



# ANIMAL



## A note on casting and language from the writers

Thank you for your interest in our play *Animal*. The lead character, David, has cerebral palsy, which is a neurological impairment which affects people in different ways. David's cerebral palsy affects the clarity of his speech and his ability to control his muscles. He relies on people to help him with eating and drinking, hygiene and housework. As you read the play you'll see how David's impairments shape his home life, social life, sex life and dating as a disabled man.

David is also affected by the way the world responds to his impairment: by the physical barriers that exclude him from situations, but also by social barriers such as attitudes to disability and the assumptions people make about disabled people (you'll see this in the interactions David has on Grindr). This way of thinking about disability – that people are disabled by the barriers in society rather than by their medical condition – is known as the Social Model of Disability. It's why it's important to say that David is disabled, *not* that he 'has a disability'.

So David's impairments are fundamental to his life and they shape and drive the play's story. David must be played by an actor with a physical impairment that affects their movement and speech to some degree. But because conditions like cerebral palsy vary from person to person it is unlikely that an actor will exactly 'match' David's symptoms, and this is okay. It means there may be a degree of 'performance' to David's physicality, and it is important that this is developed in respectful collaboration with a disabled actor. We also hope that the actor playing David won't be the only disabled person involved, and urge you to include disabled people in your creative team.

David was originally played by a terrific actor called Chris Slater. Chris's impairments are not the same as David's (he does not use a wheelchair, for example), nor the same as Josh's, on whom the fictional David's impairments are modelled. To build his performance, Chris collaborated with a Movement Director called Cathy Waller to find ways to work with his own

cerebral palsy, sometimes amplifying aspects of it. If you have an actor in mind – perhaps you are an actor interested in playing the role! – you'll be able to read the script and think about what aspects will need consideration. Perhaps you'll think it would be helpful to change some details in order for you to be able to produce or perform it authentically. If so, you are welcome to get in touch with any ideas, suggestions or questions – they will be met with open ears.

It may be that you'd like to stage *Animal* but don't have an appropriate actor in your group. After all, it can be harder for disabled people to get involved in such activities, or to be given the opportunity to play parts in many plays. If so, this could be a great opportunity to look outside of your regular group or company of actors to find someone to join you for this project – and perhaps discover a talent for future projects too.

And please consider the needs of disabled actors, and anyone you're collaborating with. Ask people if they need anything in order to make the process of putting on a show not just possible for them but enjoyable and fulfilling too. This might be about providing assistance or being flexible about rehearsal times, but the way to find out is to ask. David is a huge role – he's on stage all the time, which means the actor playing him will be in rehearsal a lot! That's demanding, so do make sure they are well supported.

We loved the way audiences responded to *Animal* and we love the idea of other creative people grappling with the play afresh. We'd be delighted to help you think about it, answer any questions, or try to offer practical advice on any of the above, and we strongly encourage you to get in touch with us via Nick Hern Books. But please be sensitive to the fact that while *Animal* is a fiction, much of it is informed by Josh's life, in all its joy and pain.

Thanks – and good luck,  
Jon Bradfield and Josh Hepple