

Acting Edition

tell me straight and aggy

by Paul Bradshaw

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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concordtheatricals.co.uk

concordtheatricals.com

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

UNITED KINGDOM AND EUROPE

licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7298

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NOTE

This edition reflects a rehearsal draft of the script and may differ from the final production.

tell me straight was first performed at King’s Head Theatre on 15 October 2026. The cast and creative team were as follows:

HIM Paul Bradshaw
MATT, RYAN, LEE, ALEX, PUPIL Elliott Rogers
DANI Jade Anouka

Writer/Co-Director/Co-Producer Paul Bradshaw
Director/Intimacy Director Imogen Frances
Producer SH Productions
Designer Damian Stanton
Sound Designer Eamonn O’Dwyer
Associate Sound Designer Rudy Percival
Lighting Designer Cheng Keng
Associate Lighting Designer Callum Macdonald
Movement Director Alice O’Hanlon
Stage Managers Anna Eagle/Lauren Dalboth

aggy was first performed at King’s Head Theatre on 15 October 2026. The cast and creative team were as follows:

LAWRENCE Matthew Jordan
MAHLIK Jean-Luke Worrell
REX Jack Gittins

Writer/Co-Director/Co-Producer Paul Bradshaw
Co-Director/Intimacy Director Imogen Frances
Producer SH Productions
Designer Damian Stanton
Video Designer Matt Powell
Sound Designer Eamonn O’Dwyer
Associate Sound Designer Rudy Percival
Lighting Designer Cheng Keng
Associate Lighting Designer Callum Macdonald
Movement Director Alice O’Hanlon
Dramaturg Georgie Rankcom
Stage Managers Anna Eagle/Lauren Dalboth

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

tell me straight began as a threadbare production upstairs at the King's Head in 2021, and what a journey it has been on. Thank you to the teams at The Park, Chiswick Playhouse and the King's Head for continuously championing the play, and since 2026 it's sexy counterpart *aggy*.

Neither play would exist without significant financial support. Thank you to Phoebe Waller-Bridge and the Fleabag Support Fund, who during the pandemic, afforded me the time to sit down and write *tell me straight*. To our GoFundMe donors in Summer 2021, and to Arts Council England for funding the 2022 run, thank you! The first draft of *aggy* was made possible through the Peggy Ramsay Award, and having that opportunity to get ideas onto the page was game changing. The Park Theatre run of *tell me straight // aggy* was backed by Sir Ian McKellen and ATG's 'Ian at 80' grant, without it neither play would've made it to the stage.

To Georgie Rankcom, your dramaturgical generosity and care was instrumental to *aggy*. Thanks to everyone who fed back on the play at table reads; Rob Houchen, Iz Hesketh, Hiba Elchikhe, Harry Davies, Michael Mather, Eric Kuhn, Alexander Morris, Sam Seabrook, John McCrea and Alex Britt.

Raffaella Covino, thank you for swinging over that intro email. When your diary clears up, I owe you a lunch of your choosing.

To my *tell me straight* cast mates past and present, George Greenland, Stephanie Levi-John, Buck Braithwaite, Jade Anouka and Elliott Rogers, with your commitment, play and focus, you've shaped the play immeasurably. A massive, massive thank you!

Jean-Luke Worrell, Matthew Jordan and Jack Gittins, without your abundance of passion *aggy* would just be voices in my head. You've taken the play to new heights and I'm in awe of you all.

Thanks to my co-producer SH productions and the whole creative team who brought *tell me straight // aggy* to life. Your curiosity and skill have elevated the work, I'm eternally grateful.

Imogen Frances, we really did the thing, and kept doing it against the odds. And there were many. Your tenderness, calm and whimsy are in the fabric of both plays. I truly can't think of anyone better to share the rehearsal process with.

To my roomie and other half of a pretty successful lavender marriage, Rosa Escoda, thank you for being a sound board to the infamous sofa moments...long may they continue!

Thanks to the endless support of friends and family for shouting about the work, coming down and showing up. There is nothing like the theatre community and I am so grateful to be a part of it.

Dad, I kept going and thanks for the magpies. And, even though I haven't let you see *tell me straight* yet, Mum, you're in everything I make. Thanks for moving to London to follow the bright lights, you're my biggest muse.

Debbie Bell and Emma Stevens, thanks for igniting my passion for English and Drama, and Mr Darwish for igniting my passion...iykyk. To my first acting teacher Ben Bennett, you made me believe I could do this and to Adam Welsh, thank you for everything you taught me at Mountview.

Thanks to the audiences who have backed the shows, to the chats in the bar about feeling seen, held and challenged by the material. You have made it all worth it.

And lastly, thank you to Oli Gordon, Emma Anacootee and the whole team at Concord Theatricals for supporting me in this process. If I could tell the scrappy kid who thumbed through monologue anthologies in store that he'd be published by *the* Samuel French, he wouldn't believe his luck!

tell me straight

CHARACTERS

HIM – mid-thirties – one actor (gay, working-class Londoner preferably)

MATT, RYAN, LEE, ALEX, PUPIL, HOODED FIGURE – late twenties/
early thirties – one actor (multiple accents required)

DANI – early thirties – one actress (voice notes only)

SETTING

London

TIME

Now

AUTHOR'S NOTES

It's a fast-paced play – it's alright if the action moves ahead of the audience sometimes, they'll catch up.

/ indicates an interruption in speech

— indicates a new scene

References can be changed to suit the time period. The regions Matt, Lee, Ryan, Alex, and Pupil are from should be changed to suit the actor.

*For the dreamers selling programmes, pulling pints, answering calls,
waiting tables, handing out flyers, walking dogs, teaching Grandma's
footsteps at an after school drama club in a church hall...
this one is for us.*

(A bare stage. Two chairs. A hat stand with various items of clothing or accessories on it. A red cap, a grey hoody, rucksack, a vintage checkered shirt, a khaki shirt etc.)

(Blackout.)

(Spotlight on HIM, meditating. Rain sounds.)

HIM. Growing up we didn't have the money to go abroad, this was way before the nine-pound-fifty flights on the front page of *The Sun*. So our summer holidays were spent down in the West Country visiting Mum's family and getting attacked by seagulls on the beach. Traumatizing stuff actually. When we got older, my brothers became teenage and unruly and started doing stupid shit like stealing Soleros from the shops on the seafront. So Mum thought "fuck this" and decided it was best we stayed in London over the summer. We'd go to the Lido in Hampstead, sometimes Hyde Park – but mostly it was playing Run-Outs and British Bulldog 'til it was ten or eleven at night.

(MATT enters and sets up the scene as HIM speaks.)

We'd have sleepovers all the time. I'd always stay with Matt. This is Matt. Say hello, then.

MATT. *(Awkward.)* Hello.

HIM. We're still pals now. Matt was the year below me at school, and like me, preferred to stay firmly on the ground if a ball was kicked over a fence...we were active, but we wanted to avoid climbing, because y'know, grazes! One afternoon we were playing in his garden. I was eleven, he was ten.

MATT. Where are we now? Is it far away?

HIM. Yeah.

MATT. Where? Where?!

HIM. The Bermuda Triangle?

MATT. Cooooool!

HIM. It's really hot.

MATT. Nice.

HIM. No, here, it's hot here.

MATT. Take your T-shirt off then. Take it off, if you're hot.
Want me to ask Mum to get us some squash? Or ice
poles?

HIM. I'm fine.

MATT. You said you were hot.
So? We've got loads.

HIM. What flavours?

MATT. Dunno, lemme check.

HIM. Got a blue one?

MATT. *(Leaving.)* I'll check.

*(HIM is alone. He shifts uncomfortably in his
T-shirt.)*

(MATT reenters.)

No blues, but I've got coke or orange. Which?

HIM. I don't mind.

MATT. Come on, which?

HIM. Whatever you don't want.

MATT. Coke? Or orange? Coke? Or orange?

HIM. Coke.

MATT. Argh.

HIM. Fine, then. Orange.

MATT. Here, have the coke.

HIM. Thanks.

(Beat. They open them.)

MATT. Mum was fast asleep. Snoring.

HIM. No way!

MATT. Yeah, properly snoring.

(MATT does a cartoon snore.)

(HIM laughs and spits ice pole everywhere.)

Careful.

HIM. Oh...bloody hell!

MATT. Come here.

(MATT uses his T-shirt to wipe HIM's face.)

(A moment.)

(HIM pulls away.)

HIM. What's the time? I need to – I said I'd help Mum with dinner.

MATT. Ah, okay. See you tomorrow?

HIM. Alright.

—

DANI. *(Voice note.)* Babe! What's happening? You teaching? I always forget what times you teach. I'm about tonight after rehearsals, you free? We've got so much to embrace! The show is maaaaaad. Like, actually mad! Don't even get me started on the director.

Honestly. I can't. But it's definitely more of a face-to-face chat, you get me? You better not be playing this out loud, you never know who's listening. Anyway babe, give me a call slash voice note in a bit and let me know when you're free. Byyyyyye.

HIM. (*Into the phone.*) Hey babe, yeah, I'm literally about to start now. Won't get back to mine 'til like nine/nine thirty, so can't see you. Sorry!! I am supposed to be seeing Ryan on Friday though. Before you say anything, it's not like that, just as pals... I think he has split up with his girlfriend. I don't know, we'll see...buuuuut I need to see you! Can't wait to see the show. Am I still good for press night? Babe, gotta go. Love you, love you. Bye, bye, bye, bye.

(**PUPIL** *nervously enters.*)

HIM.

(*More formal.*) Come in. How are you doing? God, you're drenched. Are you okay? Are you feeling prepared?

PUPIL.

Hi, yeah. Good thank you. It's pouring out there. Yes. Yes I am.

HIM. Greeeeat. Let's crack straight on with your presentation. Then I'll give you some notes, tweaks etc. Okay. Deep breath.

PUPIL. Yes, great. Okay. Thank you.

(*Beat.*)

Will A.I. affect the way we work forever? In this assignment, I will talk about how A.I. –

(**HIM** *puts an abrupt stop to that. Lights down on PUPIL. Spotlight on HIM.*)

HIM. I don't like to think of what I do as teaching. I coach posh nine-/ten-year-olds in prep for their Eleven-plus.

So it's like, conversation skills, confidence building, debating and stuff, like, how to be articulate. I'm not a real teacher. Firstly, I do zero preparation. They do all the work and I get paid thirty-five pounds an hour. So yeah, crushing it really.

I used to want to be an actual teacher. But I think it just came from a fascination with Mr Darwish. He was responsible for teaching me Chemistry, can you believe? Osama Darwish, obviously a very unfortunate first name, especially as this was right at the peak of the Bin-Laden hype. All the other boys terrorised him, but I didn't give a shit what his name was. I spent most of my GCSEs fantasising about the Canadian dreamboat.

I'd had sex by then, lots of sex. With two different guys from my estate. Both straight. I'd even tried anal, but because we were using Lynx shower gel instead of lube it was less like making sweet love and more like being stabbed. Smelled nice though. But Mr Darwish made my mind wander, he kinda looked like Superman. With his perfectly quiffed hair, his dimpled-but-chiselled face, and the most heavenly arse I have ever seen. He wore these grey trousers that just clung to it. It was so distracting I ended up with a double C for science, but it was worth every sweet, sweet second.

(Lights up on PUPIL. He's waiting. A cough.)

(To PUPIL.) That was great. Much, much better than last week. Just think about being more front-footed, y'know? It's about really showing the best of who you can be, that's all these schools want! Well done. Brilliant work. See you next week.

(PUPIL exits.)

Told you, piece of piss.

—

aggy

CHARACTERS

LAWRENCE – (he/him), early thirties – middle class, white

MAHLIK – (he/him), early thirties – working class, Black

REX – (they, them), twenties – any class, white

SETTING

The set is one room: Lawrence's open plan flat.

At the back and above the space there are dozens of screens that display TikTok, Instagram etc. throughout the play.

TIME

2026 or now

AUTHOR'S NOTES

/ indicates an interruption

— indicates a new scene

There are abbreviations and extensions of words e.g. 'rhyth', 'cba' and 'loooooong' – these should be honoured, but there is also room for plenty of invention from the cast.

It's a fast-paced play; most of what the characters say is in jest and a little poke at each other. It's not that deep, until it's suddenly very serious.

A note on social media.

Content style is ever-evolving; these references can and should be updated based on the time of the production.

(LAWRENCE sits alone, drawing. There is a faint buzzing sound. The buzzing builds to a crescendo; a fuck tonne of paper falls from above.)

—

(Lawrence's flat. MAHLIK enters carrying a holdall and two bin bags.)

LAWRENCE. in you get, in you get. give me some of those

MAHLIK. thank you

LAWRENCE. right

MAHLIK. right

LAWRENCE. tea?

MAHLIK. go on

LAWRENCE. not sure if I've got any oat milk

MAHLIK. don't worry

LAWRENCE. hang on

MAHLIK. I'll have it black

LAWRENCE. fucking hell

MAHLIK. we can grab a coffee downstairs

LAWRENCE. shit!

MAHLIK. it's fine

LAWRENCE. it's not

MAHLIK. I can order us something / on Deliveroo

LAWRENCE. I can't believe I / did that...

MAHLIK. it's okay

LAWRENCE. so stupid

MAHLIK. babe

LAWRENCE. idiot

MAHLIK. they'll be here in less than ten mins

LAWRENCE. it feels like a sign

MAHLIK. babe

LAWRENCE. an omen

MAHLIK. you forgot the milk

LAWRENCE. it's a curse

MAHLIK. it's not a curse

LAWRENCE. I wanted today to be perfect

MAHLIK. it is

LAWRENCE. hardly

MAHLIK. Lawrence

LAWRENCE. Mahlik

MAHLIK. drinks ordered

LAWRENCE. let me send you the money

MAHLIK. no way

LAWRENCE. please

MAHLIK. okay

LAWRENCE. thank you

MAHLIK. we'll down them and then we can sort all of this

LAWRENCE. I've cleared out a whole wardrobe for you

MAHLIK. you didn't have to do that

LAWRENCE. no, it was great. you'll have plenty of space for stuff. And, er – you know your way around, the bathroom is – and – it's not like you haven't been before is it?

MAHLIK. Lawrence

LAWRENCE. what else, what else?

MAHLIK. what is wrong with you?

LAWRENCE. no – nothing, nothing at all

MAHLIK. why are you stuttering and muttering?

LAWRENCE. what? no, no

MAHLIK. are you well?

LAWRENCE. I don't, I don't know

MAHLIK. can you stop?

LAWRENCE. yeah

MAHLIK. okay?

LAWRENCE. okay

MAHLIK. breathe

LAWRENCE. yes

MAHLIK. not much will change

LAWRENCE. well, that's not entirely true

MAHLIK. what is gonna change?

LAWRENCE. loads

MAHLIK. like?

LAWRENCE. I don't know, just stuff

MAHLIK. stuff?

LAWRENCE. yeah, stuff

MAHLIK. in a bad way?

LAWRENCE. yes

MAHLIK. okay

LAWRENCE. good and bad

MAHLIK. let's focus on the good

LAWRENCE. okay

MAHLIK. I can make you peanut butter bagels in bed

LAWRENCE. what else?

MAHLIK. we can walk around naked without any fear
whatsoever

LAWRENCE. can't believe you lived with one of those hetros

MAHLIK. no more!

LAWRENCE. gross

MAHLIK. and I'll be here when you get stressy and Elaine
starts to pulsate

(**LAWRENCE** *grabs his forehead.*)

LAWRENCE. is she?

MAHLIK. not yet

LAWRENCE. dick

MAHLIK. and I can give this place a proper clean

LAWRENCE. my cleaner comes twice a week

MAHLIK. does she?

LAWRENCE. she does

(**MAHLIK** *looks around, grimaces.*)

stop

MAHLIK. I mean...

LAWRENCE. stop it!

(**MAHLIK** *strokes* **LAWRENCE's** *arm.*)

MAHLIK. your elbows are dry as fuck babe

LAWRENCE. I haven't moisturised

MAHLIK. since when?

LAWRENCE. are you trying to freak me out even more?

(**MAHLIK** *kisses* **LAWRENCE.**)

MAHLIK. we'll be fine

LAWRENCE. promise?

MAHLIK. all three of us

LAWRENCE. three?

MAHLIK. you, me and Elaine

LAWRENCE. for fuck's sake

—

(**REX** *appears onscreen. TikTok. They jump, and every time they land it's another fresh look.*)

REX.

peeps, you good? thought I'd take you through a few looks to brighten your day and because I'm procrastinatingggg! this is obvs a more casual vibe – nahhht! love that lacy number, with this one I'm giving. oh, let me, let me just fix these chapped lips really quick. forever giving you Victoria and Victor. who has a big secret: he's gay-gay-gay... but this one is my absolute fave. really makes me feel somewhere in between. listen yeah, I'm out – move, move move.

—

(**LAWRENCE** and **MAHLIK** *watch a film at a laptop.*)

MAHLIK. you need to get a TV so we can screen mirror

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