

Independent Project Dissertation

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Introduction

3.1 Project Overview

Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them? This dissertation will challenge the controversial topic of queer representation in the world of the entertainment industry. I will argue my view on this particular subject from the perspective of a queer man currently trying to make his way into the industry. When planning my independent project, I knew immediately I wanted to tackle a theme I was not only passionate about, but also an area of study that I would find merit in researching. Even though the performing arts industry has improved leaps and bounds in making queer people more visible, we are still a long way away from queer people being fully accepted, appreciated, and valued in this line of work. Holly Mallet from Backstage supports this ideology by stating queer people in theatre, film and television are still placed into regressive stereotypes and it is the responsibility of those in power to enhance their own understanding of what the queer community needs and how they need to be represented (Mallett, 2019).

3.2 Research Aims & Creative Aims

My academic intentions for this project are to have a better understanding of my chosen topic, convey all my research into this dissertation and to answer the question I chose, which is 'Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?' My practical intentions for my project are to create a piece of theatre with themes of queer representation in theatre, conflict between characters, and have the piece build to a climactic end. My goal is to create a ten-minute play and the concept I landed on was a play within a play. This is where a secondary performance is incorporated into the main narrative of the play. It often contributes additional meaning and encourages the audience to critically engage with the themes of the performance (StageAgent, 2026). The two characters that would be featured in my play will be an actor and a director and the story would stem from a piece of direction the director gives to the actor that pushes homophobic ideologies; therefore, the play would focus on the contradiction between the character's professional opinions.

3.3 Research Methods

For my literature review, my strategy is to allocate dedicated time to conducting comprehensive research, where I will gather all relevant sources, which will inform

my critical analysis of my research question. Once my research is completed, I can accurately complete my literature review. The aim for my literature review is to discuss the themes linking to my chosen topic. I will gather literature from scholar's theories and make a comprehensive review based on the findings I will discover. I will also identify any gaps in the literature and ultimately reach a conclusion on how the research I discover will impact and influence the practical portion of my project. This literature review will also provide me with a greater understanding of my chosen question before I complete the practical element of my project.

3.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The structure for the remaining chapters of this dissertation will be my literature review. Then, once the practical aspect of my project has begun, I will go on to my development, collaboration and exploration, my overview of the creative development, researched-informed exploration, practical investigations, collaboration, production planning and critical reflection on the whole process. I will seek to write, direct and perform a ten-minute piece of theatre. I shall explain the piece, justify how it connects to my research and development, evaluate my final performance and list the professional skills I demonstrate. Finally, I will sum up everything in a conclusion, what I discovered throughout the entire project, my theoretical and practical relationship, value of the project in my artistic and industry developments and Possible next steps or future iterations.

4. Literature Review

Introduction

The issue of queer representation has become increasingly significant within the entertainment industry. Although in recent years, writers are creating more queer-lead projects and casting directors are casting more queer actors in productions; there are still many inequalities queer creatives face in this industry. This problem inspired me to discuss the question "Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?" I find this to be relevant in the creative arts world as there have been many instances of heterosexual people casted and profiting on queer storylines. An immediate example comes to mind with the 2017 feature film 'Call Me by Your

Name'. Both lead actors Timothée Chalamet and Armie Hammer identify as heterosexual. I will go on to discuss my opinions on this casting decision later in this review. The scope of this literature review will include contemporary resources, books, articles which will provide me knowledge and understanding to further analyse my chosen topic. This literature review will outline a multitude of theories as well as contextual framework. The aim of this literature review is to explore the theories of scholars regarding the topic of queer representation in the entertainment industry. I will go on to identify any gaps in the literature I discover as well as examine how and why this research links to my independent project and finalise all of my findings and come to the conclusion on how my practical work for this project will develop from this research.

Theoretical and Contextual Framework

The shaping of my chosen topic is constructed by a multitude of elements, theories and ideologies. One being the previously mentioned controversial casting of 'Call Me by Your Name'. The film's director Luca Guadagnino justifies his decision to cast two heterosexual actors in this queer story by arguing he should not cast based on what people think is real, real being a gay man playing a gay character. He theorises that he should cast who is the correct fit for the character, regardless on sexuality. He goes on to state the film is not about gay identity because no two gay men are the same (Guadagnino, 2020). In reflection, I take a critical stance towards this theory. I believe his attempt to justify this casting decision has serious faults. It is my view that if a character is gay, the actor playing the role should also be queer. Also, the decision to cast household names such as Timothée Chalamet and Armie Hammer gives off the impression he cared more about casting famous actors, resulting in a profitable project rather than the truth of the story. Scholars would consider this to be problematic, Guadagnino, an openly gay director cannot see the importance of queer people playing these amazing roles. This absolutely applies to my project as it is an example of heterosexual people telling and profiting off queer stories. It is unfortunate that these roles were not performed by members of the queer community as it could have benefited them immensely from the opportunity. As well as this, it would put a needed spotlight on queer performers, fairly representing them.

In 2021, American actor and singer Joshua Bassett came out as a member of the LGBTQIA+ community. Bassett has not confirmed his sexuality; he simply stated he is in no rush to jump to a conclusion on his identity, and he is happy to be embraced by the community (Bassett, 2022). However, there are many conflicting opinions to this situation; since Bassett later made the decision to become baptised. While it is not uncommon for Christians to identify as queer, the church Joshua has aligned himself with has a complicated and problematic history with the LGBTQIA+ community (Monteil, 2023). My stance on this situation is that I believe it is controversial to join a church with troubling opinions on queer people. Historically, queer people have received prejudice based on their sexuality especially from people who practice Christianity. Bassett's morals have been brought into question on this situation, and I believe he should have underwent research on what churches are accepting of queer individuals and which are not and assess what is best for him. However, I am to believe Joshua's sexuality should not be brought into question. Many people are accusing him of queerbaiting, which is a marketing tactic that hints towards queerness. Creatives often use this methodology to promise positive queer representation but rarely upholds that commitment (Murphy, 2026). As fascinating as this piece of research I discovered is, I have concluded it does not apply directly to my project. Queerbaiting is relevant to my project, and I will further discuss this topic however, I do not believe Joshua Bassett is queerbaiting. It is my belief that this does not affect queer people being represented in the entertainment industry.

Thematic Review of the Literature

Theme 1: Queer Representation and Authenticity in the Entertainment Industry

A notable debate surrounding queer representation in the entertainment industry concerns authenticity in storytelling. This begs the question, "who should tell queer stories?" In recent years, queer stories presented in film, television and theatre have become increasingly popular. Productions like 'Brokeback Mountain', 'Love Victor' and 'The Inheritance' have been created to entertain audience while incorporating a much-needed spotlight on queer characters and stories. However, almost all of these roles are portrayed by heterosexual actors (Admin, 2018). This has many problematic potential outcomes; the most apparent example is this is preventing

actual queer identifying actors from receiving the opportunity to be fairly represented in the industry.

Alternatively, the American musical comedy-drama television show 'Glee' features an abundance of queer representation, some more authentic than others. Chris Colfer played Kurt Hummel and even though he is now openly gay, he was encouraged to not disclose his sexuality while being a part of the show, despite him playing an openly gay character (Muir, 2024). Nonetheless, he is a notable exemplar of a gay man getting to play a gay role in a highly regarded television program. The same cannot be said for other cast members of the show. Darren Criss played Blaine Anderson and is a heterosexual identifying actor who played gay character. Blaine's character is a positive representation of queer characters as he does not conform to the gay stereotypes often presented in media. While this is a favourable progression for queer representation, Blaine is still a role that could have easily been played by a gay man (RTF Gender and Media Culture, 2020).

The next question is "are queer stories more authentic when created by queer people?" Reflecting on the literature, it can be concluded that the answer to this question is yes. Personal, lived experiences matters, and based on the research I have conducted and the sources I have gathered, queer stories are more meaningful and authentic when they are told from the perspective of queer performers who have true experiences being queer in the real world. According to theorist (Thompson and Brooks, 2021), while progress has been made in making queer roles more accessible to queer identifying performers, there is still room for improvement. There is still a lack of LGBTQIA+ voices in the industry. Ultimately, heterosexual identifying actors can, have and will continue to play queer characters regardless on the potential harmful effects this may have on the queer community, but the hope for the future is more opportunities for queer identifying people to play queer identifying roles in film, television and theatre.

From an analytical and comparative perspective, (Admin, 2018) clearly critiques the prevalence of queer characters being portrayed by heterosexual actors, asserting the opinion that this action limits opportunities for LGBTQIA+ performers. Chris Colfer's portrayal of the character Kurt Hummel in Glee could be considered as an authentic example of queer representation, due to his lived experiences as a gay

identifying man. To counteract this argument, (RTF Gender and Media Culture, 2020) argues Darren Criss' portrayal of Blaine Anderson in Glee emphasises that heterosexual identifying actors are equipped to play queer characters in a non-stereotypical and sensitive way. This manifests tension within the literature surrounding whether truthfulness of a performance stems from an actor's quality and sensitivity of their performance in the piece or primarily from their identity. However, Theorists (Thompson and Brooks, 2021) argue that despite the improvements regarding queer visibility, LGBTQIA+ voices remain unrepresented, implying that opportunities for queer actors continue to be restricted within the creative arts industry.

Theme 2: Profit and Commercialisation in Queer Productions

While queer representation and visibility have improved significantly within mainstream media and the entertainment industry, the next question that needs to be discussed is "who is profiting from these queer stories?". The discourse surrounding queer media and culture has long been occupied with the complexities of commodifying queer identities. Despite the concern, much of the attention has remained fixed on how commercialized queer stereotypes have become, reinforcing a harmful heteronormative view by preventing authentic repetitions of queerness (Levy, p.28, 2023).

Rainbow capitalism is something that has become all too common in today's culture, not specifically within the industry, but in marketing. Rainbow capitalism or pink capitalism as it is also known as is the action of companies commodifying off queer people, especially during Pride Month. These companies claim to support the LGBTQIA+ community but use marketing tactics to make a profit (Schneider, 2021).

The next point to be made discusses queerbaiting. Studios specifically in Hollywood use queerbaiting as a tactic to draw in queer audiences to make profit. This may be considered problematic, as the commodification of queer narratives risks reducing lived experiences to marketable products, potentially undermining the authenticity of queer representation in the industry. Scholar (McEvoy, 2021) seeks to argue that queer happenings are not designed for heterosexual profit. Queer representation should be approached with authenticity and not be used as a profitable tactic, as the examples argue commodify and exploit queer identity for financial gain.

The commercialisation of LGBTQIA+ identity remains a substantial debating in current media and entertainment sources. (Levy, 2023) suggests that the commodification of queer identities has resulted in the confirmation of heteronormative ideologies. This limits authentic depictions of queerness using marketable misconceptions. (Schnider, 2021) expands on this point through the argument of rainbow capitalism; companies using the queer experience and false LGBTQIA+ allyship, especially during Pride Month to profit from queer people. While (Levy, 2023) critiques the consequences of commodification, (Schnider, 2021) how this problem manifests a profit through consumerism.

Theme 3: Queer Representation in the Theatrical Industry

Today, the number of queer characters in theatre played by members of the LGBTQIA+ community is significantly larger than in previous years. Stars such as Cynthia Erivo, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Ncuti Gatwa and Liz Carr are just some of many incredible queer identifying performers being recognised for their substantial work in theatre (Rank, 2025). However, many queer creatives feel neglected by companies (Bromley, 2024). The debate between these two theorists suggests that there is clear evolution regarding the presence of queer performers. However, there is still improvements to be made in the industry regardless of how much progress has been made.

A significant issue within creative performance environments is homophobia within performance environments; specifically gay male sexualities are being insulted by heteronormative ideologies for gay men, which performers are encouraged to conform to (Rumens and Broomfield, 2014). Alternatively, theorists claim that despite the previous normality of white, cis-gender male leading in the creation of theatre, there is hope for developments in a more inclusive queer-lead future for theatre makers (Noriega and Schildcrout, p.2, 2022).

A substantial problem within performance environments for creatives questions the presence of homophobia, particularly surrounding toxic masculinity and gay identity. (Rumens and Broomfield, 2024) claim that gay male identities are often critiqued through heteronormative beliefs. Adding pressure on queer performers to either conform to a socially acceptable expression of heteronormative sexuality or a dated stereotype of what it means to be a gay man. This implies that performance spaces

may still solidify regressive normalities, limiting true expression of queer identity. On the other hand, (Noriega and Schildcrout, p.2, 2022). Offer a perspective that is more optimistic, arguing that despite the historical authority of white, cis-gender male control in theatre specifically, our industry is gradually making progress to a more accessible space for queer creatives. Even though (Rumens and Broomfield) emphasise there is still prejudice and discrimination within performance environments, (Noriega and Schildcrout, p.2, 2022) point out the potential for change within the industry. Collectively, these theorists' perspectives imply that although theatre is increasingly becoming more inclusive, homophobia and heteronormative ideologies remain within performance culture.

Synthesis and Identification of Gaps

Assessing the literature I researched, there is a broad understanding and agreement that queer representation within the entertainment industry has made substantial improvements over the years. Scholars and theorists acknowledge that there has been a significant increase in LGBTQIA+ representation, including more queer narratives across theatre, film and television. However, improvements are imperative as there are still ongoing concerns regarding true queer authenticity within queer stories, commercialisation of queer experiences and heteronormative and stereotypical standards within the industry.

There are however contradictions in the literature. Even though industry discourse is continuing to promote diversity and inclusivity within storytelling, the conducted research implies queer creatives still suffer from barriers to authentic representation and opportunities in the professional world. In addition, although narratives specifically aligning with queerness have become more visible commercially, scholars and theorists cannot agree on whether this mirrors meaningful progression or the commodification of LGBTQIA+ stories and identities for financial profit.

A substantial gap established throughout the discovered literature concerns performance environments specifically linked to theatre. Much of the literature does not prioritise theatre; instead, it prioritises film, television and representation within the media. This unfortunately provides less attention to theatrical actor-director relationships, inclusion of queerness in rehearsal spaces and the overall experiences of queer creatives within the theatre industry. Furthermore, there is little discourse

involving the discussion of how homophobia and heteronormative ideologies manifest during creative collaboration in this industry. In addition to this, for my personal research, there was a lack of written material in the form of books available to research. A vast majority of my sources in this literature review are from websites as for my chosen topic, there was not a significant number of books available that encompassed my project and the wide scope of the research I intended to conduct.

Ultimately, the literature that I have researched reinforces my initial aims for my project. Appointing my dissertation question, “Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?” which has allowed me to conduct research on specific experiences from queer creatives. As well as examine the financial aspect of the industry, determine where the profit is being made and who is commodifying from the LGBTQIA+ community. Finally, this literature review has partially allowed me to discover what the previous and current situations regarding queer experiences in theatre. My aim for my practical exploration is to explore the main gap I found in this literature review, which is queer experiences in theatre specifically. My goal is to create a piece of theatre, outlining the intense scrutiny queer people face in theatre.

Conclusion

To conclude, the literature I have researched collectively shows that while queer representation is rapidly improving within the entertainment industry, there are many improvements needed to further progress this agenda. This is meaningful to my project as my aim was to discover “Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?” It is my belief that the theories and research I found for this literature review, have aided my goal in answering this question. From completing this literature review, I am confident that my practical work for this project will develop significantly. This is apparent as I now have numerous focus points to make a promising start on the practical element of this project.

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5. Development, Collaboration & Exploration

5.1 Overview of the Creative Development

My initial ideas for this project were very different to what I wrote in the end. I knew immediately I wanted to create a piece of theatre as it is something I am deeply committed to. I have future aspirations to create, write and direct, so a play was the best choice for me to present my project. For the performance, I started with an idea for a comedic piece, drawing inspiration from the theatre company, StarKid productions. StarKid is a theatre company that specialise in comedy and musical parodies. They have been creating musical theatre comedies since 2009 and upload all their productions onto YouTube (StarKid Productions, 2019). I took inspiration from their original musicals 'The Guy Who Didn't Like Musicals' and 'Nerdy Prudes Must Die'. I was influenced by the horror comedy genre they have and the 'end of the world' narrative they both follow. I played around with multiple choices for what to write for my performance, but concept I came up with was the story of three teenagers stuck in a lockdown in school. There would be an 'end of the world'

scenario forcing them to leave school and save the world. After giving myself time to reflect on this idea, I came to the realization it was a far too ambitious idea to reduce to a ten-minute performance, with limited budget and technical elements. At this point in the process, I was not making as much progress as I wanted to. I was struggling finding an idea I connected to and was content with pursuing for my entire project. As much as I am fond of StarKid's work and they would be a significant inspiration for future projects I may write; for this project, it was imperative I create something that was deeply personal to me. Once I stopped thinking about the final, completed product and started thinking about what I am truly passionate about outside of theatre, the idea came to me. The one part of my life that I advocate for most is my identity as a gay man. That was how my idea started. A queer-led story, focusing on inequalities queer performers face in the entertainment industry. I decided on a two-man play featuring an actor character and a director character. This idea allowed me to ask myself some questions about queer representation in the entertainment industry. Some of these questions were: "Are we really practicing what we preach with queer representation in theatre in 2026?", "Why can't queer performers play any role?" and "Why are we ignoring homophobia in theatre?" All these questions were suitable for my project and would have allowed me to develop ideas and research the topic in detail. However, I wanted a more thought-provoking question that would not only challenge me as the writer of this dissertation, but also challenge the reader, and challenge the people who see my play. The importance of a compelling research question is that it will keep the writer interested and focused on their chosen topic and will guide them on what readings they may need and what data they need to gather (Oxford Brookes University, 2024). Ultimately, I decided on the question 'Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?'

5.2 Research informed Exploration

Based on the evidence and findings of my literature review, I discovered there a significant gap in knowledge of queer identifying people being mistreated in the theatrical industry specifically. However, there were still sources located. This prompted the first piece of inspiration for my practical performance. Theorist (Bromley, 2024) discussed that queer people in theatre have felt overlooked and abandoned by theatre companies. This information influenced me to start writing my play. I sought to write a story of a queer stage performer being mistreated by

someone in power. Additionally, referring to a questionnaire I created at the start of this project, it was concluded that 94.7% of participants believed it is important for queer stories to be told by queer performers. The other 5.3% were unsure, not against this viewpoint (Wheelhouse, 2026, unpublished survey data). This further motivated me to create this piece of theatre. If 94.7% of people who participated in my survey believed it is important for queer stories to be told by queer actors, then why are so many queer stories being told by heterosexual identifying performers?

5.3 Practical Investigations

There were numerous practical investigations that I discovered through this process. The first draft of the script for my play had some notable changes to what the final draft looked like. Once a first draft of any script is completed, it is important to edit and revise the script. This ensures that the script is well-crafted and engaging (Pajkovic, 2023). When writing my script, I didn't have specific character names in mind, so the first draft's characters were the same names as the actors in the play. Later, I decided as part of my Welsh identity, it would be essential for the characters to have Welsh names. I also decided that it was crucial for me to be in this play, as I identify with the actor character I created. I have experienced situations in my life where people tone down on how gay I am, which is the through narrative of the play. This made sense as my scene partner, Callum Jones and I are both Welsh and would perform the piece in our natural accents. I ended up choosing the name Evan for the actor character and Rhys for the director character. My original script draft was also four pages shorter than the final draft. I was fortunate enough to have Callum read through the first draft with me, not only to receive his opinion on the piece, but also to see if the play meets the ten-minute criteria. From that read through, I discovered the scene was around three minutes too short. As well as this, I feel the play didn't feature a big enough catalyst leading to the final climactic monologue performed by my character. So, after writing in these additions, my play was ready to begin rehearsing. To execute successfully in the 'play within a play' concept, I wanted it to appear like I was in a one man play. So, I decided Callum, who plays the director character would be sat in the audience as if he was watching my performance. When trying out different ideas with blocking, I thought it would be crucial for Callum to enter the stage on significant moments of conflict and tension. The feedback I received from Callum was extremely positive. He expressed his

satisfaction with my blocking choices; he admired my clear vision for what I wanted the play to look like. As well as this, he appreciated my direction for his character (Jones, Personal Communication, 17/04/26). To accomplish the play within a play concept, my character performs a monologue every time he is 'acting'. To further execute this narrative, my idea was to have a record player be a part of the set. Every time the 'play' starts I turn on the record player. Choosing the music for this play was a very complex challenge for me. I cut together an instrumental track of the song 'The Grudge' by Olivia Rodrigo. I wanted the music to replicate not only what Evan's character was feeling in his scene but also what Evan was feeling in his rehearsal with the director Rhys. The main theme of this track is feeling betrayed by someone you admire, "Your flowers filled with vitriol". The "flowers" are a symbol of praise, but "filled with vitriol" represents the praise being covered with resentment and bitterness (Rodrigo, 2023). Thematically, this song was perfect. However, sonically, it didn't sound right over a tense monologue. The song I ultimately selected was 'Jigsaw' by Conan Gray. This song works for so many reasons. The lyrics represent everything Evan goes through with Rhys, but also what Evan's character in his play goes through with his partner, "You take every part of me, all the things you need, then the rest you discard. I look in the mirror, now I'm just a jigsaw". The "jigsaw" is the narrator feeling as if he is being cut into pieces, and a metaphor for him being altered to complete someone else's picture (Gray, 2022). The song in its entirety is about feeling like you must change everything about yourself to meet another person's standards, which is the plotline for the play; Evan is constantly being criticised by Rhys, being told he is playing his role "too gay". Even though the lyrics coincide with everything Evan goes through in the play, it overpowers what Evan is saying in his monologue. I wanted to keep the song in as an instrument as it complements the dialogue very well and Conan Gray is also a queer artist, so being able to have more queer representation in my play through the music assists in the effectiveness of the piece. Gray's queer identity, often referenced in his music allows a large portion of his queer audience to relate to him and come to terms with their own sexuality and helps them to accept themselves (Kistler, 2025).

5.4 Collaboration

Early in the rehearsal process I expressed to Callum how I wanted this process to be as collaborative as possible. This was inspired by my experience working with

director Matthew Holmquist on WAVDA's production of *The World Goes 'Round*. He created a safe and collaborative environment for the cast to experiment and "be brave" with choices (Holmquist, Personal Communication, 18/02/2026).

Communication was one of my biggest priorities throughout the rehearsal process. As it was a two-man play, I wanted to make sure my professional relationship with Callum was an especially positive one. I consistently how valued his feelings were on blocking, the script and his interpretation of his character. When directing him, I'd always ask him if he was happy and comfortable with the direction and the development of his character. A great director is someone who can offer support and guidance to their cast and know when to stick to their artistic vision and respond to external factors well, such as opinions of their cast members (Lee-Rekers, 2022). We negotiated well on this project by us both expressing our opinions on specific aspects of the play. For example, the section where his character sits on the sofa and imitates how my character is performing the piece. In the session, I suggested his character should over-exaggerate my mannerisms to seem like he is belittling me. However, his take on the interaction I much preferred. He suggested his imitation of my character be an accurate impression of my mannerisms to further imply that Rhys' opinion on Evan's acting is wrong for the scene; so wrong he doesn't need to exaggerate anything. This is just one example of where I listened to my actor's professional opinions and went against my original vision for the play to create a better outcome. Along with great collaboration, I believe my leadership and directing skills were strong throughout the rehearsal process. I read that. I valued this information and followed it vigorously throughout the entire rehearsal process. I find leadership daunting however, in this project, it felt very natural for me. I believe a huge part of that is because I made the decision to cast someone I know well and have worked with on other productions before. We both knew how each other work, where our strengths lie, how to collaborate well with each other and to work professionally together.

5.5 Production Planning

At the start of this project, I knew to keep myself motivated, I would need to create a production schedule. The schedule was plan of the entire timeline for the module and was created to guide me through the whole process. The schedule I created was not made to be an exact, detailed plan; it was simply to keep me on track if I

started to get distracted or lose motivation. For the most part, I stuck to the schedule when writing my play. I allowed myself a substantial amount of time to write a draft and complete my final script. However, during this part of the process, I struggled with personal health issues, delaying my progression. Creatives dealing with health complications is not uncommon; in fact, the day before Idina Menzel's final performance in *Wicked* on Broadway, the Tony winner fell through a trap door onstage, fracturing her ribs and preventing her from completing her final show as Elphaba (Haber, 2021). When it came to scheduling rehearsals, I had fewer obstacles to overcome. I found what worked best for us both was rehearsing twice a week for two weeks as we are both currently in level six and have modules to complete and occupations outside of university. While being disciplined with our rehearsal schedule, we also found time within that to rehearse as much as possible. The rehearsal process starts with setting priorities and goals, then allocating time to rehearse, then communicating with your cast and finally, technical preparations and working in the space before the performance (New International Performing Arts Institute, 2023). The casting for my play was obvious for me. Callum was always my top choice, but I originally had the idea to have one female and one male actor in my piece. That being said, once I began writing the first draft, it made more sense for it to be a story between two men, so I could add underlying motifs of jealousy and resentment from Rhys towards Evan, calling him "too gay" when Rhys himself is gay. I made the decision to cast myself as Evan because while I was writing the script, I was writing with myself in mind. I was writing from a lot of personal experiences I have had and logically it made sense to cast myself in this role. I knew Callum and I would work well professionally together based on previous productions we have been in. For the technical elements for this play I had a very specific vision. When Evan was 'acting' my idea was to light the stage in blue. I chose blue as it can symbolise coldness, sadness and being distant, all feelings that Evan's character feels both towards Rhys and what his character in the play feels like (Cherry, 2024). When the play switches to the dialogue between Rhys and Evan, I wanted the lighting to be more natural looking, showing the audience that they have been taken out of the play and that this is real life. At the end of the play, Evan repeats his monologue, but he directs it at Rhys. For this section, I wanted the lighting to turn red. The psychology linked to the colour red symbolises strong emotions such as anger and aggression (Cherry, 2023). To expand on this idea, I wanted the lighting

to switch between the red and the natural lighting to portray that Evan is performing the scene, but he is not acting. What he is saying in the monologue might be the dialogue he was given, but he means every word he is saying to Rhys. For the sound elements, the song 'Jigsaw' by Conan Gray was the track I used for this piece. However, at the end of the play, when Evan does his monologue for the final time, the song cuts to a different part of the song. This part has more intense instrumentation, which adds to the tension of the scene. I was unsure whether these sound elements would add to the conflict already created in this scene, my fear was that it would distract the audience from the important dialogue being said. However, when we rehearsed it in our technical session, it worked tremendously well. Elizabeth Catherine Chiu was the tech manager, and she brought every vision I had for this performance to life. She even increased the volume of the music in the last section of the play as Callum and I's argument increased in intensity, adding to the drama of the piece. Music plays a critical role in deepening emotion in theatre, while also enhancing the performance (Theatretrain HQ, 2024).

5.6 Critical Reflection on Process

I was satisfied with every decision I made throughout the process of this project. The decision to change my idea from the StarKid inspiration to a topic I truly resonated with and was passionate about, which would allow me to conduct in-depth research surrounding a multitude of sub-topics. The project led question I chose has also granted me numerous pathways in which I was able to research my subject thoroughly. As well as this, the decision to create a play within a play was a concept I was very proud of. The concept for this was under consideration for an extended period, and I am highly satisfied to have successfully executed this concept. The writing of my script is something I am still fulfilled by. I wrote a monologue that could be redirected by Rhys' character and ultimately directed towards him at the climax of the play. I believe also having Evan never complete the monologue in its entirety until the end of the play was especially powerful as it showed how his character developed and gained strength to stand up to Rhys' borderline homophobic direction. In my opinion, the one part of the play I could have made vast improvements on was being diligent with learning the dialogue of the piece. It made sense for Evan to have a script in his hand while doing his monologue as he was rehearsing his play, but I wish Callum and I learned the dialogue between Evan and

Rhys. This was not an essential part of the project, but from a performance perspective, I believe it would take the audience out of the piece. There were multiple changes made; from changing my concept completely as well as changing the casting and characters. These changes were essential in creating a successful piece of theatre. The concept I landed on was strong, and the script was well written. I received that feedback from my supervisor and course leader Tori Johns (Johns, Personal Communication, 21/04/26). I worked independently on this project by completing twelve-page script with well written stage directions and lighting cues for Callum and Elizabeth to easily follow. Also, I had a complicated concept, which I was able to successfully communicate into a ten-minute play. A problem I encountered was in my technical session. The lighting options available were not what I had envisioned when creating my play. The lights we had did not have any bold colour options like the red and the blue I had in mind for the performance. To combat this obstacle, Elizabeth and I discovered there was a lighting option with a slight blue tint to it. It was not perfect and not what I envisioned however, it still created that contrast between the natural stage lighting and the performance lighting I was looking for.

6. Practical Choice – 10-Minute Presentation + Commentary

Too Much, Not Enough

A Play by Zack Wheelhouse - [Wheelhouse, Zack ADPA6000 Practical.mov](#)

6.1 Overview of the Practical Piece

The form of this practical piece was a ten-minute stage play. The play features two characters: Evan, a queer actor rehearsing a serious monologue for a play he has cast in, and Rhys, the director of the play Evan is performing in. The style and concept of this performance was a play within a play. The play covers several genres: it is a drama, focusing on realistic characters in realistic situations with emotional conflict. It also has elements of satire present, using irony to criticize serious topics. The main purpose of this play was to educate the audience of these real-life situations. Many actors face this homophobic behaviour from people in power. Nathan Lane states that homophobia is still a significant problem in Hollywood (Pulver, 2025). I also created this play to entertain the viewer. As much as

it has a serious subject matter and is something I believe needs to change. I created it to be enjoyed by whoever watches it.

6.2 Artistic Rationale

Research findings from my literature review highlights a history of queer misinterpretation and unrealistic stereotypes on what it is to be a gay man in this industry. Alongside this, it also suggests a gradual shift in the representation of LGBTQIA+ creatives. This shift is towards a more progressive and acceptable future for queer people in this line of work. This includes more roles written for queer performers as well as pre-existing queer roles getting to be portrayed by queer people. Results from my questionnaire provide me with the understanding that the opinion is still mixed on whether heterosexual people should play queer roles; 38.6% of people believed they should (Wheelhouse, 2026, unpublished survey data). When asked to explain their opinion, the consensus was if the actor can play the role with emotional depth and sincerity, then it should not matter if they identify as queer. This is apparent when looking at the story between Evan and Rhys. Rhys' character does not see why Evan believes a queer role should be played by a queer actor.

6.3 Evaluation of the Final Outcome

I achieved the aims I set out to complete. I created a successful piece of theatre outlining the inequalities queer people in the entertainment industry, adding emotional drama and tension to provide quality theatrical entertainment. One specific strength the performance had was high-quality acting choices from Callum and I. We had a strong understanding of our characters and delivered the written dialogue appropriately with commendable detail and intention. I followed Uta Hagen's ideologies and disciplined myself thoroughly in the performance (Hagen, p.19, 2009). Another strength this performance had was the exemplary technical elements featured. A significant prop used throughout the performance was a record player. Elizabeth's ability to time the music with me lifting the tonearm and placing the needle on the vinyl was exceptional, and an element I was thankful she was equipped to have brought this to fruition. The language I used in this play was clear and direct. If I had an audience present, I would have wanted them to clearly understand the storyline; the concept being a play within a play was already a complicated approach, I wanted the potential viewers to comprehend the storyline

and see the issues I aimed to present. The main limitation I faced was I had ten-minutes to get this story across. I possessed the ability to manifest an elaborate piece of theatre to fit the ten-minute bracket however, if I had more time, I'd be able to add backstory to these characters. I would also have made plot additions such as going into detail on the financial elements of the entertainment industry, further answering my question "Who gets to tell queer stories, and who profits from them?" An unexpected factor I experienced was I had no audience present for my performance. I visioned Callum to sit in the audience amongst other attendees to imply I was performing a one-man play. It was my view that if there was an audience in attendance, Callum and I would have more energy to use as leverage in our performance. "The relationship between performer and audience is one of dynamic communication" (Woltmann, 2023). To address the lack of attendance, Callum and I ensured that we would deliver the performance to the best of our ability, proceeding as if performing to a full audience.

6.4 Professional Skills Demonstrated

I demonstrated a multitude of skills in the performance. Firstly, the skills I have developed in acting over the course of my degree were presented in the performance. I believe developed my skills in script writing and I demonstrated these skills effectively in my piece. I think Callum and I's time management skills were well displayed in the performance, keeping within the ten-minute timeframe. I presented leadership skills; I contend that I gave Callum a substantial amount to work with onstage with my performance. Finally, evidence from the performance suggest my communication with Callum onstage was strong. If there ever was a slip up with dialogue, it was well recovered. When unforeseen issues emerge, improvisation is the best way to resolve the situation (Raymond, 2025).

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this project has been an incredibly fulfilling experience for me. From the perspective of a gay man, having the opportunity to research, develop ideas culminating in a play about the mistreatment of other gay men in an industry I am aiming to insert myself in the future has been especially meaningful and rewarding experience for me. Through my extensive research within my literature review and critical analysis within the review, I gained an impactful understanding of historical

context as well as the current situation regarding queer representation in the entertainment industry. Simultaneously, the practical element of this project was equally fulfilling for me. The practical application of these ideas and theories provided me the ability to use these concepts as inspiration for my own work. This allowed me to engage directly with the challenges of telling this particular story onstage. What I have learned is that while the creative arts industry has made significant improvements over the years in LGBTQIA+ inclusivity, representation and visibility, there is still room to grow. Queer people's voices are breaking through and there is hope that in the future there will be more queer-lead shows, more roles queer people can play, less heterosexual performers being granted opportunities created for queer people and less homophobia in creative spaces.

The link between theory and practice in this project constantly was refining my perspective on this subject. I initially approached the written element of this project with the mindset I was writing with a degree of academic detachment. However, as I progressed through this dissertation, I had a much deeper and emotional understanding of the themes I was discussing. This manifested into a practical piece of theatre I was and still am incredibly gratified by.

The value of this project for my artistic and industry development has provided me with a critical lens in which I analyse sources. My ability to engage with literature as well as my understanding of the entertainment industry has evolved throughout this project. The project has honed my creative skills and granted me the opportunity to create a piece of theatre that I not only wrote, but directed and performed in. When looking at possible next steps for the future, people who may seek to explore similar outlets as I have, could examine much of the same literature I covered in this project and will be able to inform their own opinions based on the evidence. Hopefully, there will also be more theories, stories, books, journals and articles on this topic that can inspire young people to consider researching this subject.

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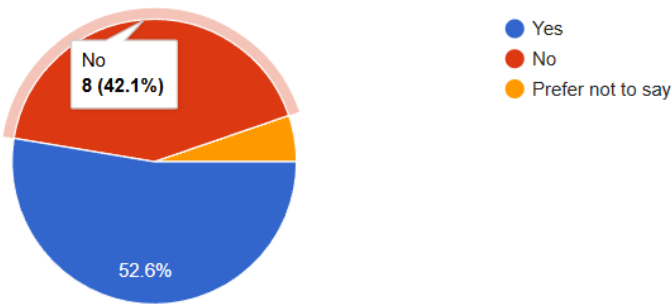
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9. Appendices

Do you Identify as LGBTQ+?

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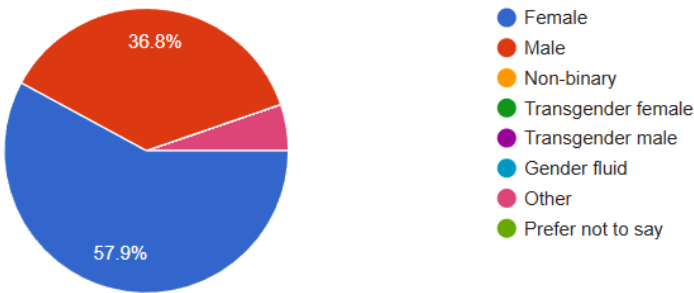
19 responses



What is your gender identity?

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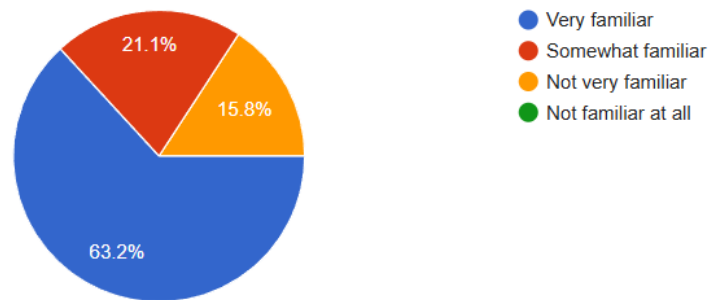
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How familiar are you with queer representation in the entertainment industry (film, TV, stage, musical theatre, etc.)?

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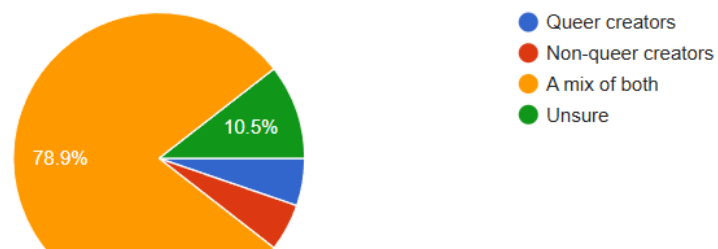
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When you see queer stories onscreen or onstage, who do you think creates them?

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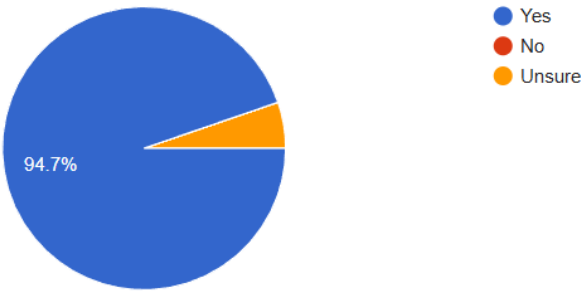
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Do you think it is important for queer stories to be told by queer actors and creators?

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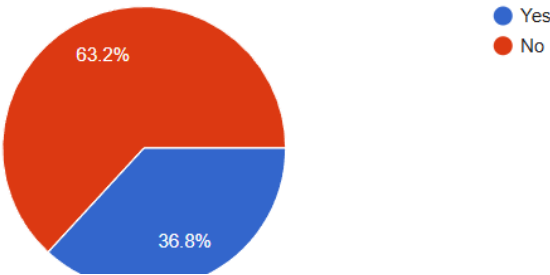
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Do you think heterosexual actors should play queer characters?

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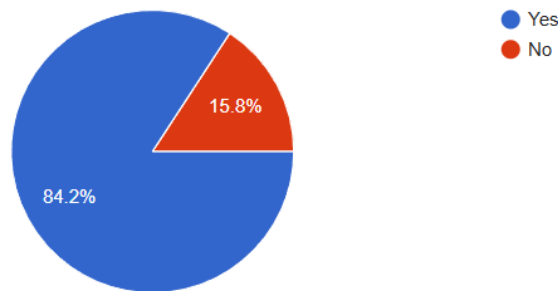
19 responses



Have you ever supported a queer-led production (by streaming a film or TV show, attending a live performance, etc.)?

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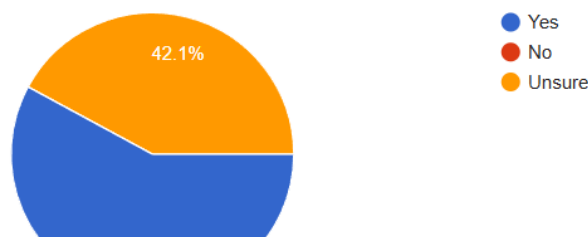
19 responses



Do you think that queer performers and creators face barriers in the entertainment industry?

 [Copy chart](#)

19 responses



If you selected Yes, what kind of barriers do you think they face?

11 responses

Homophobia, and identity

discrimination, may be treated differently in the industry

Fitting the gender binary having roles that your comfortable playing having accurate representation.

Discrimination, lack of representation, corrupted directors

They can still face prejudice, typecasting, marketability concerns, and uneven access to high-profile roles or creative control in certain sectors of the industry.

General hostility and inherent discrimination

Discrimination, not being listened to. Theres a theory called the Minority Stress theory by Meyor 2003 and it goes into just the day to day issues queer individuals go through and face day to day so I assume these would happen within theatre to.

Script Drafts

[Independent Project Draft.docx](#)

[Independent Project Script.docx](#)

Rehearsal and Performance Photos

