

Touch Tour Programme Notes

Tell Me Where It Hurts is a play performed by three actors. The central character, Chrissy, remains the same character throughout, while the other two actors play multiple roles. The play explores Chrissy's tumultuous life living with premenstrual dysphoric disorder, or PMDD, and the effect it has on her work, relationships, sense of identity and mental wellbeing.

The play is structured around Chrissy's menstrual cycle. Different phases of her cycle affect her mood, energy and ability to deal with situations. Changes in sound and projection indicate which phase of her cycle she is experiencing. There are three different visual representations used to show Chrissy's menstrual cycle phases.

When you hear **[sound will be played]**, Chrissy is in her luteal phase. This is the phase of her menstrual cycle in which her PMDD symptoms are at their most severe and difficult to manage.

During this phase, the projection shows a large circular graph. The numbers 1 to 28 are arranged around the circumference of the circle, representing the 28 days of Chrissy's menstrual cycle. At the centre of the circle is a red, fiery ball. The ball moves and breathes like flames, giving the impression of something hot, alive and unstable.

When you hear **[sound will be played]**, Chrissy is in her follicular phase. This is the phase in which she feels most like herself and is better able to deal with situations. The same circular graph appears, with the numbers 1 to 28 arranged around its circumference. The central shape has changed from red to blue. Rather than appearing fiery, it moves with a fluid, flowing quality, like water.

When you hear **[sound will be played]**, Chrissy is in her ovulation phase. This phase is represented as a period of heightened energy, joy and elation. The same circular cycle graph remains on screen, but the central shape is now pink and glowing.

When you hear **[sound will be played]**, the projection indicates the specific day of Chrissy's cycle. A number around the outside of the circular graph is circled to show which day she is experiencing.

Throughout the play, dates are also projected onto the screen. They are shown when you hear this sound **[sound will be played]**. These indicate when time has passed between scenes.

THE SET – *During the touch tour, participants will be invited to explore selected elements of the set while they are described.*

The set has a deliberately clinical, medical appearance.

At the back of the stage are two large medical-blue curtains. They are hung from silver metal scaffolding. The scaffolding is on wheels, although the curtains and scaffolding remain at the back of the stage and do not move during the performance. They hang vertically from the metal framework. Pictures are attached to the curtains using wire and hooks. These include two photographs of Chrissy and Nathan. One photograph shows them on their wedding day and the other shows them together at a festival. The remaining images are medical diagrams, which contribute to the clinical appearance of the space. There is also a school poster which reads: "always at our best."

On stage right is a black hospital bed. A sheet of white medical tissue is laid across the top of the bed.

Next to the bed is a large, heavy piece of medical machinery, used in the piece as an ultrasound machine. It has a rectangular screen at the top and an ultrasound probe attached to it. At the front of the machine is a white metal basket containing various pieces of medical apparatus. The basket is open, allowing the equipment inside to be seen. The machinery is supported by a long metal, tube-like base which extends downwards and outwards to three legs. Each leg has a wheel, allowing the machine to be rolled around the space.

Beside the bed are white plastic drawers. A projector sits on top of the drawers. The projector projects images onto a rectangular white screen positioned on the right-hand side of the medical curtain.

On stage left is a white square wooden table. Around the table are two black metal chairs.

Also on stage left, is a doctor's chair. It has a wooden frame and blue fabric seating.

The set remains the same, with occasional objects being moved at times to show the different locations, which are - secondary school settings, Chrissy and Nathan's home, and medical or hospital environments.

A white long cotton tablecloth with purple lines is placed over the white table and a salmon-coloured blanket is placed over the doctor's chair during scenes between Chrissy and Nathan, helping to transform the clinical-looking set into their home.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

Chrissy

Chrissy is a white woman in her thirties with long ginger hair and blue eyes.

She wears a red teacher's lanyard with her photograph and name displayed on it. She wears a white top with sleeves reaching to her elbows, dangly silver earrings, floaty purple patterned trousers and purple leather boots. When Chrissy enters from outside, she wears a long violet coat over her costume.

Changes in her physicality, voice, mood and the projection indicate the different phases of her menstrual cycle rather than changes in her costume.

Nathan, Headteacher, Doctor and Trainee

The actor who plays Nathan also plays the Headteacher, Doctor and Trainee. He is a white man in his thirties with short blonde hair and blue eyes. The characters share elements of the same base costume, with additional clothing and accessories used to distinguish them.

Nathan wears a white top and cream trousers. When he is at home with Chrissy, he wears a blue-and-white checked shirt, which is worn open and unbuttoned over his white top. He wears purple socks without shoes when inside their house. At other points, he wears black leather sliders.

As the doctor, he wears the same white top and cream trousers as Nathan, with a black blazer and an NHS-blue lanyard worn over the top.

As the Headteacher, he wears the same white top and cream trousers, with a red school lanyard, a long purple cardigan and black shoes.

As the trainee, he wears the same white top and cream trousers, with a large white medical tunic worn over the top.

Annie, Doctor and Gynaecologist

The actor who plays Annie also plays a doctor and gynaecologist. She is a white woman with blue eyes and blonde hair of short stature.

Annie is presented as a 15-year-old schoolgirl. She wears a school uniform consisting of a red jumper, with a white shirt underneath, grey school trousers and black socks without shoes. Her hair is tied up in a high ponytail. Annie often carries a small black rucksack or schoolwork, which helps establish her as a school student.

When playing the doctor, the actor wears the same white shirt and trousers, with a white lab coat over the top and black trainers.

The gynaecologist wears the same costume as the doctor and is distinguished primarily through the actor's accent, rather than through a change in costume.

THE PLAY

The play begins in darkness. A projection of the red fiery luteal ball appears on the screen. Chrissy stands directly in front of the projection so that the red fiery image appears across her stomach.

The date December 2023 is then displayed on the projection.

Chrissy then steps forward into a school assembly. A spotlight comes up on her.

When Chrissy shouts "I said I can do it," the sound builds to a crescendo. At this moment, the red fiery ball on the projection suddenly expands. It grows outward until the red fiery image fills the entire projection screen. It then rapidly contracts back into the centre of the circular cycle graph. The number 23 is then circled on the graph, indicating that Chrissy is now on day 23 of her menstrual cycle.

On the line "and it started because you were upset," the doctor enters. He sits at the white table on stage left typing on a black laptop, Chrissy joins him.

Following this, when you hear **[sound will be played]**, Chrissy's cycle moves from the luteal phase into the follicular phase. Chrissy stands at the front of the stage and takes a deep breath. On the projection, the central shape changes from the red, fiery ball into the blue, fluid shape. The number 10 is circled on the cycle graph, showing that Chrissy is now on day 10 of her cycle.

Chrissy sorts through a pile of plays/scripts on the table, now in her home.

The projected date changes to November 2024. This indicates that more than a year has passed since the previous scene.

After Nathan is handed his notepad and says "my comedy genius," he tries to squeeze a pair of black leather work shoes onto his feet. They are too small for him, leading him to say "sorry" when they do not fit.

Later in the scene, when Nathan says "the piggies are hurt. Say sorry to them," he playfully tries to put his feet close to Chrissy's face. Chrissy runs away from him, and they eventually come together in a loving embrace.

In the following scene, the sound **[play Crucible wind]** indicates that we have entered the world of *The Crucible*.

Annie enters into a spotlight and becomes a character from *The Crucible*, reciting a monologue. The lighting then changes sharply, bringing us into the school drama studio with Chrissy and the headteacher.

At the end of this scene, Chrissy's cycle changes again. When you hear **[sound will be played]**, the projected central shape changes from the blue, fluid follicular ball to the pink, glowing ovulation ball.

Chrissy stands at the front of the stage. She takes a deep breath and smiles. The circular cycle graph then reappears around the pink glowing ball and the number 14 is circled, indicating that Chrissy is now on day 14 of her cycle.

The next scene takes place in Chrissy and Nathan's home.

When Chrissy says "let's loosen you up a bit," she pulls Nathan up from his seat and encourages him to dance. As music plays, they dance together. When Nathan says "Now?", he lifts Chrissy onto the table. The couple kiss passionately while the pink glowing ovulation ball remains visible on the projection behind them.

As the music begins to distort, the couple leave the space. The projected pink ball changes back into the red, fiery luteal ball and the number 16 is circled, indicating that Chrissy has moved into day 16 of her cycle.

The action then returns to the school drama studio. During the scene, Chrissy becomes frustrated and shouts "Annie!" Her bag falls onto the floor and its contents spill out. The contents include sanitary towels, a packet of contraceptive pills and ibuprofen.

During the next scene, Chrissy and Nathan are at home having dinner.

Chrissy brings out two bowls of food, cutlery and a jug and places them on the white table.

Following this, the action quickly returns to the school. After Annie says "Liars get their tongues cut out" the lighting changes, Annie enters a spotlight and we return to the world of *The Crucible*.

The projection then appears again, showing the red, fiery luteal ball with the number 18 circled. This indicates that the story has moved to day 18 of Chrissy's cycle.

It is now the following morning at Chrissy and Nathan's home. Nathan is sitting at the laptop in the doctor's chair on stage left. When Chrissy says "I'm sorry, I love you," you will hear **[sound will be played]**. At this point, Chrissy's different worlds begin to merge and change rapidly. Chrissy turns and sees that Nathan has become the headteacher, and the setting has changed from their home to the school.

Annie then enters and the headteacher leaves.

The scene becomes increasingly physical and distressed. As Chrissy tries to leave, Annie flips one of the black metal chairs over onto its side and picks the chair up aggressively. Chrissy grabs the opposite side of the chair while it is raised in the air. The two women hold opposite sides of the chair before Chrissy takes it from Annie.

Throughout the scene, Annie becomes increasingly distressed and agitated. She throws a copy of *The Crucible* play text to the floor and starts to physically hurt herself by digging her fingernails into her arm, pulling her own hair and hitting her arms and legs.

Chrissy attempts to stop Annie. During the struggle, Annie accidentally hits Chrissy across the face before the headteacher enters.

Following this, Chrissy sits in the doctor's chair on stage left with the salmon-coloured blanket wrapped around her. The cycle graphic reappears on the projection. The central shape is the red, fiery luteal ball and the number 19 is circled, indicating day 19 of Chrissy's cycle.

When Nathan enters, he places a small knitted white baby jacket onto the table. Chrissy notices the jacket and asks, "what is that?"

Later in the scene, when Chrissy says "did you just put those on," she is referring to the black leather sliders Nathan is wearing.

In the next scene, the circular cycle graphic appears again. The number 20 is circled. The doctor enters and sits at the white table with the laptop. Chrissy and Nathan move to the opposite side of the table, creating the setting of the doctor's surgery.

When the doctor leaves, Chrissy and Nathan return to their home.

Nathan places car keys onto the table. When Chrissy says, "you mean you can't, you can't deal with me when I'm like this," she picks up the car keys and presses them into her arm. Nathan tries to stop her and eventually guides Chrissy off stage.

When Nathan is left alone, music plays. He picks up the small knitted white baby jacket from the table. He looks at it sadly before putting it away inside the white plastic drawers beside the hospital bed.

The cycle graphic appears again. The central shape is the red, fiery ball and the number 21 is circled.

Chrissy and the headteacher enter in the school setting. When the headteacher says "do some yoga," he exits. The red fiery ball appears again on the projection and the number 22 is circled.

Chrissy is now alone in a supermarket. Nathan enters carrying a shopping basket. When Nathan says "you have wronged me in many ways," the lighting suddenly flashes red. For a moment, the action enters the world of *The Crucible* as it exists within Chrissy's mind. The scene repeatedly moves between the supermarket and Chrissy's imagined *Crucible* world until it is all engulfing. Annie enters to join this dystopia. The two actors torment and surround Chrissy. At the same time, the red fiery ball on the projection suddenly expands outwards until it engulfs the entire projection screen. As this happens, projected dates rapidly change, moving between dates from the 1800s and modern day. This represents Chrissy's mind becoming overwhelmed and the different worlds and time periods merging together.

At the end, the two actors push Chrissy down onto the hospital bed. Chrissy shouts "STOP." At this moment, the projection cuts out abruptly and the other two actors leave the stage.

Chrissy remains lying on the hospital bed while a voice-over plays.

Following this, the projected date changes and we jump forward in time to December 2024. Despite the change in year, Chrissy is still experiencing the luteal phase of her cycle. The projection shows the red fiery ball and the number 18 is circled. The two other actors re-enter as a gynaecologist and a trainee.

When the gynaecologist approaches Chrissy and says "might be a bit uncomfortable." A lightweight blue cloth is placed over Chrissy. The gynaecologist goes under the blue cloth and uses a plastic speculum during the examination, followed by a long medical swab.

When performing the transabdominal ultrasound scan, the ultrasound machine is wheeled towards Chrissy, and the attached ultrasound probe is placed against Chrissy's lower stomach. As the scan takes place, an image of an ultrasound with a baby appears on the projection screen. The baby is not physically present. It represents what Chrissy imagines in her mind.

When the two women discuss a hysterectomy, the trainee begins fiddling with the hospital bed and the gynaecologist gestures for him to leave, leaving the two women alone.

The gynaecologist eventually leaves. The number 23 is circled on the cycle graphic, and Nathan appears back at Chrissy's flat.

Following Nathan saying "Chrissy, I love you," Chrissy responds "please." The scene then merges the worlds of Chrissy and Annie. Annie enters and sits on the hospital bed. She has a sharp nail file, which she uses to dig into her fingers and legs, expressing her discomfort through self-harm. Meanwhile, Chrissy searches desperately around her flat for painkillers. She searches through drawers before eventually emptying the contents of her bag onto the floor.

Chrissy then recites text from *The Crucible* before exiting the stage.

Annie notices the large number of pill packets scattered across the floor. She picks them up and exits carrying a handful of packets.

The red fiery ball appears once more on the projection. It then changes into the blue, fluid follicular ball, indicating that Chrissy's cycle has changed and she is returning to a phase in which she feels more like herself. The number 1 is circled on the cycle graphic. Chrissy returns to the stage and begins tidying the space.

The action then moves to the hospital. Annie is sitting on the hospital bed wearing a hospital gown. Chrissy sits on a chair beside the bed.

When Chrissy says "I'd be honoured," she leaves *The Crucible* play text on the end of Annie's bed before exiting.

The lights dim around Annie.

The action then shifts to Chrissy and Nathan, who are outside in the hospital corridor. Nathan enters wearing the pair of black leather work shoes seen earlier in the play. When Chrissy says "I've found these," she takes the gold sliders from out of her bag and Nathan puts them on.

When the sound of babies crying is heard Chrissy waves through the window towards the babies.

When Chrissy & Nathan exit, the lights come back up on Annie, stage right, sitting on the hospital bed. Annie notices the copy of *The Crucible* that Chrissy left on the end of the bed. She picks up the play text and begins to read it; content.