



Immersive ***live music*** shows that  
***tell stories*** to explore ***mental health***

Hold the Drama Promo Pack

Hold the Drama delivers *immersive shows* that use *high-quality live music* and *physical theatre* to tell stories with contemporary themes: modern family units, isolation, resilience, social cohesion, mental health and wellbeing.

**Our shows are non-verbal and challenge audiences to interpret the dramatic, visual, and live musical cues in their own way. Post show, we leave space for them to share their ideas using a range of activities and tools, from open discussion to creating artistic responses based on their own diverse lived experiences, opinions and outlooks. Our shows help to develop a shared language for talking about mental health, whilst improving social cohesion, acceptance and understanding of others' views.**

Hold the Drama also work with Higher Education students and teachers to develop their own skills in designing and leading arts projects, providing professional development training (CPD). Together since 2018, Hold the Drama have performed to more than **6,000 children** across the UK in live and digital settings, and completed two creative residencies at Snape Maltings, including premiering our second show in the Britten Pears Studio and a local care home.

In 2022, Hold the Drama were commissioned by the Royal Academy of Music to work with its students, a local primary school, to create a response to our show, Stripes. The resulting musical, the Royal Academy of Detectives, was co-written with and performed by Year 3 and their teachers, alongside RAM students in the Susie Sainsbury Theatre (RAM) in February 2023.

Hold the Drama have been grateful recipients of four rounds of National Lottery funding from Arts Council England, and have developed partnerships with Wardens Trust, Sunderland Empire, Griffin Schools Trust, and local music hubs across England. Hold The Drama artists are all freelance musicians with experience working with other leading organisations including Wigmore Hall, English National Opera, Orchestra of The Age of Enlightenment, Royal Opera House and the London Musical Theatre Orchestra.

**This brochure introduces Hold the Drama's approach and our two touring shows.**



Above: Edward Edgcumbe (Voice), Frances Leith (Horn), Joe Cummings (Piano), Matthew Wilsher (Clarinet), Alice Poppleton (Violin), Cliona Ni Choileáin (Cello).

## What we do

**Hold the Drama uses music to start conversations around social cohesion, wellbeing and mental health. We find audiences of all ages can both articulate the plots of our shows, and then unpick their own emotional responses with inspiring clarity.**

Each performance begins with a physical and vocal warm-up, followed by a live (or digital) show, and finishes with a Q&A. We adapt the framework to suit the setting, including special educational needs (SEND) schools, social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) schools, care homes, and public performances.

In schools, we provide a follow-up **classroom pack** which teachers are encouraged to use to explore the PSHE themes and musical elements of the show. This approach can unlock powerful discussions in which audience members use what they've seen to reflect on their personal experiences.

**One audience member's response following the premiere of Spark at Snape Maltings:**

☺☺☺

It was **full of things** that made you realise how isolated people can be, how intolerant people can be... but also, through the music, it showed you how people could come back together... **I thought it was extraordinary.**

We take enormous care to frame the show and our discussions in safe and appropriate ways. We provide suggestions for where audience members can go to find further support and information about the issues raised by our work.

**Louise Keller, a UKCP & BACP registered child & adolescent psychotherapist, came to watch Stripes during our Waltham Forest Tour:**

☺☺☺

I had the privilege of seeing Hold the Drama perform to Years 3 & 4. The children were enrapt from beginning to end and it was **incredibly moving** to see the group burst into spontaneous song as they recognised one of the pieces played.

The play is **a fantastic vehicle for children** to explore important themes around identity, friendship and collaboration. At a time when the emotional wellbeing of children couldn't be more pressing, **every school in the UK would be wise to include Stripes as part of their mental health programme.**





## What our shows do

We have two shows which we perform in a range of contexts. Each show stitches together extracts and arrangements of pieces from across the classical, improvised and contemporary music spectrum, and represents a diverse range of composers (e.g. black, female), to tell their stories. Shows are performed by six actor musicians who convey the narrative through their playing.

### Our two shows:



**Stripes** is aimed at Key Stage 2 level audiences and has proven to be impactful in special educational needs (SEND) and social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) settings, as well as intergenerational audiences.

Both shows explore vulnerability and themes around mental health, and we are experienced in facilitating conversations with the audience after a performance.

Our shows are **non-verbal**, plots are non-didactic and audience participatory elements, which engage



**Spark** is aimed at slightly older audiences (e.g. Key Stage 3, adult groups, care home settings, and intergenerational audiences), and invites engagement with deep emotions in complex social situations.

the audience with their critical and creative selves, makes both shows highly accessible.

Previous tours have proven that performances to targeted groups and audiences are more impactful than public performances, as it allows for more open and flowing discussion, as well as follow up work.



**Stripes** follows six characters as they discover what it means to be an individual and to find their own voice in a group. The show explores themes of friendship, empathy, resilience, identity, difference, change, and respect.

Aimed at younger audiences and their families, Stripes gives children the opportunity to engage with high-quality live music and physical theatre, while connecting with emotions and scenarios they may have experienced or observed in their lives.

Thanks to its non-verbal presentation, we often get particularly strong responses from children who are reticent to share their perspective in other settings.

These are just a few comments from children who've seen Stripes:

“ ”

It made me feel better about being different and I really felt the emotion.

“ ”

I learnt that I don't have to fit in, I can follow my dreams.

“ ”

You don't need words to tell a story. Don't judge a person before you know what they want to say.

“ ”

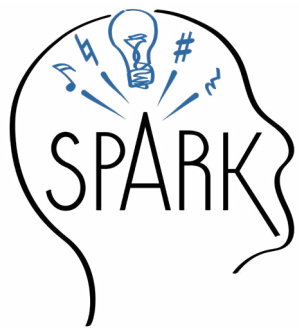
If someone is brave enough to try something new we should all listen.



Click here to watch our trailer or scan the QR:







**Spark explores the restorative qualities of community and friendship in the face of clashing personalities, hurt feelings, and isolation. The six characters' relationships change as they play in new and different combinations, from private duets to raucous ensembles.**

Aimed at older audiences, in more intimate settings, Spark invites engagement with deep emotions in complex social situations.

**We've had powerful and personal responses from audience members, including:**

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I saw my recent burnout and the way that **my friends rallied around me**.

☺☺

The **power of another person reaching out** to help was so wonderfully conveyed.

☺☺

Life. **It was all of life**. It could be applied to any social context.



**Click here to watch our trailer or scan the QR:**



## What our audiences say

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Five stars. They are extremely impressive. Their show is outstanding. I could watch them all day. It shows that you can be different which is a very important. Even though they don't speak you can feel their music as if they were talking. You need to watch it!

**School children, Isle of Wight Residency 2023**

☺☺☺

It tells you how to work together.  
**School children, Sheffield Tour 2023**

☺☺☺

With it being a non-verbal show - everyone could follow and infer what was happening through the music, facial expressions and movement. It was accessible for all. It was about something everyone has experienced - being different, following a rule/routine that they don't want to do.

**Classroom teacher, Sheffield Tour 2023**

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I give Stripes a 5 star rating because they were funny, confident and the message is [that] people are different and you have to respect that!

**School children, Isle of Wight Residency 2023**

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The school hasn't had music on the curriculum for some time. **I guess we need to find a way to put music back on the curriculum!**

**Head teacher, SEMH school, Sheffield Tour 2023**

☺☺☺

True friends forgive each other after an argument.  
**School children, Sheffield Tour 2023**

☺☺☺

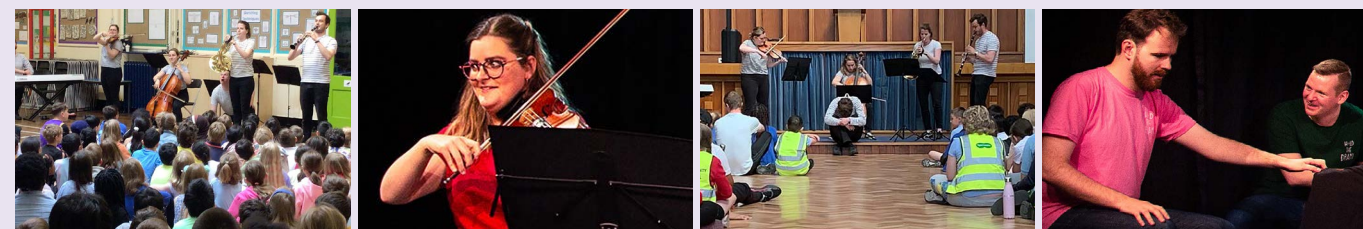
I really enjoyed the invitation to interpret the performance individually. It really made me connect personally with the art knowing that the person next to me might be experiencing it in a totally different way!

**Spark Audience, Sheffield**

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Great musicians and performers with a really engaging way of telling stories, firing up one's imagination and thinking! HtD is very skilled at encouraging audience participation.

**Spark Audience, Sheffield**





## What we offer

**Bespoke performances**

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**Creative music and drama projects  
inspired by the themes in our shows**

.....

**Professional development**



***Every school*** in the UK would be wise to ***include Stripes*** as part of their mental health programme.

Louise Keller, UKCP & BACP Registered Child & Adolescent Psychotherapist

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**To find out more about how we can connect with your audience:**

**Email Frances Leith:** [producer@holdthedrama.co.uk](mailto:producer@holdthedrama.co.uk)

**Visit our website:** [holdthedrama.co.uk](http://holdthedrama.co.uk)

**Find us on social media:**

**X:** @drama\_hold

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