Welcome to these pre-show notes for Parliament Square by James Fritz, in a co production by Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre and the Bush theatre.

This production is directed by Jude Christian, the designer is Fly Davis, the lighting is by Jack Knowles and the sound is by Ben and Max Ringham.

The audio described performance takes place on Saturday January the 6.th There’s a touch tour at 1.30 to allow us to visit the set, handle the props and perhaps meet some of the actors. Please let the Box Office know if you’d like to attend the touch tour so that we have an idea of numbers. Then these notes will be read live through the headset at 2.20, before the performance begins at half past two.

The play lasts for about 1 hour and twenty minutes without an interval, and I do need to warn you that this production makes use of smoke and haze effects, strobe lighting, and very bright flashing lights.

The leaflet asks: ‘HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO FOR WHAT YOU BELIEVE IN? Kat gets up one morning, leaves her family behind, and travels to London to carry out an act that will change her life and, she hopes, everyone else’s. But what are the real consequences?

It goes on: ‘James Fritz’s searingly powerful play won a Judges Award in the 2015 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting. Raw, disturbing and compassionate, it forces a confrontation with some of the most urgent questions we face. What can one individual do to effect change? And where do we choose to draw the line between absolute commitment and dangerous obsession?’

As we take our seats the stage is in full view, surrounded on all four sides by ranks of tiered seating. .

The floor is pale grey - made up of large, rectangular panels, which are screwed down at the corners, and have a matt finish. Sometimes the light is a cold grey, and at other times a warm golden yellow, and it often shifts very quickly, marking the changes in time.

The play is in three acts. During act 1, some of the characters are disembodied voices. When these voices speak, one of the lights above the stage glows brighter, and the characters onstage look up towards the light.

At the end of act 1 there is a short burst of strobe lighting, and during acts 2 and 3, the lighting state flicks from bright light to pitch dark without warning, sometimes several times in quick succession, to suggest lapsing in and out of consciousness, and the passage of time.

In the very centre of the stage is a bedside lamp, with a plain silvery base and a cream textured shade. The lamp is lit, the shade creating a warm yellow glow. There are 4 main, double-door entranceways evenly spaced around the stage, with smaller single doors in between. A large blue plastic container, on wheels, is positioned in one corner. Close to the lamp is a pale blue mug with 3 toothbrushes – one electric and two manual. There are a number of other items around the space, creating a wider circle around the lamp .

If we work our way around the circle – near the blue bin, to its right, is a pale wooden step stool – it has 2 steps, with a carrying handle cut out of the seat. On its right is a dark green spider plant in a cream patterned pot. Further round, a small portable digital radio – silvery metal and pale wood.

To its right, opposite the bin, is a pair of child-size dark green crocodile wellies, with pale green zigzags down the backs. Nearby, a square cushion, with a pale grey and cream pattern. Further round again is a turquoise curved/ergonomic water bottle with a sippy lid, then a silver electric kettle, and finally a honey-coloured teddy bear, with a gold ribbon tied in a bow around its neck.

In act 2, a white-framed hospital bed is wheeled into the centre of the space. It has a large white angle-poise lamp is attached to the head of the bed.

A single, pale wooden chair with a light green fabric seat and back is placed at 6 o’clock, and a white metal-framed chair on small solid wheels is positioned at 11 o’clock. A single crutch leans against this chair.

For act 3, the space is empty. As the characters appear onstage, they each bring a pale wooden step-stool which they sit or stand on.

There is a cast of 7 actors, some of whom play more than one part. Some of the characters are disembodied voices.

The central character is **Cat.** She is in her early 30s, slender with long brown hair pinned back in a straggly bun, a thin, pale face and intense blue eyes. Cat wears a long, pale grey cardigan over a white vest, with blue jeans with rolled cuffs, and pale grey Adidas trainers. Her shoulders are rounded, and she habitually pulls the cardigan sleeves down to cover her hands. When Cat uses her mobile, she does not produce a phone, and she does not mime using one. She talks upwards into a spotlight. Cat is played by Esther Smith.

In act 1, the only other character we meet is not named in the dialogue, but is listed in the programme as **Voice**. Voice is played by Loyce Chimimba – she is about the same height and build as Cat, with a coffee-coloured complexion, her corkscrew-curly black hair pinned in an untidy bun on top of her head. She has watchful green eyes, high cheekbones and full lips. Voice wears a pale grey T-shirt with black jeans, with black and grey patterned socks and black and white trainers. Full of confidence, she strides around the space, shoulders back, head held high, issuing orders and observing Cat’s interactions with the disembodied voices.

Later, in act 3, Loyce Chimimba plays **Jo**, Kat’s daughter, wearing black denim dungarees over a white Adidas T-shirt with black stripes, and the same black and grey socks and black and white trainers, her hair in a ponytail.

**Cat’s mum** is in her 50s, with short, wavy grey hair, a washed-out complexion, and dark shadows under her watery blue eyes. Mum wears a navy blue blouse with a pattern of tiny white flowers, over a round-necked T-shirt, blue jeans and brown suede lace-up shoes. Mum is played by Joanne Howarth.

**Tommy**, Cat’s husband, is played by black actor Damola Adelaja [Adel-AR-jah] He is not overly tall, but is powerfully built, with broad shoulders and a narrow waist.

His black hair is neatly trimmed into a short afro style, back from a high square forehead and his expressive dark eyes betray a range of extreme emotions. Tommy wears a dark blue and green checked shirt, with blue jeans and brown suede boots.

**Catherine** is aged around 20, played by black actress Seraphina Beh. She is tall and curvaceous, her hair cut into a short bob, shaved around her ears. She has almond-shaped dark eyes, accentuated with a swoop of black eyeliner, and a broad, ready smile which illuminates her face.

Catherine wears a baggy, pale blue denim shirt over a white crop-top, revealing a glimpse of toned tummy, with black leggings with a wide white stripe down the sides, and white trainers with black socks. When we first meet Catherine, her body language is relaxed and open, her dark eyes twinkling.

**The physio** is tall and slender, her glossy blonde hair in a high ponytail, with a hint of makeup around her glinting blue eyes, and a porcelain complexion. The physio wears a floaty, charcoal grey blouse with maroon trousers and white trainers. She strides around, both harsh/hard/heartless and encouraging. The physio is played by Kelly Hotten.

Kelly Hotten also plays the disembodied voice of the ticket woman, and the work colleague, who is just a voice in act 1, and later wears a cream cable-knit jumper with black and white patterned trousers.

**The doctor** is played by Jamie Zubairi. [Zoo-BEARy] He is sturdily built, with thick black hair slicked back from a round face, a tanned complexion and twinkling dark eyes. The doctor wears a pale blue shirt, open at the collar with the sleeves rolled up to the elbows, with dark grey trousers and black shoes. Jamie Zubairi also plays the voice of the taxi driver, and later a friend, wearing a navy blue knitted jumper, beige slacks and grey trainers.

And that is the end of these pre-show notes.