



RICHARD LANDER SCHOOL PRESENTS

**SMILEY
FACE
SPECIAL EDITION**



If you're happy and you know it, count your likes.

What is 'Smiley Face'?

This year's Richard Lander School Production, 'Smiley Face,' has been written by Pipeline Theatre's playwright Jon Welch in collaboration with our students. To write it Jon facilitated workshops in school and got to know our students' strengths, interests and concerns...

He then wrote this dystopian story, set in 3 very different schools in the not too distant future. It's a world where at age 11, a student's adult life has already been decided. Boys attending 'Goldman Sachs' are destined for a career as a stockbroker or banker. Girls attending 'L'Oreal' blog beauty secrets, take lessons in how to laugh at men's jokes and stay thin, and never go a day without updating their social media. Meanwhile, at the 'Dream Academy' the 'rest' live in a virtual

world whilst doing the jobs no one else wants to...

Over 100 students are involved as writers, actors, musicians, and technical support. This promises to be an unforgettable school play which is nothing like other school plays. It's fresh, new and tackles the concern of our students with humour and a fantastic story.

Don't miss out, get your tickets from Student Reception for £5 adult /£3 concessions!



Students painting banners today but which school is which?

IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION..

Interview with the 'Smiley Face' playwright Jon Welch

Meet debutant 'Sidney' from **L'Oreal** and find out more about this all-girl school

'Hope' tells us about a day in the life of a **Dream Academy** student

Goldman Sachs prodigy 'Parker' shares his ambitions and expectations for life.



**Interview
with the
Playwright**



Lily Bossey and Lucy Fripp from Year 8 interviewed 'Smiley Face' playwright, **Jon Welch** to find out more about the inspiration, story and writing process. They also asked a few random questions!

The play is called 'Smiley Face'. Does that mean it is happy and light-hearted?

Well... not so much! It's kind of a satire, imagining an alternate reality, which is a distortion of the real world. So there's room for humour there, but at the same time it's reflecting issues (particularly those which are currently impacting on young people) that some people find troubling. So I guess it's asking serious questions.

What inspired you to write Smiley Face?

I tend to write to the casting I'm faced with and at Richard Lander I was faced with many girls and not many boys! So the idea of looking at gender issues seemed appropriate. And around the time the project was being conceived there were a few TV programs floating around about how boys and girls are set on pre-determined gender trajectories from birth (girls like pink and boys don't cry, etc. etc.) and whether that could/should be changed. Also in the news there was increasing evidence of the on-line world affecting young people's mental health, particularly that of girls. So that's all been thrown into the mix.

How did you find working with RLS students during the writing process?

Well - during the conception process we had a few chats about these issues, but in the writing, I tend to disappear into my burrow and just get on with it. Then there

comes the frightening moment of sharing a few early draft scenes with students to try out, to see whether they work, and whether the students like the ideas and the writing, whether they 'get it'. And Richard Lander students have been particularly generous in getting on board, buying into the premise (which, in fairness, takes a fair bit of getting one's head around!), and being really helpful in terms of making suggestions, and taking ownership.

Which of the three schools in Smiley Face would you have most liked / been most likely to go to?

Although it pains me to admit it, I actually went to a school a little bit like the boys' school - 'Goldman Sachs'. There were no girls until the sixth form, and it was all pretty competitive. Now I'm a firm believer in the state system (both my children went to state school), and I don't see why state schools shouldn't be as well resourced as fee-paying ones. I think if you have differently resourced and populated schools, you increase the separation between social 'tribes', and decrease the chance of social mobility. So, to answer the question - If I had to choose, I'd probably go to the Dream Academy (where the no-hopers go), but I'd rather the overall options were better!

How far into the future do you think the events of Smiley Face are from the current day?

Hopefully so far that they'll never happen to that extent! But that's the point - all the elements that are

exaggerated in the play (gender stereotyping, sexism, obsessive use of social media, body fascism, etc.) are actually happening right now, and all the play seeks to ask is: are we ok with that, or do we want to change things?

What is your opinion on social media?

Hypocritical! Although last year I deactivated my Facebook account. I think there's more and more evidence of the harm it can do. It ghettoises people, it allows people to express hate without any repercussions, it shows other people leading unattainably perfect lives, it gives you a daily addictive dopamine hit (the 'like'), and it records every online mistake you might ever make. Over time, we might evolve to live with this new world, but I don't know if, in doing so, it'll make us 'better' humans.

Do you think being a teenager now is harder than when you were at secondary school?

Yes I do. For the reasons above. When I was a teenager life was a series of mistakes interrupted by sleep (actually it still is). I remember trying out new personalities like you might try on shoes, trying to work out my place in my social circle, who I was, where I fitted in, obsessing about whether I was popular enough, funny enough, whether I was ever going to get a girl-friend, looking, as I did, like a fourteen-year-old Woody Allen. If I imagine feeling all that, when you're as sensitive to it all as you'll ever be, under the social media spotlight, whilst being bombarded with global bad news,



Jon Welch working with students in a workshop last September



endless click-bait, the seemingly incessant pressure of working towards the best possible grades (without which you're apparently doomed), it's amazing that any of you still seem to be so cheerful!

Have you ever written a musical?

No, but I'd love to! In fact, that question has made me want to, so watch this space!

Who is your favourite cartoon character?

Now that's tricky... When I was very young, it would have been Bambi. I basically wanted to be Bambi. In the sense of wanting to be in that whole story arc. I had this huge hardback book of the Disney film which I read over and over again. But then my kids grew up in a kind of golden age of

amazing CGI animations - Toy Story, the Incredibles, Monsters Inc., etc. so I'm very attached to all them. Edna Mode in the Incredibles is a particular favourite. Also - is stop-motion allowed? If it is, Gromit is up there. Am I allowed Gromit? Also Paddington could be a recent addition. Which also makes me nostalgic about the original TV Paddington, which was on when I was young. Such a hard question...

'What follows is not reality. This is a made-up world'

Interview with Dream Academy student 'Hope' (Lily Burton)



Can you describe a typical school day at Dream Academy?

Heads down, working all day, breaks now and then, most people are happy enough they just want to spend time in the virtual world

So what is this virtual world like?

Well everyone else seems to like it so much that they want to spend all their time in it but I prefer making things, I dream of visiting the real world..

Interview with Goldman Sachs student 'Parker' (Isaac Feldman)



Can you describe a typical school day at Goldman Sachs?

Typically there is general academia where one learns how to make money, there is sport - competitive and suitably violent and of course the reinforcement of Goldman Sachs student superiority above all others

What are you planning to do when you leave school?

I'm planning on taking a managerial position. I expect to be earning at least \$500K by year 5 as this is average for a Goldman Sachs student, I wouldn't dream of taking a blue-collar job...

Interview with L'Oreal student 'Sidney' (Lauren Peters)



Can you describe a typical school day at L'Oreal?

We take make-up classes (my favourite), American accent classes, fitness and aerobic classes, classes in 'man-humour'. We also take our medication to keep us thin and trim.

What do you hope to do after leaving school?

I plan to have a fabulous life with my ticket. Hopefully that will be the Best Boy from Goldman Sachs!

Do you ever see your family?

Family? Of course the most important person in my life is MOTHER, do you mean mother? What is family?

'Just to repeat - this is not reality'



Cafe Uganda

An enterprise run by Richard Lander School students to raise funds for their partner schools in rural Uganda.

**HOT DRINKS
SOFT DRINKS
WINE & BEER,
COOKIES
DOUGHNUTS
CHOCOLATE
SAVOURY
SNACKS, FRUIT
AND MORE ...**

To save time why not order before the production begins. Please see a L4U student!