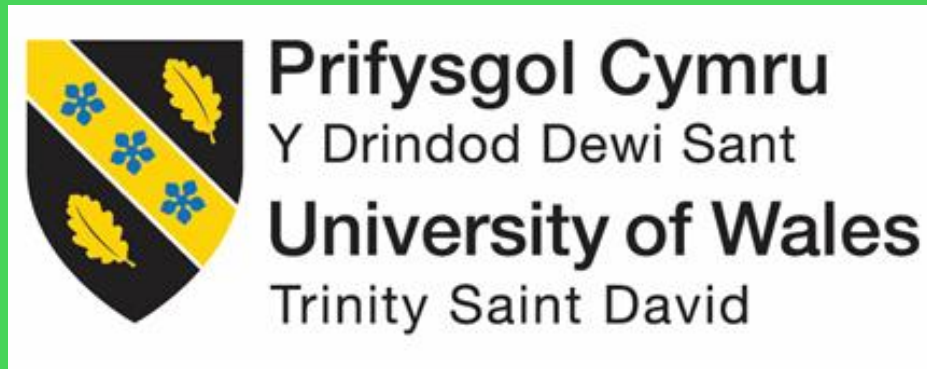




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BA Theatre Gerddorol (ADPA600C)

Independent Project Question -What challenges arise from being neurodiverse within musical theatre?

6,000-8,000 Word Dissertation

Supervisor – Angharad Rees

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AI Acknowledgement

I acknowledge the use of [Copilot and ChatGPT]

on [29.04.2026] to Structure my work.

- [Prompt] – Copilot, (Explain a literature review to me)
- [Prompt] - ChatGPT – (Explain Research Methods)
- [Prompt] - Copilot – (Explain Points of agreement or disagreement between authors in simpler terms.
- [Prompt] - ChatGPT – Explain what self-preservation vs reality in being neurodiverse means.
- [Prompt] – ChatGPT – Explain what synthesis means in a dissertation and give a structure how to do it.
- [Prompt] – Copilot – Explain the difference between Neurodiversity and being neurotypical in the creative arts.
- [Prompt] – ChatGPT- structure for conclusion.

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.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview

This project sits within today's musical theatre world and takes a close look at how neurodiversity is understood in both training and professional settings. Even though people are talking more about accessibility, inclusion, and performer wellbeing, there's still not much detailed discussion about how traditional musical theatre practices tend to favour neurotypical ways of working. As a result, neurodivergent performers can end up at a disadvantage. To address this, the project explores a central question: *What challenges arise from being neurodiverse within musical theatre?* The study explores differences in experience, expectation, communication, and creative processes, showing structural barriers within rehearsal and performance environments that failed to support people with neurodiversity and lived experience, with embodied practice positioned at the centre of the investigation. Alongside academic research, the independent project includes a practical creative element: an original short theatre play that highlights neurodivergent perspectives within industry contexts. This is developed through workshops and rehearsals designed to evaluate more inclusive rehearsal methods. Research, script drafts, workshop plans, rehearsal notes, and performers feedback all form part of the investigation, helping to keep theory and practice connected throughout.

1.2 Research and Creative Aims - Academic and practical intentions.

The overall aim of this independent project is to investigate and creatively explore the differences between neurodivergent and neurotypical experiences within the musical theatre industry, and to evaluate how current rehearsal and performance practices may support or disadvantage neurodivergent performers.

Objectives

To achieve this aim, the project pursues the following objectives:

1. To examine existing literature on neurodiversity, inclusion, and performance practice within musical theatre.
2. To identify key challenges for neurodivergent individuals' experience in musical theatre training and rehearsal environments.
3. To create an original creative script that embodies and represents neurodivergent perspectives within the musical theatre industry.

4. To critically reflect on the creative process.
5. To assess the potential implications of the findings for future musical theatre practice, training, and industry standards.

1.3 Research Methods

The project adopts a practice as research methodology, in which knowledge is generated through doing, making, and reflecting. Creative practice is used to explore industry assumptions in embodied ways: test inclusive rehearsal strategies; observe engagement of neurodivergent participants. Reflection on these processes informs both the academic discussion and the development of the creative work.

A mixed-methods questionnaire was used to gather empirical data, and along with actor's feedback was used as evidence within a practice-as-research framework, informing rehearsal processes and creative decision-making.

1.4 Structure of the Dissertation

The remaining chapters review literature relevant to the research question; apply research methods and explore data from neurodiverse participants; evaluate the development process of script writing, its presentation along with the collaboration process, and conclude with lessons learnt from both research and practice.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The research question relates to the field of musical theatre study and draws upon views from neurodivergent individuals. Winnicott (1971, quoted in Crown, 2025) maintains that that inclusive musical theatre “community can offer a transitional space based on deep and mutual trust as well as the acceptance and sense of belonging conducive to learning new skills, including social skills.” It is important for people with neurodiversity to feel safe in a space and work in places they trust and make them feel like a neurotypical person.

This review focuses on research about neurodiversity within the musical theatre industry, using academic journals, and books. Key theories involve academic side of the education purpose with people dealing with neurodiversity in a university setting and how they deal with the stress side of having been diagnosed.

The aim of the research question is to investigate and creatively explore experiences of individuals with neurodiversity within the creative arts. It will evaluate how current rehearsal and performance practices may support or disadvantage neurodivergent performers, highlighting challenges related to being neurodivergent.

2.2 Theoretical and Contextual Framework

Crown (2025) explains that

The opportunity for innovative and safe social opportunities where neurodivergent youth can learn, practice, and thrive is a clear and pressing need. Artistic communities offer unique opportunities to address this need. Because many neurodivergent people tend to be quite creative, and think “outside the box,” artistic communities are a natural fit.

The importance of nurturing and capitalising on strengths and interests is especially critical for people who struggle to find their place in the social and work worlds (Crown, 2025). The author suggests that theatre has the power to address the core challenges of neurodiversity. Further, they point out that theatre-making allows neurodiverse youths opportunities to engage their creative and social potential, leading to skill development for future employment (Crown, 2025).

BAPAM (2023) highlights the need to:

Provide relevant support and mentorship to help each other develop and grow professionally with management styles that match their learning needs; Make workplace accommodations and reasonable adjustments for those who require them to ensure neurodivergent creatives are comfortable, for example, providing quiet zones, sensory rooms, noise-cancelling headphones, or installing specialised software; Use clear and straightforward communication as this minimises misunderstandings and ensures everyone can follow instructions; Techniques could include regular check-ins, visual aids, or written tasks: Provide training and education to raise awareness as this encourages acceptance within the professional space and teaches creative teams to celebrate neurodivergence.

Albert (2026, p. 28) provides an explanation of each part of neurodiversity such as ADHD and Dyslexia extra. One phrase “getting the diagnosis right is important and so the process can feel quite drawn out” resonates with the researcher. Furthermore, Mitchell (2026, p. 59) explains how dyslexia is “a common form of neurodiversity,” a “type of specific learning disability, which means people can process information differently.” Reading and writing skills can be challenging for individuals with ADHD and without support this can cause problems in schools or within a work environment. Furthermore, it can cause a variety of difficulties in everyday life for both children and adults. Albert (2026, p. 8) explains the derivation of the term neurodiversity where Singer, an Australian sociologist realises that “they were not oddballs, freaks, weirdos”. Rather, she realised “that their minds worked differently from neurotypical people, with their own strengths and weaknesses to get them through it” (cited in Albert, 2026, p. 8).

2.3. Thematic Review of the Literature

Theme 1: Living with Neurodiversity as a musical theatre student

Miodrag (2015) data suggest that “youth with a neurodiverse disorder, demonstrates notable increases in sense of self and group engagement, with more muted and slight decline in their sense of other” when engaging in theatre base performance. They maintain that “inclusive theatre experiences have important potential implications for improving the communication and socialisation skills” of neurodiverse individuals,

as theatre can have a significant and positive impact on their self-esteem, empathetic abilities, and comfort with others. It also points to the potential for theatre to enhance levels of trust among young people with neurodiversity (Miodrag, 2015).

Neurodiverse student experiences in higher education continue to be widely misunderstood according to Carriere (2025): “Limited, or misrepresented in research as mostly struggles, challenges and exclusions, reproducing the ableist notion that neurodiverse students are misfits.” Rice *et al.* (2024) suggest that students with ADHD are “inherently incompatible with the demands of a university education” and that “the number of diagnosed young adults with ADHD, autism, anxiety, and learning disability continues to increase, including for those entering or already studying at universities.”

Kwon, Kim, and Kwak (2018) explain that university life is classified into four main themes: lack of daily routine, unsatisfactory academic performance and achievement, reduced people skills, and continuing worries and analysis. They deduce that these issues could prove challenging to university students with ADHD symptoms who have difficulties coping with repeated cycles of negative thoughts and worries and irregular lifestyles due to poor time management (Kwon, Kim, and Kwak, 2018).

Couzens *et al.* (2015) states,

More students with disabilities are accessing the tertiary sector with many disabilities not easily observed (or hidden), because there are no physical indicators. These “hidden” disabilities affect a variety of cognitive processes and may be developmental or acquired. To ensure students with hidden disabilities can enrol, engage in and benefit from tertiary education, universities provide a range of supports. Typically, these supports and any reasonable adjustments are negotiated with students considering several factors including, where available, any supporting documentation that they might be able to provide.

Between the authors, there is broad agreement that neurodiverse individuals experience structural and social challenges within education, although interpretations of these experiences differ. Miodrag (2015) adopt a strengths-based approach, highlighting the benefits of inclusive theatre practices in enhancing self-esteem, communication, and social engagement amongst neurodiverse individuals. In contrast, Carriere (2025) critiques the basic narratives in existing research, arguing that these can reinforce assumptions about

neurodiverse students within higher education. Despite these differing viewpoints, there is a shared recognition of the need for more inclusive and supportive educational environments. However, Couzens *et al.* (2015) and Kwon, Kim and Kwak (2018) identify common challenges faced by neurodiverse students, including difficulties with routine, academic performance, and interpersonal interaction, while also highlighting the importance of support.

Theme 2: Self-preservation vs Reality

Grummt (2024) states in his article that self-preservation “applies even more to the field of neurodiversity studies”. Craine, (2020) likens the concept of neurodiversity as an “unifying banner”, that unites people who have or suspect they have a diagnosis, and those who do not but still feel they have a different relationship to the world than most”.

Walker and Raymaker (2021 cited in Grummt, 2024) identify that:

this “neuro” encompasses not only the connections within the brain but also all neural connections throughout the body. This means that when we talk about neurodiversity, we are not just talking about different thought processes or procedures, but about the diversity of perception, processing, and practices. On a biological level neuronal structures provide the connection between mind and body.

Bassett (2026) emphasises the importance of building self-confidence for individuals who are neurodiverse. She explains: “There are ways to develop more resilience, boost self-esteem and grow in confidence. The first stage is acceptance of oneself.” Pattillo (2026) appreciates challenges relating to neurodiversity: “Many neurodiverse individuals struggle with social interactions. This can cause them to think negative feedback all the time instead of positive things.” Johnson and Ahluwalia (2024) describe the process as an individual with ADHD trying to be someone else, as if wearing a mask: “Imposter syndrome is characterised by feelings of persistent self-doubt, as well as fear of being exposed as a fraud despite evidence of accomplishments”. Furthermore, Baeve, (2025) explains the feeling of inferiority:

For neurodivergent individuals, low self-esteem manifests itself overtime. The inner voice often formed by years of correction, criticism, or just never quite fitting in, becomes an apology. Eventually, it becomes a constantly ‘sorry’ for being me. The

body mirrors the burden hunched shoulders, fidgeting hands, a glance that avoids eye contact. It's the posture of someone bracing themselves for being 'too much' or 'not enough' again.

Newton *et al.* (2025) recognise that neurodivergence can be "self-identified" and does not necessarily rely on a medical model, they "do not see neurodivergence as an illness or deficit, and self-identification can be a meaningful, legitimate, and necessary means of understanding ourselves and the world".

Despite findings of agreement and the disagreement between authors regarding neurodiversity, they share the same but distinct perspective on the identity and exclusive experiences of the condition itself. Grummt (2024) considers the voice of other researchers on neurodiversity, which go beyond looking at different diagnosis, that have a unique way of thinking, persevering and experiencing the world in a way they understand. This point is supported by Newton *et al.* (2025) which allows individuals with ADHD to have a self-identification and being an identity rather than being a problem. Bassett and Pattillo (2026) focus on the challenges they will face, such as low confidence and social difficulties when pursuing what they want to achieve in their everyday life. Johson and Ahluwalia (2024) and Baeve (2025) add to this by showing what the problems of repeated criticism can cause such as low self-esteem and they do not want individuals to feel bad for apologising and suggests they focus more on acceptance and identity. They all agree that understanding and accepting oneself is important for well-being, and that neurodiversity is a real and a meaningful part of human differences (Johnson and Ahluwalia, 2024; Baeve, 2025).

Theme 3: The importance of a support system

Tang *et al.* (2024) recognise that:

Autistic young people and/or those with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) who have co-occurring mental health conditions experience significant challenges when transitioning from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to adult mental health services (AMHS). However, barriers and facilitators to this service transition are poorly understood for this population.

The NHS website also provides a support system for neurodiverse individuals where they can find specific help to best support their needs.

Borsotti, Begal, and Bjørn (2024) find “that neurodivergent students face several structural and attitudinal barriers to access in the educational environment and within the disability support system”. Furthermore “they identified barriers in three main areas: assistive technology access barriers, cognitive and physical access barriers, and social access barriers” (Borsotti, Begal and Bjørn, 2024).

All authors collectively highlight that neurodivergent individuals, particularly autistic young people, and those with ADHD, face significant systemic barriers (Tang *et al.*, 2024; Borsotti, Begal and Biron 2024; NHS, no date). The sources agree that these challenges are complex and multifaceted, structural, and social, with service-related domains, and that current systems are not equipped enough to meet their needs (Tang *et al.*, 2024; Borsotti, Begal and Biron 2024; NHS, no date). However, they differ in scope and emphasis. Tang *et al.* (2024) focus on healthcare transitions from child and adolescence mental health services and transferred to adult mental health service. They identify a lack of comprehensive understanding and call for further research in this area of focus. In contrast Borsotti, Begal and Biron (2024) offer more defined, experimental insights within educational settings, categorising barriers such as assistive technology and social access. While NHS resources are positioned as practical support, both studies remain primarily problem-focused, differing in their balance between identifying research gaps and detailing specific barriers.

2.4. Synthesis and Identification of Gaps

Existing research on neurodiversity is still limited in several key areas, highlighting notable gaps within the current body of knowledge. While there has been attention on certain neurodiverse conditions, other aspects of neurodiversity remain unidentified. This results in an incomplete understanding of the full spectrum (Larrauri *et al.*, 2025).

Neurodiversity is a concept that acknowledges the wide range of neurological differences, yet societal norms rooted in neurotypical standards often labelled these differences (Riches and North, 2024). There is a lack of research surrounding diagnostic processes, especially for individuals whose conditions are not identified through the usual channels / testing methods (Riches and North, 2024). They state that the diagnosis gap between neurodivergent males and females may be closing, but plenty of girls and women still fall through the cracks. This

raises concerns about the inclusive and efficient current diagnostic framework: “80% of autistic females remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed at the age of 18” (Riches and North, 2024). Many neurodiverse individuals, both adult and children, remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed.

There is still not enough investigation into how neurodivergent individuals experience and manage stress within specialised fields such as musical theatre. Given the unique emotional, and sensory demands of performance environments, this indicates that neurodiverse individuals in the musical theatre field need to have the proper support such as an ‘access rider’ put into place for them to show they are supported in the correct way (Disability Arts Cymru, 2025).

By engaging with existing literature in these areas, Furthermore, it aims to highlight that neurodivergent individuals require appropriate support tailored to their needs. In contexts where such provision may be changeable or lacking. In doing so, the project contributes to a broader understanding of how support systems can be effectively applied and experienced, Rice (2020) states in their journal that “We looked for a practical guide to help When we couldn’t find one, we decided to create one and share it, and that’s why we launched the Creative Differences project. Our overall conclusion is that making your organisation neurodiverse-friendly is to the benefit of your entire workforce. Everyone should feel comfortable.” This company has helped lots of neurodiverse individuals feel heard in an environment they enjoy and helping and giving greater support for neurodiversity people in the setting of their choosing.

2.5. Conclusion

The literature reviewed in this project shows that neurodivergent individuals in education and the musical theatre industry experience both challenges and opportunities for personal growth. Common themes across the research include stress, communication difficulties, low confidence, academic pressure, social challenges, and feelings of exclusion. At the same time, the literature highlights how inclusive theatre environments can positively support neurodivergent individuals by encouraging creativity, confidence, belonging, and self-

expression. Miodrag (2015) and Crown (2025) explain that supportive theatre communities can help neurodivergent people feel accepted and understood. Winnicott (1971, cited in Crown, 2025) also suggests that inclusive musical theatre spaces built on trust and acceptance can help individuals develop important social and creative skills. This research is important to the project because it investigates the differences between neurodivergent and neurotypical experiences within musical theatre training and performance. It also emphasises the importance of support systems such as clear communication, mentorship, sensory awareness, and workplace adjustments. The practical work will build on this research by exploring how rehearsal and performance spaces can become more inclusive and supportive for neurodivergent performers, helping create safer environments where individuals feel comfortable expressing themselves creatively.

3. Development, Collaboration & Exploration

3.1 Overview of the Creative Development

The first stages of my independent project began on 2nd January 2026, when I started exploring ideas for what I wanted my play to focus on. I researched different types of theatrical structures and considered how these could be presented on stage. From the beginning, I knew I wanted my play to focus on neurodiversity, so I explored a range of plays and dramatic techniques connected to this theme. This research helped me gain insight into how I could interpret neurodiversity within my own performance and how different structures could communicate these experiences effectively.

On 13th January 2026, after continuing my research, I decided that the setting for my play would be a university environment. I chose this because I am a university student who is neurodiverse, allowing me to draw from personal experiences and create a more authentic narrative. During this stage, I began developing ideas for the structure of the play while continuing to research additional theatrical forms. One structure I explored in detail was “The Mask,” which reflected themes of hiding emotions and identity. Although I strongly connected with this concept, I felt it had been used frequently, so I continued exploring other possible structures that could make my work more original.

On 2nd February 2026, I had a one-to-one meeting with my lecturer to discuss the progress of my independent project. During this meeting, I was given several developmental tasks, including writing a stream-of-consciousness piece to help establish the foundation of the play and organise my ideas more clearly. This exercise helped me develop a stronger understanding of the themes, characters, and emotional direction of the project before beginning the scriptwriting process.

By the end of March 2026, I was close to completing the second draft of my script. At this stage, I had fully established the setting of the play, identified the key themes explored throughout the performance, and developed the ambitions and motivations of the characters. The drafting process allowed me to refine the narrative structure and gain a clearer understanding of how the characters' experiences reflected the wider themes of neurodiversity within the play.

In April 2026 I had completed my script and was now playing to meeting with the chosen actress and begin to teach the script to them ready for the performance. The directing progress of the independent project has shown me that I can write a script even though I had problems with the spelling and grammar, but I go there in the end, and it was very successful.

3.2 Research informed Exploration

From the cast selected to portray the character roles within the script, the two young students are assumed neurotypical, whilst the lecturer role was played by a neurodiverse individual. In relation to the script, the character casting proved challenging as the neurodiverse student within the script was played by a neurotypical actor. As a result, the director role involved channelling a darker time in the actor's life to resonate with feelings of hopelessness, loneliness and despair. This aligns with Carrier's (2025) research where they describe neurodiverse students as having "struggles, challenges and exclusions, reproducing the ableist notion that neurodiverse students are misfits." Rice *et al.*'s (2024) viewpoint supports this conclusion, that students with ADHD are "inherently incompatible with the

demands of a university education. Participants from the questionnaire explain that “don’t let it put you back. there are thousands of people in the industry with a neurodiversity and it’s important to realise they are the most successful people as they have certain talents that help them achieve certain things so don’t stop, find it and excel in it” .The unison of stage direction supported by research theory can assist neurotypical actor to convincingly portray the role of a neurodiverse student.

Associated with character embodiment, the Meisner technique was applied with the aim of developing a rapport amongst the actors and an ability to communicate well. The proved influential in the ‘talking with lecturer’ and the ‘friendship’ scene. The engagement through direct eye contact between the actors in the ‘friendship’ scene conveyed the connectedness as if they were one. The repetition exercise with in the Meisner technique promoted this closeness. The drawing together of the characters within the ‘talking to lecturer’ scene was intensified with the teacher’s kneeling action to speak calmly with the distressed student.

These actions reflect Meisner’s technique as repetition encourages actors to respond truthfully in the moment, which naturally builds emotional intimacy and shared focus. Furthermore, eye contact is a classic tool for signalling trust, vulnerability, or unity between characters. Again, the kneeling shifts power dynamics, softens authority, and creates a more empathetic relationship between teacher and student. “Meisner Technique was applied to support actors in engaging with the script. Performers were asked to sit opposite one another and make simple observations, such as identifying elements of their partner’s appearance. These observations were then repeated back, with adjustments introduced to explore changes in behaviour and assess whether the actors could recognise and respond to these shifts” (Ates, 2024). Ates, (2024) states in their website that the repetition exercise improves actors’ ability to connect with fellow cast members. And show the connection through the acting performance is a better way to perform in a naturalistic way.

Rehearsal space was made to show a happy environment for the actress to have a safe space of expressing their ideas freely and not be afraid to make any mistakes. This proved influential in the whole rehearsal process and through the performance. Crown (2025) explains that neurotypical and neurodiverse individuals work well in a place where they feel most safe, “It is important for people with neurodiversity to feel safe in a space and work in places they trust and make them feel like a neurotypical person”. From empirical data

gathered from questionnaire, one neurodiverse participator not associated with the creative arts agrees and states “I find it difficult to work in the common area as I get overwhelmed or overstimulated if the area is populated”. The unison of stage direction supported by research theory can show how important a safe space is for everyone.

3.3 Practical Investigations

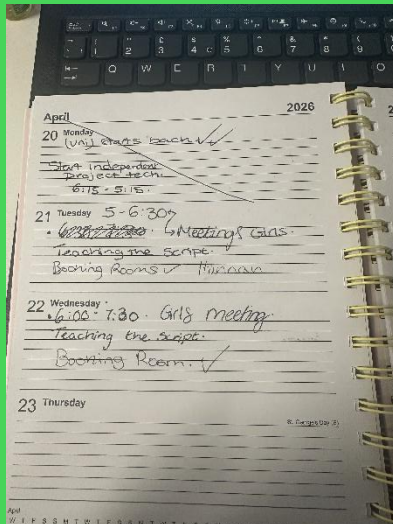


This review presents all the practical work completed throughout my independent project and demonstrates the development of my creative process from the start of the process to end. Including within the review are several script drafts in the appendices that show how my ideas evolved over time and how the responses from my questionnaire supported my understanding of neurodiversity and influenced my creative decisions. I have also included photographic evidence from the rehearsal process to document experimentation, collaboration, and performance development. In addition, choreographic and script notations are provided to illustrate movement, staging, and key production choices, helping to explain how the outcome was shaped through practical investigation and reflection. Actor feedback seen in appendices of evidence. Actors feedback will be named as A1, A2 and A3 are my actors feedback from the actress that performed my play. Rehearsal room decisions were filmed as evidence of how the performance was shown. And how I directed the actress confidently and respectfully. I created a composition of how the set appear on the stage (see appendices).

3.4 Collaboration.

In relation to communicating with the chosen actors, having appreciated their performing skills in previous shows and observing their confidence as actors, I asked them directly whether they would be interested in performing in my play. In terms of providing direction to the chosen actors, I received feedback that I spoke too quickly. This resulted from nerves. In hindsight, I would speak in a low, calm voice and provide clear directions and check understanding. As Hodge and McLain (2015) point out, the director's communication skills drive actors to give their most creative attention to a play. With negotiation, I appreciated their ideas and responses when starting the rehearsal process, so they felt included and not afraid of making mistakes. I agreed if they wanted to adapt the text of the script because my spelling and grammar proved difficult to comprehend. My cast leadership skills developed throughout the rehearsal process. On the performance day, I further applied my leadership skills by encouraging the actors to be confident and positive when portraying their roles. Casting rationale, selecting my actress, I wanted one to be neurodivergent and one neurotypical and my third actress was the tutor, because my play was set in a university

setting so I wanted to show that by having three people in it. Technical notes (sound, lighting, setting)



3.5 Production Planning

Firstly, I created a group chat with the actresses involved in my play so that I could discuss rehearsal times, studio locations, and any updates regarding the production. This helped me stay organised and ensured that everyone was available and prepared for each rehearsal session. I also kept a rehearsal diary to record schedules and make sure everything was suitable for the cast.

On the first day of rehearsals, I provided the actresses with background information about the plot of the play so they could better understand their characters and what emotions they needed to portray throughout the performance. After this introduction, we began working on the more emotional and deeper sections of the script so the actresses could explore the appropriate acting techniques and emotional expression required for each scene. During rehearsals, I demonstrated how certain scenes and emotions should be performed and explained my ideas clearly to help the actresses understand the vision I wanted to achieve. Throughout the rehearsal process, I continued to guide and support the cast to ensure the performance developed effectively and professionally.

3.6 Critical Reflection on Process

The critical reflection on my project, evaluated on the success and failed reasons such as, the succession of the play turned out be better than I anticipated because I had chosen a cast who were present in the rehearsal space, who demonstrated confidence and critical thinking of their own accord. The unsuccessful parts were trying to find the timeline of how long we had to prepare this play in a small amount of time, which was stressful and overwhelming to get done in the time scale we had. Overall, I was satisfied as to how the outcome of everything came together in its conclusion. The various parts of the script and some of the scene I had changed were, I included additional lines to show off the characters more clearly

so they would be shown in a clear vision of what I envisaged. In scene 3 I changed how the lecturer walks in because originally, I had them sitting down in the scene which did not make sense for them to be in the scene all ready. I had changed it to them walking in a saying their line as they came to their correct place in the scene. Another part I had changed was to move the set and the cast members more forward instead of being so far towards the back of the theatre, where I would not be able to understand what they were saying. This change in the scenes made it clearer for the audience members to hear and understand what they were explaining. In my opinion I had made these justifiable decisions because I felt, I needed to simplify the changes to justify the 15-minute time slot the actors had to meet. I was able to show my confidence and ability to show my transferable skills I had been shown in university through my acting classes and theatre lab classes of how to create a play about a subject I care deeply about and to show a person's story sympathetically through writing and performing.

4. Practical Choice – 10-Minute Presentation + Commentary = Unlisted YouTube link =

Seven days in my head, Different not Broken. <https://youtu.be/KZ9MkZVSdvY>

4.1 Overview of the Practical Piece

My practical presentation choice was 15-minute play about the difference between being neurodiverse and neurotypical in the musical theatre industry. I have explored this subject because I wanted to find more information about being neurodiverse in the creative arts, and to explore how neurodiverse deal with their problems. This play was set in a university setting because I wanted to show how neurodiverse individual's deal within this setting. A bit about the plot, there is a young girl named Bella she is 18 years of age, she has just been diagnosed with neurodiversity and her life flips upside down and goes out of control, But the another character Violet who is 19 years of age and she is a neurotypical character but suffers with self-esteem and body confidence and has struggles of her own and she doesn't open up to Bella however she is Bella's best friend and they have turn because Bella keeps pushing violet away nearly breaking their friendship apart and they do make a promise to each other to be more honest with each other. The last character of the play is the tutor Miss Naomi smith, and she is a neurotypical character, and she cares about both characters, and she talk to Bella very calm in one scene, shows how they should speak to someone who is neurodiverse, but before the end of the scene we see violet starting to feel very disliking

of herself and it not coping with everything. The central themes of the play are, living with neurodiversity, the importance of a support system and self-preservation vs reality the themes relate to the play because the main character feels loneliness and seen and not heard. The aims fit my play and relating back to my question is What challenges arise from being neurodiverse within musical, when researching upon these themes I felt that I understood more about them and what they did for neurodiverse people.

I was influenced to choose this topic because I feel that many neurodiverse people are often misunderstood or overlooked. I wanted to show people understand what it can feel like when someone becomes overwhelmed and how certain triggers can deeply affect a neurodiverse individual. I also wanted to highlight how important trust and friendship can be for people who are neurodiverse, especially when life becomes difficult or overwhelming. This topic felt important to explore because neurodiversity is becoming more openly discussed in society, yet there are still limited and sometimes inaccurate representations of neurodiverse experiences within theatre. Through this play, I wanted to tell a meaningful and realistic story that encourages understanding, empathy, and inclusion. The issues I had identified in the literacy review I created that practically by teaching them how much knowledge I had about neurodiversity, I researched how neurodiverse individuals experience social environments, sensory triggers, and communication challenges. This helped me create realistic interactions between Bella and the other characters, particularly during moments of conflict and emotional overwhelm. I would explain that to them in a way they would understand it all and I would explain how a neurodiverse person acts when they get overwhelmed.

4.2 Artistic Rationale

This connects with my research and development throughout my understanding of neurodiversity better because I have done the correct research and has built me more confidence on my work and my research. This helped by directing the actors in a correct manner and teaching them the basic of teaching. And with the collaboration with the actors, I let them bring their own ideas into the production because I wanted them to have a say. Instead of sounding demanding throughout my teaching methods.

4.3 Evaluation of the Final Outcome

The overall performance I was very pleased with because I felt I had told the story across the right way, but there are things I would change such as the timing of the whole process of the independent project because in my eyes it was rushed and I felt I had no time to get things ready.

I ran into a few problems within my project because I was writing the script I found it difficult how to get the spelling and grammar make sense because I suffer from dyslexia. One part I would change in the script I would take my time to write it carefully and to make sure everything makes sense before giving it to my actresses so they wouldn't have to change anything. In terms of unexpected factors, lack of research was evident in relation to the importance of a support system for neurodiverse individuals. Another disappointing factor was the lack of filters for lighting in my university. This resulted in basic natural lighting that did not enhance the production. I had created a music video of a 16 second part for my opening scene. This showed me transferable skills from classes I had from university of how to shorten music down to the correct length.

4.4 Professional Skills Demonstrated

This project helped me develop several transferable skills, including time management, leadership, communication, and organisation. I improved my problem-solving skills by dealing with technical issues with the lighting difficulties because I wanted colourful lighting but could not have it as my university did not have them so I had to decide how I would achieve these issues and finding solutions quickly. I also learned how to balance directing and writing tasks at the same time, which strengthened my ability to stay organised and manage multiple responsibilities effectively.

5. Conclusion

This project has helped me gain a much better understanding of neurodiversity within musical theatre through both research and practical experience. From the research, I learned that many neurodivergent individuals experience challenges such as stress, communication difficulties, low confidence, feeling misunderstood, and struggling to fit into environments that are often designed for neurotypical people. At the same time, the research showed that theatre can also be a very positive and supportive space where

neurodivergent people can feel accepted, creative, and confident. Through creating and directing my own play, I was able to explore these ideas in a practical way and better understand how important support, patience, and communication are within rehearsal and performance spaces.

As the project developed, the connection between theory and practice became much clearer to me. The research I read influenced many of my decisions during rehearsals, including how I communicated with the actors, how I created a safe and comfortable rehearsal environment, and how I directed emotional scenes. At the same time, the rehearsal process helped me understand the research more deeply because I could see these ideas happening in real situations. For example, I realised how important calm communication and trust are when actors are exploring emotional topics. This showed me that research and practical work can support each other and work together throughout the creative process.

This project has also helped me grow personally and professionally. I developed skills in directing, leadership, communication, organisation, and problem-solving. Although I faced difficulties with spelling and grammar because of my dyslexia, completing the script and seeing the final performance gave me more confidence in my abilities as a writer and director. I also learned how important collaboration is and how valuable it is to listen to actors' ideas and make them feel included within the rehearsal process.

If I continued this project in the future, I would like to expand the play into a longer performance and involve more neurodivergent performers within the creative process. I would also like to explore more inclusive rehearsal techniques and gain feedback from wider audiences. Overall, this project has shown me how important representation, understanding, and support are within musical theatre, and how theatre can help people feel seen, heard, and accepted.

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7. Appendices

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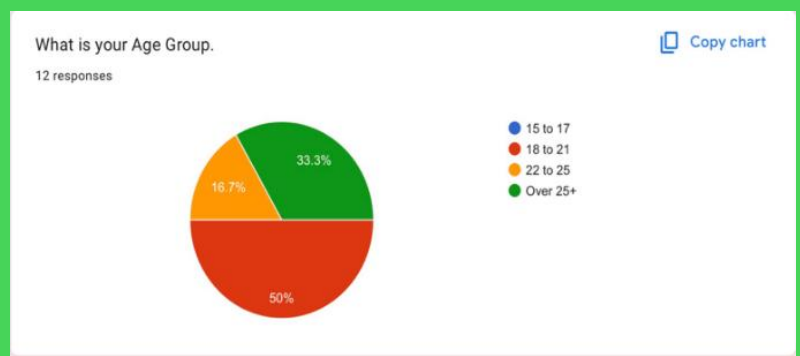
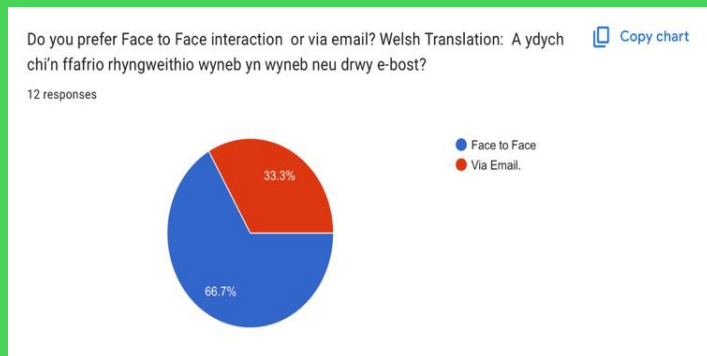
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One drive folder. - evidence. [Independent project rehearsal evidence EFS](#)

Independent project rehearsal evidence EFS Evidence of play. (Seven days in my head, different not broken)

Ella Fs – teams' folder of evidence of independent project.

Photo evidence of Questionnaire –



Access to data link

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdnfRJP_Mk4NgORoJZY09EM8aFFbRCoiGiBjbs_McxDGsuEg/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=112793003861202516577

