bandage covering his genital area.

Tinker enters and reveals that he has altered Grace's body to resemble Graham's. He leads her to the field of daffodils, where she removes her hospital gown and is seen wearing bandages covering her genitals and chest. Tinker tells her he must call her Graham from now on. Grace looks on, distressed. Graham appears holding a replica of his clothes. Tinker and Graham say goodbye to Grace before Graham hands her the clothes and leaves. Grace lies down amongst the daffodils.

Scene Nineteen

Content: Nudity, kissing, physical intimacy, simulated explicit sexual content and emotional intimacy.

What happens: Tinker stands in the field of daffodils and throws tokens into the peep show box. Woman greets him and asks if she can kiss him. She climbs out of the booth and joins him in the daffodils, where they kiss, undress and have simulated sex. Afterwards, she reveals that her name is Grace. They leave by climbing through the window frame and exiting through a door.

Scene Twenty

Content: Grief, rats, graphic injuries, despair, thoughts about death and emotional distress.

Sensory information: Rats are heard. The light grows progressively brighter until it becomes intensely bright, followed by a sudden blackout.

What happens: Grace, now fully embodying Graham, sits in the middle of the daffodils. Carl crawls towards her while putting on Grace's (formerly Robin's) dress and sits beside her. Grace speaks with Graham's voice – she mouths words that we hear as Graham in voiceover, reflecting on grief and love. Despite his injuries, Carl reaches out to Grace and they hold one another as the light builds to a strong, bright intensity before the play ends in a sudden blackout.

About the Almeida Theatre

How to get here

The Almeida Theatre is on Almeida Street in Islington. The postcode is N1 1TA. It is a large, white concrete building and it is situated halfway up the road.

The outside of the theatre looks like this:



Journey
to the
theatre

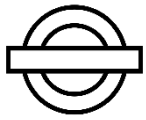
to the

The nearest underground stations are **Angel** on the Northern line or **Highbury & Islington** on the Victoria line, and London Overground.



You can find more information on our website here:

almeida.co.uk/your-visit/getting-here/



Highbury & Islington Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Highbury & Islington** station looks like outside.



Follow the path out of the station to the right onto Upper Street.
The theatre is about 1 kilometre down the road on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Highbury, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is Union Chapel.
It is near bus stop G.



If you don't want to walk, you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at St Mary's church - bus stop N – for the theatre.

This is where Upper Street
crosses Islington Park Street
and Canonbury Lane.

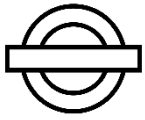


This is Islington Town Hall.



This is what Almeida Street
looks like as you arrive at the
theatre.





Angel Station to Almeida Theatre

This is what **Angel** station looks like outside.



From Angel station, turn right onto Upper Street and cross the busy road at the pedestrian crossing.

Continue along Upper Street for about 1 kilometre.

The theatre is on the left on Almeida Street.

On your journey down from Angel, you will pass these **landmarks**:

This is the main bus stop across the road from Angel station – bus stop Y.





If you don't want to walk you can get buses 4, 19, 30 or 43 and get off at bus stop P, opposite St Mary's church.

This is Islington Green.



This is St. Mary's Church.



This is what Almeida Street looks like as you arrive at the theatre.



About the Almeida Theatre

Information about the theatre

You can watch a video tour of the building on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/access/>

Inside the main entrance of the theatre, there is a foyer where people can wait. This is what the foyer looks like.



It can get quite busy here before the start of the play.



When you arrive, the front of house team will greet you.



There are lots of staff available in the building if you have questions or if you would like directions to your seats. They are very happy to help you.

Almeida Theatre staff wear black t-shirts with white writing.



If you need help with your ticket, you can speak to the box office team. It can be quite noisy at the box office, and you may have to wait in a queue. Their desk looks like this.



If you have a digital ticket, you can find it in your email inbox, and it will look like this.

**ALMEIDA
THEATRE**

Romans, a novel
Relaxed Environment



Performance date
Wed 1 Oct

Start time
7:30 PM

Section	Row	Seat
CIRCLE	F	12

Please use on street entrance

Mr Al Meida

Order No: 1137734

£0.00 **Ticket type:** Complimentary

Latecomers may not be admitted
[Click here to read our full terms and conditions](#)

Box Office **020 7359 4404**
Almeida Theatre, London N1 1TA
almeida.co.uk



Supported through public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

The Front of House assistants will scan your ticket as you enter the auditorium.



The entrance to the stalls is via the ramp to the right of the foyer.



The entrance to the circle is on the outside of the building located to the right of the main entrance.



There is step-free access to the foyer and stalls. There is one accessible toilet at the back of the foyer.

This is the café and bar, where you can buy hot and cold drinks and food.





If you have any questions or feel worried about your visit, please do contact us at access@almeida.co.uk or call our box office on **020 7359 4404**.

Opening Hours

You can find our Box Office opening hours on our website here:

<https://almeida.co.uk/your-visit/booking-information/>

The Almeida Café & Bar opens two hours before every performance and remains open until 11 pm, with the kitchen closing 30 minutes before the show starts.

The auditorium opens 30 minutes before the performance begins – you are welcome to take your seats from then.