

Independent Project
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BA Musical Theatre - ADPA6000
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I acknowledge the use of Microsoft CoPilot [(<https://copilot.microsoft.com>)] and ElevenLabs [(<https://elevenlabs.io>)] from February to May to find research, proofreading and assist with creative work.

I used the prompt(s):

- Can you give me media, for example journals, articles that fit within the CRAAP framework surrounding contemporary and historical laws of the 1950's regarding queer women and lesbianism. Also, ones, revolving about conversion therapy, religious context to queer history?
- Can you give me different types of media that talk about naturalism, minimalism and improvisation, can they fit the CRAAP standard and explore into realism of 'adding fiction to real events'
- Can you proofread my work and correct any grammatical, clarity or literacy problems. Can you highlight anything changed in BOLD (insert work)
- ElevenLabs - Can you create a radio hosts voice, sounding like the 1950's as a Welsh man?

I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated text as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used before, and after the use of AI tools which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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3. Introduction

3.1 Project Overview

The dissertation investigates what life was like for a queer woman in 1950's Britain, the piece titled Lavender & Lace, a stage play following Maggie, a married woman who begins to develop feelings for another woman.

It is set in the United Kingdom with the play examining how queer women had to navigate desire and identity at a time where there were strict expectations and morals regarding gender, marriage and sexuality that controlled their lives. Maggie's story reflects the reality many women were expected to conform to with the domestic and heterosexual norms and roles, even if it conflicted with feelings.

My project aims to complete a full investigation of *"How can performance be used to explore the emotional, societal and political experiences of queer women in the 1950's?"*

3.2 Research Aims & Creative Aims

My research aims are:

- To understand the lived experience of lesbian women in 1950s Britain
- To explore the social and political pressures they faced
- To examine everyday life, including housing, employment, and social expectations
- To analyse how historical research can inform the creation of believable characters and narratives
- To explore how sexism and homophobia operate across different time periods

Creative aims:

- To write a stage play that reflects a lesbian woman's emotional journey and self-discovery in this period.
- To communicate the piece through not only the writing but the acting, lighting, sound effects and set/costume.
- To use performance as a method of exploring and representing a historical experience.

3.3 Research Methods

My research included books and articles on lesbian life, gender expectations and the social norms in that period, as well as examining laws or societal constrictions.

In addition, I had also surveyed my peers to view the parallels of present and past experiences of the queer or female community. This combination of research allows me to shape it around my investigation and assists me in writing and acting for my piece.

I developed scenes and characters whilst reflecting on what I learnt surrounding the period.

3.4 Structure of the Dissertation

In Chapter 4, I will present my literature review, examining further into my research, delving into queer history, political and societal context and performance theory and how it shaped my piece.

In Chapter 5, I will explain and give evidence of the development and exploration of the piece, including script drafts, staging, investigations and design choices.

In Chapter 6, I will reflect on the process and evaluate how the project addresses my investigation

In Chapter 7, I will conclude and summarize this project and whether I have successfully completed my investigation.

4. Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review explores the experience of a woman in the early 1950's who begins to realise she is not heterosexual, focusing strongly on the social and political climate of the UK at the time, The 1950's were remarked as for their strong expectations around gender, sexuality and queer woman lived under pressure to hide and suppress their identities.

Although the UK is the focus, brief comparisons to attitudes and laws in the United States will expand my research and illustrate how widespread these restrictions were. Understanding the wider context is important in creating a performance that aims to represent queer stories with as much care and depth and correct historical context.

This topic is related to Musical Theatre, as itself is a piece of Theatre but also it has been used as a voice for hidden identities and marginalised voices to explore their feelings for centuries. Even when queer stories were not openly told, historical theatre told these with subtext and symbolism. Looking at how these developed helps inform me with a modern piece of theatre and how it can be approached.

The review draws on present-day sources in queer history, actual mid-century research, feminist views and performance practice. It also will look at politics and legal research from that period, exploring how laws and social norms shaped the lived experiences of queer woman. By combining history and performance theory, this literature review establishes a foundation for understanding the world of my character and my characters circumstances not only in writing but with the creative decisions as well.

Framework

Developing a performance that represents an authentic view of a queer woman in those times that requires an understanding of the wider social, political and cultural forces that shaped queer identities during this period. This was built from several large ideas: the policing of sexuality, gendered expectations placed on women and the way theatre has been a large side of the growth during history for queer people.

Historically, the 1950s were marked by strong legal and social restrictions on LGBTQ+ people. The law banning homosexuality between men was instated in the United Kingdom, Homosexual acts between men were criminalized under the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 (*Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885, s.11*) Although the UK did not criminalise sexual acts between woman, parliament did debate the possibility in 1921 but ended up rejecting it due to the belief that lesbianism, was rare and that criminalizing it would ‘draw attention’ (Derry, 2020)

In contrast, American sodomy laws did not align with the UK as lesbianism was illegalized under the sodomy laws (Wikipedia, 2022) Instead, it was the societal impact that affected lesbianism in the UK. To add, the United States enforced explicit anti-LGBTQ+ laws, including the ‘Lavender Scare’ during which Executive Order 14050 (1953) banned gay men and lesbians from federal employment labelling them as security risks. (Rauch, 2016) Public Law (1948) further categorized them as “sexual psychopaths,” enabling targeted policing. While my project focuses on the UK, these international comparisons, as mentioned, highlights how widespread fear and suppression of queer identities were. These international comparisons highlight the global fear and suppression surrounding queer communities, instating the pressures even in a country where lesbianism was not explicitly illegal.

Women in Britain also faced significant gender-based restrictions. The 1950’s housewife ideal ensured expectations of domesticity, financial dependence and traditional heterosexual marriages. Woman were unable to own a home without a male co-signer, or even hold a credit card independently until 1973 (Cole, 2025) Even marital assault was not fully criminalized until 1991. These limitations contribute to the idea of ‘living a double life’ a theme that strongly informed the start of my play.

Another crucial aspect of the context surrounding the UK is the existence of lesbian social spaces such as The Gateway Club in Chelsea, one of the few venues for lesbians at that time in Britian. (A History of LGBT+ Bars and Queer Revolutions, 8AD) Its existence shows that queer woman had formed communities, but they were limited, discreet and often inaccessible to anyone apart from members.

In performance studies, practitioners such as Lorraine Hansberry, her own queer identity was concealed during her lifetime, her

plays demonstrated how writers would add subtext and coded queer themes within their work. (Wikipedia Contributors, 2019) Similarly, mid-century lesbian pulp fiction also existed though often hidden, it offered rare depictions (Sieslik, 2024) they provided insight into how these stories circulated. These sources inform my approach particularly in portraying the internal conflict and the social consequence. They also highlight how women's queers' stories were distorted or undocumented.

The Wolfenden Report (1957) doesn't directly apply to lesbianism and was focused on male homosexuality, but also shaped public attitudes towards sexuality in Britain. The omission of lesbianism further amplifies my point with invisibility and how their experiences were overlooked legally and socially. (UK Parliament, 1957)

Thematic Review

Theme 1: Technique, Skill, Practice Analysis

Developing a naturalistic one-woman monologue required different types of acting techniques and skills. These shaped my creative process and final piece. The literature on naturalistic and solo performances relies on given circumstances, as many other techniques require multiple people, this would just be fine independently. Given circumstances was a substantial part of Stanislavski's system, it engaged the environmental, historical and emotional conditions that shape the character's behaviour. (Stanislavski, 1936) This is essential for understanding Maggie's world and her true feelings throughout. Naturalism helped me portray the suppression that she would have experienced.

Improvisation also played a key role in the process, as for building character in the rehearsals I gave myself. In my experience, improvisation allowed me to explore how Maggie might express certain emotions and different stakes. This aligns with the work of Viola Spolin, who I had researched previously alongside Meisner, who argues that improvisation helps actors access spontaneity and truthfulness. (Spolin, 1999) This work also contributes to Meisner's acting on instinct and although many of his techniques are useful with peers, they assisted me with knowing to act with spontaneity and to act on instinct which helped me understand the acting better to bring out raw and truthful emotion. (Meisner, Longwell and Pollack, 1987)

Minimalistic staging was also a deliberate choice, although it wasn't empty, I wanted it set as like the way we would read which is from left to right. Peter Brook's *The Empty Space* mentions that theatre does not need elaborate sets to create meaning, instead any empty space can become a stage, (Brook, 2008) My staging, as mentioned, used three simple sections to represent parts of the emotional journey allowing the audience to watch it as an emotional thing rather than visual.

Sound design also enhanced the piece. I used period style pieces, like 1950's radio music to enforce the historical context, atmosphere and the tone of the piece, (BBC Bitesize, n.d.) These helped situate the audience into Maggie's world and situation and brought emphasis to the environment she lived in.

The monologue form itself was initially because of the lack of cast, but it grew into a form of research and understanding. I investigated solo documentary styles or biographical style pieces and drew inspiration off Anna Deavere Smith's 'Notes from the field.' In an interview, she mentions that she listened and learnt about the themes and the personal experiences. (Smith, 2019) Although my piece is fictional, it shares the same interest within personal testimonies or the limited media that was produced about the negatives and positives to the LGBTQ+ society in those times. Likewise, I investigated queer art with solo performance pieces and found that Tim Miller uses autobiographical story telling to transform experiences into political commentary, using vignettes of his real-life stories to reclaim the marginalized and dislike he was given as a gay man. (Miller, 1AD)

However, these techniques also have limitations. I would say that naturalism does not fully capture the psychological trauma of conversion therapy. Improvisation, whilst is useful, my experience does not balance to actual historical accuracy and can be an issue when dealing with sensitive materials. Minimalism risks underrepresenting the oppressive nature of conversion therapy and the 'housewife' lifestyle with the restrictive expectations on women.

Despite these limitations, the combination of all these techniques added together. I believe it is a grounded and emotionally authentic to an extent. Researching queer and women's history deepened my connection to the material and once I understood the stakes and the world she lived in, my writing did flow more naturally. The biggest challenge was creating a piece that fit the dialect and age of the language then and directing myself, as it was difficult to judge what looked effective. What surprised me the most was how fluid the process came once I embodied and researched into it.

Theme 2: Current debates and Innovations

Contemporary debates in performances often centre around representation, mental health and minorities. One major debate concerns how queer histories should be represented on stage. Some argue that naturalism risks simplifying trauma, while others believe it allows audiences to connect more deeply with lived experiences. BBC Bitesize (n.d) explains that naturalism aims to present characters and events as truthful as possible, which can help the audience engage in sensitive or complex materials. Backstage also highlights that naturalistic performances encourage actors to behave

truthfully, as mentioned before with Meisner, this makes unlived and unrecognized experiences more relatable and retainable for audiences. (Windahl, 2025) My choice of a naturalistic monologue aligns with the latter view, as it enabled me to explore Maggie's emotional truth while maintaining historical grounding.

Scholars such as Jill Dolan argue that representing marginalized identities on stage require careful ethical consideration, as performance has the power to alter people's views and to share narratives. (Dolan, 1994)

Similarly, Elin Diamond suggests that feminist and queer performance must avoid reproducing harmful stereotypes (Diamond, 1996) Although, not a worry as I aim to represent a realistic standpoint and having a personal experience enhances this.

Another debate concerns the blending of fiction and real-life events. Many contemporary practitioners use fictional characters to explore real historical events, arguing that this approach gives freedom but also assists the practitioner from writing the wrong content and creates less issue with sensitive content as they are not writing of people's lives. My piece is fictional, Maggie and her story are fictional, but her experience reflects the real social conditions of 1950's Britain. This aligns with the innovations of biographical performances, where fictionalized narratives often reclaim histories that were undocumented and spread further awareness on the topic. (Matt, 2022)

To add, there is also an ongoing debate about whether the performers should have lived the experience the character they portray had. Some argue this ensures authenticity, whilst on the other hand research and empathy play a large factor too. In my case, a large amount of historical research supported my writing and acting for this piece even through experiences that are not my own, but empathy does have limits. (Subramaniam, 2021)

Theme 3: Application in Musical Theatre and Performance

Although my piece is not a musical, it is a play which is a part of musical theatre. It was initially to be a Musical, but I felt as though without the correct training in Music and understanding, using pre-existing songs would be insensitive and take away the statement of the piece. This connection is important as Theatre has presently and historically has been a space for oppressed identities to explore themes of identity, sexuality, social constraints and politics. Even in earlier times, it was often told throughout subtext, suggested relationships or symbolism, as mentioned, to communicate the experiences not openly discussed due to censorship or stigma. (Coates, 2025)

In this sense, my play aligns with the broader tradition of using performance to explore the voice of a hidden and suppressed voice. While it does not use song, it uses the same principals of storytelling.

Many shows, such as *Operation Mincemeat*, *Dreamgirls*, *The Colour Purple* and many more explore themes that are real life events but not a personal story, all of these can easily be seen that the writers have engaged in a large amount of research whilst writing these to be accurate in their historical context.

Synthesis

Across the research on queer history, performance in practice and one-person plays. There are many clear ideas that most writers and practitioners agree upon. One is that queer identities were silenced, in writing like journals or letters and just socially. Writers such as Lillian Faderman, highlighted that lesbian lives were hidden in plain sight. (Faderman, 2015) This supports that Maggie would not be likely to have much knowledge on sexuality and if she did it would be discussed negatively especially considering the high population of catholic and religious members in the mid-twentieth century.

Another area to add on what was just mentioned is the strong influence of religion towards sexuality. Many note that Christianity's morales shaped the public's views, policies and moulded the 'standard' for sexuality. (Lüthi, 2024) and created homosexuality as something 'sinful, immoral and unnatural.' This is especially relevant to the topic of conversion therapy which is deeply rooted from religious attempts to 'cure' or 'correct' same sex attraction. (Pilgrim, 2022) The religious influence added another layer to her experience, as for the time and period, Catholics were high in population and she would have grown up in a culture where faith-based ideals were looked highly on. Despite this, the specific experiences of queer women within religious communities, especially in that period, remains under-researched and undocumented, with most studies focusing on gay male experiences.

My project is to help express the gap by exploring how a queer woman is affected in those times. Through these themes and techniques, I believe my piece aims to represent a voice that has been largely absent from historical records and from current records as it is not written about enough.

5. Development, Collaboration & Exploration

5.1 Overview of the Creative Development

Initial ideas and concepts.

At the beginning of the process, I explored a wide range of ideas, each with different themes and genres, all of which had a great level of interest from me. My goal at this

stage was to simply create possibilities and understand what would pique my interest and be practical.

I had many ideas and created different positives and negatives regarding them.

Idea 1 was a Radio Show Format. I first considered creating a performance based on a fictional radio show, different characters would come in to discuss their problems. These problems all consisted of the quote, 'Jack of all trades, Master of none,' and constantly being stuck in the middle, socially, economically, career and more. Eventually, it would reveal these were all the hosts problems.

The positives were:

- It could be heavily researched through mental health studies and story telling
- Personally interesting and relatable to my feelings.

The negatives were:

- Lack of a clear narrative
- Risks becoming repetitive
- Is it engaging enough for an audience

Idea 2 was a choose-your-own-story. I explored the idea as for the books, potentially like horror or fantasy.

The positives were:

- Highly immersive for the audience
- Connected to my love of books and storytelling
- Interesting and exciting

The negatives were:

- Requires complex uses of writing and improvisation
- Too broad for a 10-minute piece

Idea 3 was a time travel narrative of changing past mistakes. I considered this as I enjoy the concept and felt inspired by the film, 'When we first met' where a character travels back and tries to fix mistakes to be with who they desire.

The positives were:

- Clear emotional journey/stakes
- Strong narrative

The negatives were

- It didn't feel personal
- There is not a lot to research

Idea 4 was a Lavender Marriage. This was a strong idea for me, I was drawn to it as for my own sexuality and an interest in LGBTQ+ history. I was drawn to the idea of exploring a queer woman/man entering a marriage for social survival.

The positives were:

- Personal to me as a queer woman
- Rich with historical context
- Strong emotional, societal and political themes

The negatives were:

- If biographical it needed careful handling.
- An issue with serious and sensitive topics being fictional

Idea 6 was Dystopian Future / Time Travel.

I briefly explored a dystopian narrative where characters travel back in time to undo the destruction they caused.

The positives were:

- Creative and imaginative
- Allowed for metaphorical storytelling

The negatives were:

- Complex to write and show
- Hard to execute with limited cast and staging and set

Refining Ideas and combining them

As I reflected on these concepts, I noticed themes that reoccurred or that could merge into one. Which were queer identities, social pressures and emotionally driven story telling.

The lavender marriage stood out as the most meaningful regarding having a lot to research and the most connection to my own experiences.

I began to look at ideas and began combining them to create a piece with multiple ideas integrated into one. I looked at the time travel and how that could be incorporated, the hidden biographical aspect of the radio show idea and the changing past mistakes idea.

Combining those it developed into a three person play with Maggie, the protagonist, Vivian, the love interest and William, her husband. I also decided this play would take place in the United Kingdom as writing an American play didn't resonate with me and I did not want to pressure the actors to do an American accent which was also period accurate.

Originally, this version was structured to be around Maggie getting married and then being given the chance to go back in time after realizing she was deeply unhappy with the question of "Would you change everything for yourself if you had the chance even if the social and political constraints were against you?"

The concept allowed me to explore many themes like the pressure of 1950's expectations, the fantasy of rewriting your own life and the conflict of happiness and societal norms.

However, as the idea developed, I realized the time-travel element risked overshadowing the historical reality I wanted to explore. It also required more complex staging and set and a more complex narrative that was more than practical for my skill level.

Finalizing the script/idea

Still, this stage of the process was important as it became the core of the work I had created.

When casting, it became difficult as no one wanted to take part, I had to rethink the writing and structure of the piece. This challenged pushed me down the route of a one-woman monologue and I believe it was for the best as it strengthened the emotional journey of the piece and had felt easier to write.

I wrote the entire script as a testimony, told directly by Maggie, but I needed a reason for her to speak about it, otherwise there would be no reason for her to in those times. This led to a major development as during research, I discovered conversion therapy is still legal in the UK, (Farley and Lawrie, 2024) which shocked me and although there is a legislation to prohibit it, it remains legal (Pyper and Tyler-Todd, 2024). This became a piece of the narrative as I wanted somehow to include it in to spread the awareness of it and because it was a realistic thing then.

I also wanted to include petitions about different issues the UK was currently facing, this tied well into it. The petitions also highlighted that teaching any LGBTQ+ history (UK Government and Parliament, 2026a) and including same-sex depictions (UK Government and Parliament, 2026) was not allowed either, so I added these into my list.

I reframed the monologue as the audience finding out, the only reason she is explaining this as she is talking to a therapist at conversion therapy.

This shift integrated more historical reality, queer history and emotional drive and it aligned perfectly with my ideas.

5.2 Research-informed Exploration

My exploration was shaped by the theories, practitioners and research within my literature review. As I began experimenting with the early versions of my piece.

One of my first influences was the idea of given circumstances which I explored through Stanislavski's approach to character. Understanding her social, historical and emotional environment helped me shape her with physicality and writing her but also many other characteristics. For example, knowing that there were strict expectations on women's behaviours, this informed my experience with how she would act at the start, in the domestic setting, that it would develop my actions in the silence and the way she acted at the beginning.

My research on queer history, particularly the societal and emotional impacts it would have created, influenced the stakes I set with creating it but also alongside the acting, understanding the stakes at hand for Maggie, was very important.

When I shifted the piece to a one-woman monologue and I discovered the history of conversion therapy. Discovering that through my research it was still legal in the UK, it influenced the entire structure of the piece and reasoning for the piece. I explored how formal one would speak, how that setting could change someone.

5.3 Practical Investigations

There were a range of different practical investigations that I had explored. Although the performance was minimalistic due to it being a one-woman play, there were still many elements that required logging and exploring. My process was more on staging, characterization and discoveries in rehearsals.

One of the main areas of exploration was during the development of the script and how it translated from an idea on script to a performance. The entire journey changed as for the change in idea, as for limited casting. I had originally only two scenes for the 3-person cast as can be seen in the first draft of the script:

[Lavender and Lace First Draft.docx](#)

The script was revised and changed completely with the force of change and because a monologue, focusing on more of her feelings and rewriting the ending to give her a reason to be telling this story:

[Lavender & Lace 2nd Draft.docx](#)

Alongside the script, the storyboard evolved as for the change. The original story board reflected the two-scene script, but what it would have been if I had continued it and it was no longer suitable for the one-woman format:

[Storyboard 1st Draft.docx](#)

This led to the creation of an updated storyboard that better reflected what story was to be told, to follow a similar progression just more suitable for a one-woman format.

[Story Board.docx](#)

After completing the script, I had followed the new storyboard, and the second draft was created with the one-woman format involved.

[Lavender & Lace 2nd Draft.docx](#)

My peers had read through my script and kindly gave me notes on things that could be added or had not made sense. I made multiple changes from a few notes. The most notable being one peer highlighted that it wasn't very clear with the transition to conversion therapy and needed more an emotional discovery and a transition from story to present. It was also commented by them that some of the language seemed modern and could be said with a more formal and period accurate tone (Hodge, 2024) This caused a final creation of the script that was used.

[Lavender or Lace Final.docx](#)

Staging and Rehearsal notes was also an area that was investigated. I worked through the script and annotated different emotional changes, choices, pauses, physical moments and thoughts that she would go through whilst she had spoken. These helped refine my acting choices to help keep in natural and keep it have some realism:

[Annotated Script.pdf](#)

Workshopping was an important part of the process. I explored how the piece could function with the minimal space. Initially, I wanted to use the entire space and have many different spaces represent the progression of the story. I also considered it just being a stand and tell style of monologue. I had favoured the first idea but thought the

minimalism would work better with lesser spaces, keeping it in three distinct areas, one for domesticity, the kitchen, the second for Maggie and Vivian and the final for the conversion therapy:

Photos of Final Set

Costume and set design were also explored, although both not put into performance. I explored it as if it were to be put on as a performance, what would help create atmosphere and be symbolic. I chose most things with purple tones within costume and the set deliberately, referencing lavender as a historical symbol associated with lesbianism. The design idea would have reinforced the themes of the piece.

Moodboard.png

Sound design and the lighting was another investigation. A sound/lighting document was created to list what was to be included, like a extract from the radio, although I had used an voice creator as I wanted to include a female singer to play under when Maggie was cleaning, a clock ticking to create not only the atmosphere of the kitchen but to insinuate the 'running out of time' and also just general ambience. I kept use of minimal sound as I wanted to keep focus on Maggie's words and story. The lighting used was mostly for the 3 separate spaces but also changes with the warmth of the light, the warmth being 'positive' moments and cooler and harsher lighting in more negative moments for example the conversion therapy section at the end. This is the document:

Sound Effects List.docx

5.4 Collaboration

Although I didn't use a large cast or my original 3-person idea, collaboration still played an important role in the development of this piece. I worked primarily with myself, as I had the most to understand and learn and I worked with Isobel. It was important to me that the male character, William was played by a man for authenticity and even though my peer, Aimee, had offered, I felt strongly for a man to play as him.

Even though the final performance was mainly solo, apart from the voice. Collaboration still contributed to different forms. Through peer feedback and informal rehearsals with Isobel.

Working with Isobel was valuable as she gave me useful feedback on how it would be portrayed visibly and I would not be able to do that alone. I also would give her feedback despite her being just a voice and not visible, we had worked on tone and accenting of that period.

5.5 Production Planning

A rehearsal schedule was created to ensure I was keeping on schedule and that everything remained structured and allowed time for exploration, development and to refine everything. Although, I had created the schedule with the 3-person cast involved. I had kept very similarly to it with just myself and Isobel's occasional involvement.

[Schedule.pdf](#)

Due to the lack of people wanting to be cast, I only had one casting decision on who the voice was to be. The piece I had currently wrote was with myself as Maggie in mind, to allow all my research to influence my performance.

My choice on Isobel being within my piece as the conversion therapists' voice was as I wanted to keep it as a fully woman show as for the context of the piece and as she offered as I was in her project.

Technical planning was a part of the process, as mentioned with the sound and lighting document. The script had been altered with notations for the sound effects (SFX) and lighting cues (LX) The cues were colour coded and I created a physical copy so when we had our tech session, it would be seamless with the discussions with Liz, our technical manager:

[Lavender or Lace Final Draft Lighting and Sound.docx](#)

5.6 Critical Reflection on Process

Justifications of Decisions

One of the most significant decisions made and mentioned many times already was restructuring the entire piece from a 3-person piece to a one-woman play. Initially, I was very worried and didn't want to change it. As I was already assisting 2 of my peers in their pieces and again, I wanted to accurately represent it with a man in the piece as William, which was not possible as no man had offered and I did not want to add stress to any of the Level 6's.

The change although felt as a better idea, as it helped ideas flow more easily as my research was a lot more easily incorporated into the script as it was a description of what had happened and the narrative had a clear story journey and a beginning and end.

Evaluation of what succeeded and what did not

What succeeded in this was the showing of her emotional journey throughout, I included many aspects of what I had planned, it flowed and especially when corrected and followed the narrative I was trying to follow, which was plot structure which was Freytag's Pyramid/Icarus structure, which is structured as introduction, rising movement, climax, falling action, catastrophe. (Bunting, 2020)

What failed was the inclusion of the added research, it explains her story and doesn't delve into the actual proper history which I wish was more included as it is an important part of the story.

Analysis of What Changed and Why

Throughout the process, several aspects evolved. The most notable change was again the restructuring of the script but alongside that the staging had also changed. Initially, I imagined multiple locations and interactions between characters. As the piece developed to a monologue, I simplified the staging into a small number of defined spaces. This change was driven by force but also by the desire of keeping to Maggie's inner world.

I also moved away from the idea of including time travel or fantasy elements. At first I was drawn to the concept of Maggie being given a chance to 'rewrite' her life, but as I researched more about queer history and conversion therapy and I realized it was unsensitive to add that when there were real-life stakes. It became realistic and gave the seriousness of the matter more respect and avoided trivializing my research and piece.

Independence of Thought and Problem-Solving

A Key Challenge in this process was representing a relationship that was never fully realized or openly expressed, especially within a memory. Maggie and Vivian's relationship only existed within the memory of Maggie's feelings and explanation. Their actual relationship existed more under subtext and implication. Instead of resolving this, I leaned into it, allowing their relationship to remain partial and undefined because that reflected how many queer relationships existed and ended in the 1950's.

Another problem-solving aspect was balancing my own personal connection with the performance. As the theme is loosely related, as for being a queer woman, I did not want to risk having some sense of personal feeling within it. As the experience I had written for Maggie had little connection to my own. I focused on keeping a distance within the acting and writing so I can write as accurate to what I had interpreted from my research.

Overall, the process required me to justify my choices adapt to unexpected challenges and think critically about what served the story best. Not every decision was perfect, but it created a result I had been proud of.

6. Practical Choice

https://youtu.be/zFZS90ph8_w

6.1 Overview of the Practical Piece

The practical choice for my independent project was a one-woman performance titled 'Lavender & Lace' This piece is a 10-minute monologue that follows Maggie, a 1950's housewife as she reflects on the past of how she had realized her sexuality. The narrative unfolds as she recollects how it came to seeing it.

The style of the piece is minimalistic, a strong focus on the storytelling aspect. The entire thing is subtle and engages in realism of someone retelling a story rather than excessive acting, staging or technical aspects.

The purpose of this piece is to explore the untold and undocumented lived experiences of queer women in the 1950's. It aims to highlight the lack of freedom and forced restraints against queer women. In addition, the show mirrors similar issues in the present times, encouraging audiences to reflect on these themes and how they feel about this but also what they could do socially or politically to assist the current issues.

6.2 Artistic Rationale

The decisions within my piece were strongly informed by both historical and performance-based research explored throughout the development of it. The piece was designed to reflect the lived experience of queer women in 1950's Britain. Research into the laws and the social repression, directly influenced the character and story of Maggie.

The framing of this piece is within a explanation of her in conversion therapy which was a significant decision as it developed the addition of research about historical and contemporary practices. While not mentioned within the piece, the roots of it are religious and societal control which are themes explained in my literature review. Including this framing device allowed the performance to connect past and present, pushing the idea that these ideas are still not history. It also provided the motivation for the entire play, as there was a need to explain why she would be telling this story.

Performance techniques also explored within the research also shaped the style of the piece. I was influenced by our previous training with Stanislavski's concept of given

circumstances and Meisner’s idea of acting on instinct as it would enhance the realism and helped with the development of her character and understanding of her character.

Overall, the artistic rationale for Lavender & Lace is rooted in the integration of historical research, performance theory and personal exploration. Each decision from structure to characterization was used intentionally to what I felt was the best choice to represent this experience with authenticity and sensitivity.

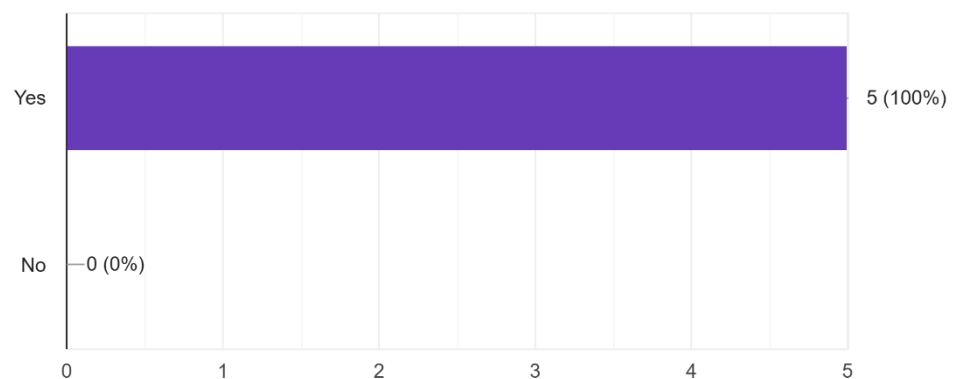
6.3 Evaluation of the Final Outcome

Performance Strengths

One of my main aims was to follow the schedule I had set for myself, as for my previous lack of time management, even when unexpected challenges arose. This aim was achieved, even when I had to completely restructure the piece. Despite this setback, I adapted quickly by rewriting the script without delaying the continuation of my piece.

Another aim was to create a performance that encouraged audiences to reflect on their knowledge of how they were treated back then but also the connections of modern-day issues. The audience survey strongly supports that this aim was met as 100% of responses answered ‘Yes’

Did the performance make you think about connections between the 1950s and modern-day issues?
5 responses



Several audience members commented on the program, especially with the QR code linking to the petition to ban conversion therapy in the UK, that had made the contemporary link clearer (Survey Respondents, 2026) This indicates that the combination of performance and added materials successfully communicated the ongoing significance of the topic.

Performance Strengths

A key strength that was identified was the effectiveness of the one-woman format. When asked if this format supported the storytelling, responses included:

“Yes, I think it was incredibly effective and showed how lonely it was for women going through this.”, “Yes, I viewed it as an inner monologue that couldn’t be expressed aloud during that time.”, “I believe that a one-woman show is a very strong format in storytelling. This show focused on her and her voice only, capturing every detail in text and physical gestures.” (Survey Respondents, 2026)

These responses show that the monologue styled structure not only worked practically but also enhanced the emotional impact of the piece.

Audience Consideration

Audience consideration was a consideration since the beginning of the process. When creating the program, I had included a content warning to ensure the audience were aware of each theme which is important to create a space where everyone was comfortable.

The survey I also created was designed so the audience felt comfortable to be critical and give honest answer, as I made sure it was anonymous.

Limitations and Challenges

One of the biggest limitations was my lack of prior experience writing a full script, my only other experience being a previous project in which had a lot of assistance. This had meant a lot of research and having my peers to read through it to make sure it had made sense, as I have had a lot of previous feedback that had mentioned I lack coherency with my points and writing.

A large challenge I had to face was keeping on point to the initial question, as I was deterring away from it and focus on what I wasn’t trying to portray within my piece.

Unexpected Factors

The most unexpected factor was no one wanting to be in the performance. My initial back-up plan was to do a simple sit and read performance but that would have prevented me on exploring acting techniques, staging and practitioner research. Instead, I chose to challenge myself to create a one-woman play.

Another factor was balancing the piece and project with my own life, keeping to the schedule to the best of my abilities as well as preparing and rehearsing for other modules was a factor I had not interpreted. Although, it should have been expected, I had never realized that myself. I addressed this by, making sure that not only I kept to this schedule but keeping a loose schedule for each other module and personal issue I had.

6.4 Professional Skills Demonstrated

Throughout the development, I demonstrated a range of transferable skills that aligned with our criteria. These skills were essential for completing this performance and written dissertation.

Time management became one of the strongest skills I had demonstrated. Which had been something I had lacked within previous projects. I created a schedule and committed to it, even with the setbacks.

Although the piece was a one-woman piece, leadership was still required, I led my own decisions with a critical mind and didn't allow myself to get lost. I made each decision and worked independently and showcased my skills of initiation, resilience and the ability to lead a project, even when everything was to land on me.

I had a lack of cast, although working in some of the rehearsals with Isobel, I made sure to be clear and work around her, mentioning in private messages what is to be worked on and how long she would be needed, I would also work around her own schedule with her independent project.

The project required strong organization skills, especially considering I was doing each job, writing the script, directing myself, setting the lighting and sound design, exploring the costume concept and managing the schedule.

Managing these different components independently demonstrated the ability to co-ordinate multiple tasks simultaneously.

7. Conclusion

The project had allowed me to develop a deeper understanding of both the historical reality of queer people, especially women in earlier periods and the full process of creating a piece of performance.

Through the research I learned how societal and political issues shaped the experiences of queer women and how it created a culture of silencing and fear. At the same time, the practical exploration taught me how to translate theory into performance as using many different techniques had amplified my performance.

Initially the research felt separate to the writing. However, as it developed, I would research alongside writing and my previous research was a constant reference point for my writing, and it built each of my decision.

The value of this project for my artistic and industry development has been substantial. I developed different skills and all of which were essential to me. I also gained a lot more

confidence within my growing skills of scriptwriting, creative decisions and confidence in my own choices.

There are several possibilities for what the next step for this project would be. If there were to be a cast, the original 3-person cast could be revisited, allowing a more personal view for the audience. Alternatively, the entire piece could be expanded to explaining the entire story with extra details.

Although, I had thought about this as I want to expand my piece. My main idea if I were to create this again would most likely be monologues that are 5-10 minutes of marginalized communities in the past. Including Maggie's story but also including more realistic experiences including people of colour, people with physical disabilities, people who were neurodiverse in that period, to spread awareness of these things which aren't documented enough as for the limited written experience of the victims of the constraints of these times.

Finally, addressing my investigation, 'How can performance be used to explore the emotional, societal and political experiences of a queer woman in the 1950s?' This project demonstrates that performance can serve as a powerful tool for reclaiming and representing the history of queer women. Through the development I was able to explore the emotional aspect, delving into the repression, social expectation and political constraints.

The final piece therefore answers the investigation by showing that performance not only reflects the historical realities but also creates a space for empathy, visibility and truth. By combining research with my own creative interpretation, the work demonstrates how performance can highlight experiences that were historically silenced.

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9. Appendices

Include any supporting documents:

[Independent Project](#)

[Independent Project - OneDrive](#)

This folder includes each thing needed for the Appendices.