



Independent Project (ADPA6000/C)

BA Musical Theatre

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Introduction

Through my independent project, “Waiting the Dating Game”, I will be exploring the question "Does speed dating offer a genuine solution to loneliness, or does it simply amplify the social pressures and misunderstandings that contribute to it?" I believe theatre should make people laugh while also reflecting on real-life experiences. My goal is to create a comedic piece about a middle-aged Welsh woman who, after struggling to find love, decides to give speed dating a go. I want my piece to be realistic and something an audience will be able to relate to. Since taking part in our recent collaborative project, I have found a new love for writing comedy pieces. I want my piece to be light-hearted and full of laughs, showing the awkward and funny situations that can happen when trying to meet new people quickly. It will show the chaos, weird conversations, and funny moments that happen in the world of speed dating. I wish to propose a short, funny play about a middle-aged Welsh woman trying speed dating. The play will focus on the humorous and awkward situations she faces as she meets different people in a speed dating event. It will also show the pressures of finding a man to date. In this portfolio, my chosen topic revolves around the stigma surrounding speed dating and the pressure individuals face from their families to find a

partner. This topic explores how societal expectations, and cultural pressures can affect personal relationships and the way people approach dating in modern times.

Literary Review

Through this literary review, my goal is to dive deeper into my chosen topic of “Speed Dating” and investigate topics that will contribute to my piece, for

example, topics such as loneliness and the social impacts of dating. Through my research I hope to answer the question “Does speed dating offer a genuine solution to loneliness, or does it simply amplify the social pressures and misunderstandings that contribute to it?”. To begin my research, I first wanted to understand speed dating and the origin behind it. Research shows that speed dating is a structured social event designed to facilitate brief, face to face interactions among participants seeking romantic connections.

Originating in 1998 to help Jewish singles meet potential partners, the format typically involves individuals rotating through a series of short "dates," each lasting between 3 to 8 minutes. After each interaction, participants indicate their interest in pursuing further contact. If mutual interest is shown, participants would often exchange phone numbers for further meetings.

(Finkel, E.J., Eastwick, P.W. and Matthews, J., 2007). Studies have shown that participants often make decisions about potential partners within the first few seconds of a meeting. For instance, a 2005 study at the University of Pennsylvania found that most participants decided within the first three seconds of meeting someone. Similarly, a 2006 study in Edinburgh revealed that 45% of women and 22% of men made their decisions within the first 30 seconds. **(Kurzban, R. and Weeden, J., 2005.)** In conclusion, speed dating

offers a unique opportunity for individuals to meet potential romantic partners in a structured and time efficient way. Research highlights the importance of first impressions, similarity, effective communication, and managing choice overload in determining the success of these interactions. While speed dating provides a platform for meeting new people, the dynamics of attraction and decision making are complex and influenced by various factors. Understanding these elements can add to the success of speed dating as a tool for forming personal connections.

The first topic I wanted to touch upon was that loneliness remains a significant public health concern, particularly among younger adults and older individuals. Speed dating, a structured social event where individuals engage in brief one on one interactions to assess romantic compatibility, has emerged as a potential solution to combat loneliness. However, its effectiveness in addressing loneliness is debated. This review examines existing literature to determine whether speed dating offers a genuine solution to loneliness or inadvertently amplifies social pressures and misunderstandings. Proponents of speed dating argue that it provides a platform for individuals to meet potential partners in a low-pressure environment, thereby reducing feelings of isolation. For instance, a study

suggests that speed dating can serve as an effective tool for studying romantic attraction and may facilitate initial connections that could lead to meaningful relationships. Additionally, initiatives like senior speed dating events have been organized to combat loneliness among older adults. Research indicates that more than half of adults aged 65 and older experience loneliness, significantly affecting their quality of life. These events aim to foster socialization, conversation, and connection among seniors, who are all Medicare beneficiaries. **(Finkel et al. 2007)**. However, speed dating may exacerbate feelings of loneliness and social anxiety for certain individuals. A study published in PubMed found that participants with chronic attachment anxiety were more likely to experience rejection during speed dating events, leading to increased feelings of loneliness. Additionally, the rapid nature of speed dating interactions may not allow for the development of genuine connections, potentially leading to superficial encounters that fail to alleviate loneliness. This aligns with concerns raised by Dr. Luke Brunning, who highlights the ethical implications of online dating and its impact on loneliness, suggesting that technological solutions should be paired with efforts to restore public spaces and improve relationship education. **(PubMed. 2010)**. Further research shows that, Supporters believe that speed

dating helps people meet potential partners in a structured way, which can reduce feelings of loneliness. For example, events like "Skip the Small Talk" have been shown to help participants feel less lonely and more positive, especially during times when social interaction is limited, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, speed dating provides an alternative to online dating platforms, which some individuals find overwhelming due to the paradox of choice, where having too many options leads to decision fatigue and dissatisfaction. **(Toma, C. L. and D'Angelo, J. D. 2017)**. Critics point out that speed dating can increase social pressure and misunderstandings. Quick interactions might lead to snap judgments based on limited information, missing deeper compatibility factors. Research suggests that having too many potential partners can confuse people, making it harder to make decisions. Something known as the "paradox of choice". Additionally, individuals with anxious attachment styles may approach speed dating with a heightened fear of rejection, leading to either overly selective or indiscriminate behaviors that do not align with their true preferences. **(Lenton, A. and Francesconi, M. 2011)** In conclusion, while speed dating can offer a genuine solution to loneliness by providing structured opportunities for social interaction, it also has the potential to amplify social pressures and

misunderstandings. Its effectiveness in alleviating loneliness may depend on individual characteristics and the context in which it is experienced.

Therefore, it is essential to consider both the benefits and limitations of speed dating as a tool for addressing loneliness.

My next discussion topic is the awkwardness and social norms of speed dating. Speed dating is a quick way to meet potential partners, but it can sometimes lead to awkward situations. The short time for each conversation may cause participants to feel rushed or uncomfortable. Additionally, the structured nature of these events can highlight societal expectations and traditional gender roles, influencing how individuals interact and make judgments about each other. The compactness and structured nature of speed dating often mean interactions that may feel forced or superficial. Participants have only a few minutes to make a positive impression, which can lead to anxiety and discomfort. This time constraint may prevent meaningful conversations, reducing the opportunity for authentic connections. Also, the presence of numerous participants can create a competitive atmosphere, further making things awkward. Research indicates that long gaps between turns can be particularly awkward for strangers. In a study, **(Templeton et al. 2022)**, it was found that long pauses in

conversations between strangers contained less laughter and were more likely to be followed by a change in topic, suggesting discomfort and a lack of connection. Vice versa, friends experienced long pauses differently, often using them as opportunities for reflection or shared understanding, which were perceived as less awkward. I also found that, Speed dating events often adhere to traditional gender roles, such as men approaching women. while women typically respond. Research found that when individuals physically approach potential partners, they tend to feel more attracted to them. This behavior is more common among men than women, suggesting that taking the initiative can influence romantic interest. **(Finkel and Eastwick 2009)**

The next topic I want to deep dive into is the community spirit in speed dating and how it can affect individuals. Community spirit in speed dating events can play a significant role in combating loneliness, though it presents both advantages and challenges. These events foster a sense of belonging by bringing together individuals seeking connection, whether for friendship or romance. For instance, initiatives like Colne Citadel's speed dating event aim to reduce social isolation by providing a structured environment for adults to meet others in their community. Similarly, organizations such as Activity Angels in Warrington host "Fast Flirting" events to help people connect and

alleviate feelings of loneliness. Moreover, speed dating can enhance social skills and self-confidence, as participants engage in brief conversations that encourage active listening and clear communication. **(Colne Citadel speed dating event for adults struggling with loneliness. 2024)** However, there are drawbacks to consider. The limited time for interaction—often just a few minutes can hinder the development of meaningful connections, leading to superficial judgments. Additionally, the pressure of competing with other singles in a fast-paced environment may cause discomfort for some participants. In addition, the focus on romantic outcomes might overshadow the potential for platonic connections, which are equally valuable in addressing loneliness. **(Inside the speed dating revolution and the communities. (2024). Cosmopolitan UK.)** In summary, while speed dating events can effectively foster a sense of community and provide opportunities to combat loneliness, they are not without limitations. The success of such events in reducing loneliness depends on their structure, the intentions of participants, and the emphasis placed on building genuine connections.

Now that we have investigated loneliness through community, I wanted to fully understand why there can sometimes be pressure from family to have a significant other and discuss how and why pressure to date can influence

people's experience with loneliness. Through my research I found that family pressure to date can significantly influence individuals' experiences with loneliness and their participation in speed dating events. While such pressure often stems from concern, it can have both positive and negative effects on individuals' well-being and their approach to forming relationships. Families may encourage dating to help their loved ones overcome loneliness and find companionship. For instance, in certain cultures, parents view marriage to ensure their children's social support and security, especially when they are the only child in the family. This concern can lead to families actively promoting dating opportunities, such as arranging speed dating events, to facilitate connections and alleviate feelings of isolation **(Gui, 2023)**.

Moreover, speed dating events, often organized by families or communities, provide structured environments where individuals can meet potential partners in a short amount of time. These events can be particularly beneficial for those who may feel socially awkward or have limited opportunities to meet new people, offering a safe space to practice social interactions and potentially form meaningful connections. Furthermore, family pressure to date can lead to feelings of resentment and increased stress. Individuals may feel coerced into participating in speed dating events, leading to experiences

that feel more like obligations than opportunities for genuine connection. For example, some individuals have reported being forced by their parents to attend speed dating sessions, which can result in discomfort and a lack of enthusiasm for the process **(Dufrene, 2017)**. Additionally, societal expectations and stereotypes can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy. In some cultures, being single beyond a certain age is stigmatized, and individuals may be labeled negatively, such as the term "leftover women" in China. Such labels can intensify the pressure to date and the fear of loneliness, potentially leading to decisions driven more by societal expectations than personal readiness or desire **(Gui, 2023)**. In conclusion to this argument family pressure to date can be both helpful and harmful when it comes to loneliness. While families may encourage dating to help their loved ones find companionship, this pressure can sometimes lead to feelings of resentment and stress. Speed dating events, when chosen freely, can be a fun way to meet new people and make connections. However, it's important that these events are not seen as obligations but as opportunities for personal choice, ensuring they truly help in reducing loneliness in a healthy way.

Another thing that shows that speed dating can reduce loneliness is the humour that surrounds it. Humour can play a significant role in speed dating,

offering both benefits and challenges in addressing loneliness. On the positive side, humor can help reduce anxiety, making participants feel more comfortable during brief interactions. Sharing a laugh can create a sense of bonding and mutual attraction between individuals **(Rathcke & Fuchs, 2022)**. However, humor can also have drawbacks. In the context of speed dating, where interactions are short, the use of humor may sometimes be misinterpreted, leading to misunderstandings or superficial connections. Moreover, individuals who rely heavily on humor to mask insecurities might not present their authentic selves, potentially hindering the formation of meaningful relationships **(Martin et al., 2003)**. In summary, while humor can be a helpful tool in speed dating to alleviate loneliness by fostering connections and easing social interactions, it's important for individuals to balance humor with authenticity. Relying too much on humor without being genuine can make it hard to build real, lasting relationships.

While online dating platforms have become a prevalent means of meeting potential partners, they often contribute to feelings of loneliness and superficial connections. The rise of speed dating events offers a refreshing alternative, providing individuals with the opportunity to engage in face to face interactions that can lead to more meaningful connections. This section

explores the advantages and disadvantages of speed dating compared to online dating, particularly in the context of combating loneliness. Through my research I have found that speed dating offers a more personal and immediate way to connect with others compared to online dating. It allows individuals to meet multiple potential partners face-to-face in a short amount of time, leading to quicker assessments of compatibility and chemistry. This real-time interaction helps reduce feelings of isolation that often accompany online dating, where conversations can be slow and sometimes superficial **(Brunning, 2024)**. Moreover, speed dating events are typically held in social settings, providing opportunities to meet new people and expand one's social circle beyond the digital realm **(Comfort Life, 2024)**. In contrast, online dating can sometimes lead to feelings of alienation and hopelessness, as users may experience ghosting or lack of genuine connection (Durvasula, 2016). While online platforms offer convenience and a wider pool of potential matches, they can also contribute to "choice overload," where too many options lead to dissatisfaction and increased loneliness **(Robards, 2024)**. Therefore, for those seeking to alleviate loneliness through more authentic and immediate connections, speed dating presents a viable alternative to online dating.

Through my research in conclusion, while speed dating offers a structured environment that can facilitate initial social interactions and potentially alleviate feelings of loneliness, its effectiveness as a solution is nuanced and dependent on various factors. The brief, timed conversations characteristic of speed dating events provides individuals with the opportunity to meet multiple new people in a short period, which can be particularly beneficial for those seeking to expand their social circles. However, the limited duration of these interactions often leads to superficial exchanges, which may not allow for the development of meaningful connections. This brevity can result in participants feeling unfulfilled or more isolated if no lasting relationships are formed. Additionally, the pressure to make a quick impression can cause anxiety, especially for individuals with social anxiety or attachment insecurities, potentially hindering authentic self-expression and genuine connections. Moreover, the emphasis on immediate compatibility may overlook deeper, long-term compatibility factors, leading to missed opportunities for meaningful relationships. Therefore, while speed dating can serve as an introduction to new social connections, it should not be relied upon as the sole strategy for combating loneliness. To enhance its effectiveness, speed dating events could incorporate elements that promote

deeper conversations and emotional connections, such as encouraging participants to share personal experiences or engage in activities that foster mutual understanding. By integrating these aspects, speed dating has the potential to be a more effective tool in addressing loneliness, provided it is part of a broader approach that includes fostering deeper connections and addressing underlying emotional needs.

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Creation and development

Initial ideas and storylines

I came up with the idea for this project after watching shows like *Dinner Date* and *Come Dine With Me*, and reflecting on an evening at my local OAP hall. These experiences made me think about the challenges people face when dating, especially middle-aged women looking for love.

Even though I haven't been speed dating myself, I've learned a lot from TV shows and other sources. I want to create something that feels real and relatable, showing the ups and downs of dating. The main challenge for me is making sure I understand the topic well and can portray it accurately.

I've always been drawn to comedy, especially when it mirrors real-life situations. Much of my writing stems from everyday experiences and relatable moments. The idea for this piece sparked during my visit to Benicon, a convention dedicated to the beloved ITV sitcom *Benidorm*, created by Derren Litten. Held in Benidorm, Spain, the event brought together fans and cast members for a weekend filled with activities like karaoke, themed bars, and even a speed dating night. The concept of speed dating intrigued me, it's a setting ripe for comedic exploration, especially when infused with the charm of a Welsh accent. Growing up in a small Welsh town, I've always found the Welsh accent to be endearing and humorous. Combining the fast-paced nature of speed dating with the distinctiveness of the Welsh accent seemed like a perfect blend for a comedic narrative. Through my piece, I wanted to highlight the pressure individuals often feel from their families to find a partner, especially when living at home. This dynamic can make dating feel more like an obligation than a personal choice, adding stress and complicating relationships.

Character work

Creating my characters presented a unique challenge due to the fast-paced nature of speed dating and the continuous flow of participants. I recognized the need for multiple characters, especially as participants often take on various roles, adding complexity to the narrative. Determined to craft a relatable and witty protagonist, I introduced Emma Noble, a 46 year old woman still living at home with her family. Her character serves as a humorous lens through which the pressures of family expectations and the quirks of speed dating are explored. In developing Emma Noble, I aimed to create a character who resonates with audiences through her quick wit and relatable familial dynamics. Living at home with her parents, Emma finds herself navigating the delicate balance between independence and the ever-present familial expectations. Her parents, though well-meaning, frequently express concern over her single status and lack of a steady job, often resorting to gentle nudges or, as Emma perceives them, persistent reminders to encourage her to "get out there" and "make something of herself." These interactions are laced with humor, as Emma's sharp comebacks and dry humor serve as her defense mechanism against the perceived pressure. However, beneath the sarcasm lies a genuine desire for connection and self-fulfillment. Through Emma's experiences, I sought to highlight the universal

challenges of adulting, the complexities of living with family as an adult, and the comedic yet poignant moments that arise from such situations. By infusing Emma with a blend of humor, vulnerability, and relatability. To deepen my character development, Elen introduced us to Uta Hagen's approach. Applying her exercises, I crafted the character, Harold. By answering key questions, such as where he lives and with who I gained a clearer understanding of his background and motivations. This process not only enhanced my portrayal but also provided valuable insights for the actor embodying Harold, ensuring a more authentic and cohesive performance. Uta Hagen's "Nine Questions" are a set of inquiries designed to help actors deeply understand their characters by focusing on specific aspects of their identity and circumstances. These questions encourage actors to explore their character's background, environment, relationships, objectives, obstacles, and actions. By answering these questions in detail, actors can develop a comprehensive understanding of their character's inner life, motivations, and circumstances, leading to a more authentic and nuanced performance. I found this task good as it made me understand each character more not only for me but also for the actor playing him. For Harold I said "Harold is a 62-year-old man who lives in Emelyn Avenue, a popular street in the area. He is a

well-known man in the local area and is almost like a “local celeb” Harold is retired and likes to volunteer to help the community. He is a caretaker down the OAP hall and likes to organise social events for the community to come together. Harold lives with his wife Sandra and has a 23 and 25 year old son who have both moved out, one to be in the navy and the other to live with his girlfriend. Harold enjoys going to play bowls at the local bowls club on Sunday afternoons with his friends Steve and Gareth. Harold loves watching darts and his favorite darts player is Chris Dobey. Each year Sandra and Harold like to go on a Mediterranean cruise to take in life's rich tapestry.” By establishing the key characters in my piece, I was able to build Emma's life through the relationships she shares with them. Recognising that these characters would significantly influence Emma's actions, I focused on creating a mother who embodies the traits of typical Welsh parents. I began developing Emma’s mother with this in mind. I wanted Emma’s mother to come across as kind and caring, but often misunderstood. She has a warm, friendly way about her, but sometimes this leads to confusion in how she sees Emma’s life. She truly wants the best for her daughter, but the way she shows it can feel a bit much. she just doesn’t always see that Emma’s idea of happiness is different from her own. I wanted to show that kind of loving but slightly clumsy relationship

that many people have with their parents. Once I had developed Denise, I focused on creating her husband, Jeff, Emma's dad. I wanted their relationship to feel real and relatable. Jeff and Denise share strong values and have a deep respect for each other. Their interactions are warm and often playful, filled with lighthearted teasing. This friendly banter shows their strong bond and love, reflecting the closeness of a long-term partnership.

When creating the speed dating participants, I wanted each character to have distinct mannerisms and a unique way of speaking, including differences in accents, vocabulary, and tone. I also aimed to represent a range of ages, from the young and nervous to the older and more experienced. One of the first characters I developed was Jim a confident older man who's a regular at these events and well known around the OAP hall. To reflect his age and personality, I gave him lines like, "You're about the same age as my granddaughter," to highlight both his life experience and his cheeky, straightforward charm.

Script and development

Writing my script felt natural, but I knew it needed refinement. The first scene I wrote set the tone, quick-witted parents and an engaging start that grabs the audience's attention. I focused on Emma's main monologue, aiming to capture her inner thoughts and continuous stream of consciousness. This approach allows the audience to connect with her emotions and experiences more deeply. Through revisions, I worked to enhance the structure and flow, ensuring the script effectively conveys the characters' journeys and emotions. To enhance its depth, I decided to incorporate the voices of her parents, representing her subconscious. This addition emphasizes the constant pressure she feels from them, making their influence ever-present during her monologue.

Emma: I sometimes wonder if I've left it too late. Mam and dad always have something to nag about. Get down to the job center, why don't you do something with your degree? When are you going to find a man? Why does it matter? I'm perfectly fine rotting in bed watching Corrie or Emmerdale and occasionally popping down to the shop. Mam and Dad always says,

PARENTS DONT MOVE

Denise: get yourself out there!

Jeff: meet new people!T

Emma: I'm aware I need to get out of the house more. But what's this expectation that I need a boyfriend? Bullshit. Although Mam did say something about a speed dating even Friday night down the OAP hall. I suppose it's a shout. It may broaden my horizons. Get me out like. *I often think about what type of people I'd meet at something like that. Outlandish comes to mind.* It's one of those words that always makes me laugh. It's perfect for describing things that are so unusual or bizarre that they almost don't belong in our world. It's the kind of thing you'd never expect, and that's what makes it so funny. When I go to that speed dating event, I can imagine I will find some rather outlandish people. I find that outlandish people can be unpredictable and like to embrace absurdity. Which isn't a bad thing. Maybe I will go. And who knows, I may find my own Martin Clunes!

As I progressed, I noticed that some interactions in the script were brief, while others were more substantial. To improve pacing and flow, I adjusted the length of these scenes, ensuring that snappy exchanges contrasted with more meaningful, extended dialogues. In the opening scene, I aimed to establish the strained dynamic between Emma and her parents. Their dialogue is laced with condescending remarks, subtly highlighting the pressure Emma feels.

For instance, phrases like "That's what I thought, you live under my roof rent free, claiming pip. It can't carry on you best get your arse done the job centre prompt" or "Exactly or the divorce fees" reflect their dismissive attitude, making Emma feel belittled and isolated. This approach not only sets the tone for their relationship but also underscores Emma's internal struggle. The subtle yet impactful language choices aim to immerse the audience in Emma's experience, allowing them to feel the weight of her loneliness and the emotional distance from her parents.

In crafting this opening monologue, I aimed to establish a warm, humorous, and relatable atmosphere for the audience. The character of Harold serves as the host of a speed dating event for older adults, and his dialogue reflects the following intentions. The use of light-hearted jokes and colloquial language, such as "put a bit of *savage* on tonight" and "it's like waiting for a bus," is designed to make the audience feel at ease and amused. These expressions are commonly used in everyday conversations, particularly among older generations, adding authenticity to Harold's character. By mentioning "speed dating in our golden years," the monologue immediately informs the audience of the event's nature, and the age group involved. This sets the tone for the evening and prepares the audience for the interactions to come. Phrases like

"sit yourself down" and "let's have a night of fun" are inclusive and inviting, encouraging the audience to engage with the event and the characters. The mention of "a new friend" or "a story to tell at the next Bingo night" adds a sense of community and shared experience. The reference to "Bingo night" is a nod to common social activities among older adults, grounding the script in a familiar cultural context and enhancing its authenticity. In summary, this monologue serves to introduce the setting, establish the character of Harold, and set the tone for a light-hearted and engaging evening of speed dating. The writing style is conversational, humorous, and tailored to resonate with the intended audience.

Harold: (taps mic) Is this thing on? (loud feedback from microphone) Well, well, well...good evening. I hope you have all put a bit of savage on tonight for this special occasion. Here we are... (presses button and wrong song comes on) no no not that one turn off! (turns music off and puts of careless whisper) speed dating. In our golden years. And the best part about it is If you don't fancy the first one, no bother! You've got a whole line up. It's like waiting for a bus! miss one, and another one's round the corner in five minutes. (Harold chuckles and there is a loud silence) So, sit yourself down, get ready for a bit of banter, and let's have a night of fun... And if it's not love at first sight, at least you'll leave with a new friend... or at the very least, a story to tell at the next Bingo night. Right then, let's crack on. On your marks, get set... let the dating begin!

Approaching the final draft, I felt the need for a plot twist to maintain the audience's interest. Inspired by the sitcom 'Benidorm', where characters Donald and Jacqueline are part of the "Middleborough Swingers Association," I introduced a new scene involving swingers Lachlan and Leah at the speed dating event. This twist adds intrigue and complexity to the narrative, keeping the audience engaged. In crafting this scene, I aimed to create a moment of unexpected humor and character development. The playful and bold personalities of Lachlan and Leah juxtapose Emma's more reserved nature, highlighting her discomfort and setting the stage for her personal growth. The

unexpected revelation of Lachlan and Leah's intentions introduces a comedic twist, using humor to address themes of openness and boundaries. Emma's reactions and internal monologue ("Well, that was certainly... different.") provide insight into her character, showcasing her ability to navigate awkward situations with wit. The scene contributes to the overall tone of the play, balancing humor with moments of introspection, and setting the stage for further character interactions. By focusing on dialogue and character interaction, this scene aims to engage the audience, providing both comedic relief and depth to the characters involved.

(Lachlan and Leah emerge from the toilets
flustered)

Leah: (enthusiastically) Right, I'm Leah, and this is Lachlan.

Lachlan: (grinning) You are?

Emma: Emma is this your wing woman? Nice to meet you both.

Leah: So, what's a lovely girl like you doing in a place like this, then? You after a bit of fun?

Emma: I think you've got the wrong end of the stick. I'm not a lesbianian. But um yeah, I guess. Just thought I'd give it a go, see what happens. Get out of the house.

Lachlan: Oh, we like that. We're all about seeing what happens, aren't we, love?

Leah: We're not here for any of that serious stuff, you know? Just a bit of fun and meeting new faces.

Emma: What tYPE of fun? like... meeting people?

Lachlan: Fun, like meeting people and maybe a little bit more... adventurous stuff.

Leah: You know, we like to keep things broad minded.

Emma: Broad minded...Fucking swingers. Great.

Leah: (laughing) Yeah, love. Don't worry, we're not going to bite. Unless you're into that.

Emma: This evening has taken a turn for the worse, I fear.

Lachlan: Well, you said you were looking for fun. And we're fun.

Leah: Yeah, just remember, no pressure! It's all about what feels right. But if you're ever up for something a bit spontaneous, we're your people.

(Bell rings) BOTH STARE AT EMMA AT THE SAME TIME

Lachlan: Well, looks like that's our time up. We'll leave you to think about it. But hey, we're always here for a laugh sugar tits.

Leah: And a little bit of extra fun, too.

Emma: Right. Okay. Thanks for the... chat.

Leah and Lachlan: (in unison) Anytime, love!

Emma: (muttering to herself) Well, that was certainly... different. (shouting) Harold. 3 baby shams please.

I added this scene to inject surprise and humour into the story, keeping the audience engaged while also challenging Emma's character. It adds depth,

creates contrast, and helps move her journey forward in a fun and unexpected way.

Maintaining a consistent narrative flow, the script required finalisation to ensure it was consistent for the audience, while preserving a clear storyline for Emma. See final script here: [INDEPENDENT PROJECT- WAITING THE DATING GAME.docx](#)

Director Influences

I'm particularly inspired by Sandy Johnson, a Scottish director known for his work on *Benidorm*. His ability to blend humor with relatable characters has significantly influenced my approach to writing and directing. Johnson's direction in *Benidorm* played a pivotal role in shaping the show's unique blend of humor and character development. In *Benidorm*, Sandy masterfully combined slapstick humor with witty dialogue and distinct, quirky characters. His approach to making outrageous situations feel grounded appeals to me, as it shows how humor can emerge from absurd yet believable scenarios, making characters' emotions and reactions feel authentic. This balance between comedy and authenticity is something I strive to achieve in my own work. Inspired by Johnson's direction, I embarked on an independent project

centered around a speed dating event. Much like the characters in Benidorm, the event features a diverse range of personalities and situations, bringing together humor, awkwardness, and relatable personal struggles. I aim to capture a similar dynamic in my project, highlighting both the hilarious and heartfelt aspects of human interaction. Johnson's work has shown me the power of creating a space where characters can be exaggerated yet deeply human at the same time, something I hope to bring to my own writing and direction.

Sound Influences

In crafting the atmosphere for my piece, I aimed to select music that resonated with both the comedic tone and the era of my protagonist, Emma Noble. To evoke the vibrant spirit of the 1980s, I incorporated Madonna's "Into the Groove" (1985) and Herman's Hermits' "I'm Into Something Good" (1964), both of which capture the upbeat and positive energy of their respective times. These tracks not only reflect Emma's age and background but also infuse the narrative with a sense of nostalgia and joy. To set the scene of a typical Welsh household, I chose the theme music from the popular game

show “Tipping Point”. Its familiar and lighthearted melody immediately transports the audience to a comfortable, everyday setting, placing with the domestic backdrop of Emma's life. To enhance the comedic elements, I introduced a voiceover for the character Harold, adding an extra layer of humor and personality to his role. Jona graciously stepped into this role, delivering the voiceover with impeccable timing and wit, perfectly complementing the comedic tone of the piece.

Madonna. (2009) *Into the Groove* Available at: <https://youtu.be/Bke7L0E8hu4>

Noone, P. (2013) *Herman's Hermits – I'm Into Something Good* Available at: <https://youtu.be/E7G0S82jQD0>

Costumes, Props and Set

For Emma's costume, I want to create a look that reflects her youthful energy and vibrant personality. The outfit will draw inspiration from chavvy fashion, incorporating oversized hoop earrings and bold makeup to showcase her confidence and spirited nature. This choice not only highlights Emma's lively character but also subtly nods to the stereotypes often associated with the

Welsh valleys. The clothing will be bright and quirky, featuring bold colors and playful patterns to emphasize Emma's individuality and zest for life. The vibrant colors symbolize her desire to stand out and express herself, while also subtly hinting at the loneliness she may be experiencing. The lively outfit contrasts with her inner struggles, reflecting the complexity of her character. For Freya and Aimee, I opted for a subtle black base to facilitate quick costume changes backstage. This approach ensures they can swiftly transition between roles without confusion. Jamie, being the most youthful character, was dressed in a football top to reflect his energetic and sporty nature. I was fortunate to find an authentic one tucked away in the costume cupboard, which added a genuine touch to his look. For characters like Jim and Gordon, I chose easy to slip on items such as hats and coats. These additions help distinguish each character quickly and effectively during the performance. To subtly convey age and personality, I dressed Jeff in glasses and a cozy cardigan, reflecting the classic "father" look. For Denise, I chose a cardigan and glasses to highlight her stereotypical Welsh traits. These simple additions helped distinguish their characters effectively. For the production, I aimed for a minimalist set to keep the focus on the speed dating event. The central feature was a high table with bar stools positioned upstage center.

This setup not only served as the main interaction point but also facilitated smooth blocking and movement throughout the performance. To enhance the community hall atmosphere, I decorated the table with trays of biscuits and coffee cups, adding a touch of authenticity. Additionally, I utilised my DIY skills to create a bright sign that symbolised Emma's optimism and her hopes for the dating world. The spatial arrangement was intentional, Emma's bedroom was placed downstage right, while the living room was positioned downstage left. This layout emphasized the physical and emotional distance between Emma and her parents, highlighting the contrasting mindsets and relationships within the family. props wise i need bus



Rehearsal Schedules

Before rehearsals began, I needed to assemble an enthusiastic cast to bring my vision to life. To achieve this, I reached out to first-year students at our

university by sending an invitation email that included a audition pack. The email began with a warm and welcoming tone, aiming to create an approachable atmosphere and encourage students to consider auditioning. I provided a brief overview of the piece, highlighting its comedic nature to give potential actors a clear understanding of the project's tone and style. Included in the audition pack was Emma's main monologue, which I asked each actor to prepare and perform. This selection was made to allow them to showcase their interpretation and bring their unique perspective to the character. I also detailed other available roles within the production. This information was intended to provide a comprehensive view of the casting needs and encourage a diverse range of students to audition, regardless of their experience level. By crafting the email with a welcoming tone and providing detailed information about the roles, I hoped to gain a sense of excitement and inclusivity, encouraging a diverse range of students to audition and contribute to the production's success.

To BAMT1, BATG1 and BAP1

Hello,

My name is Holly. I'm one of the second year MTs and I am looking for 3 enthusiastic people, who enjoy comedy to be in my individual project!

Brief synopsis:

My piece is a short play called *"Waiting the Dating Game"*. Emma, a middle- aged woman who is jobless, single and lives with her parents decides to broaden her horizons... by going speed dating. During the speed dating, Emma meets many different characters which can be rather interesting. After feeling pressured by her parents and society to find a man and "settle down", Emma discovers things not only about herself but also others around her.

Characters:

Emma: A proper valleys girl with a quick sense of humour.

I will also need 2 actors to play an array of characters including Emma's parents, and of course the dating participants. These are both heavily multi rolling characters that all need distinct characterisation!

If anyone is interested, has any more questions or would like to know a bit more, please drop me an email.

Thank you all,

Holly Roberts x

I was fortunate to receive immediate interest in the production. Two self-tapes were submitted promptly, but there was still one role left unfilled.

Although Lucy Jo kindly offered to step in, I was mindful of her commitment to her individual project. Determined to find the right fit, I took a proactive approach by reaching out directly to students who were not yet involved in any projects.

Upon reviewing the self-tapes I had received, I was pleased to finalise the cast:

- **Dee** as Emma
- **Freya** as Denise, Gordan, Leah, and Josh in supporting roles
- **Aimee** portraying Jeff, Jim, Jamie, and Lachlan

Additionally, **Jona Malone** had previously expressed interest in participating, so I was delighted to offer him the role of voicing Harold.

With the cast now complete, I felt confident in moving forward with the production.

To ensure a smooth rehearsal process, I aimed to accommodate my cast's university schedules. I created an Instagram group chat to discuss and coordinate rehearsal times that suited everyone. This approach helped open communication and allowed us to find the best slots suited for everyone. I arranged an initial meeting. This gathering provided an opportunity to get to know the cast members personally and to see how their individual strengths could help the production. Additionally, we conducted a read-through of the script. This session allowed us to hear the dialogue aloud, helping to identify the flow of the piece and any areas that might need adjustment. It also highlighted certain inconsistencies and aspects that required refinement before finalising the script. Such read throughs are invaluable in the rehearsal process, as they offer insights into pacing, character dynamics, and potential issues that may not be evident on paper. Once I had the initial meeting, I was then able to go away and plan our first rehearsals. Going into rehearsals, I

didn't have a strict plan because directing was new to me. Angharad suggested I let the actors perform freely to see if they brought anything new to the piece. This approach worked well, as the cast was confident and eager to try different ideas. Their improvisations allowed me to adjust and refine the direction to better suit the evolving dynamics of the production. At the start of rehearsals, I aimed to establish a solid foundation by blocking through the entire piece. This proved challenging due to the heavy multi-roling, where actors portray multiple characters. I needed to ensure that each scene flowed smoothly as different speed-dating characters appeared and that the actors clearly differentiated between the roles they were playing. For instance, with Aimee, I wanted to make sure there was a noticeable change when she switched between playing Jeff and Jamie. To achieve this, I reminded the cast to focus on their objectives, what each character wants in a scene. This approach helped them understand and portray the distinct motivations and personalities of each character, ensuring clarity and depth in their performances.

In our second rehearsal, with the basic structure of the play in place, I decided to focus on adding style and depth to each scene. For instance, during the speed dating event, a bell rings every time a new participant meets

Emma. This bell marks the end of one scene and the beginning of another. To emphasize this, I directed Dee, who plays Emma, to break the fourth wall and express her emotions directly to the audience. With each bell, I wanted Emma's feelings, such as disbelief or horror during her first speed dating experience, to be clearly shown through her facial expressions and actions. For moments like Gordan giving Emma his number, I chose to highlight them with a freeze-frame. Similarly, in the final scene of the speed dating section, when Josh touches Emma's hair, I used a freeze-frame to signify a positive moment. These moments symbolized the things Emma's parents often pressured her about. By marking each bell with a visual image, I aimed to create a memorable experience for the audience. We dedicated time in rehearsal to refine each "ding," ensuring it added meaning and depth to the performance.

Before our next rehearsal, I wanted to finalise the voice for 'Harold'. I met Jona, who was eager to help. He took all my directions and notes on board and delivered the perfect voiceover for Harold. With this recording ready, I could incorporate it into our rehearsals, giving the cast a clearer sense of the tone and atmosphere I envisioned for the piece. I asked Jona to use a strong Welsh accent to add humour and energy, enhancing the overall feel of the

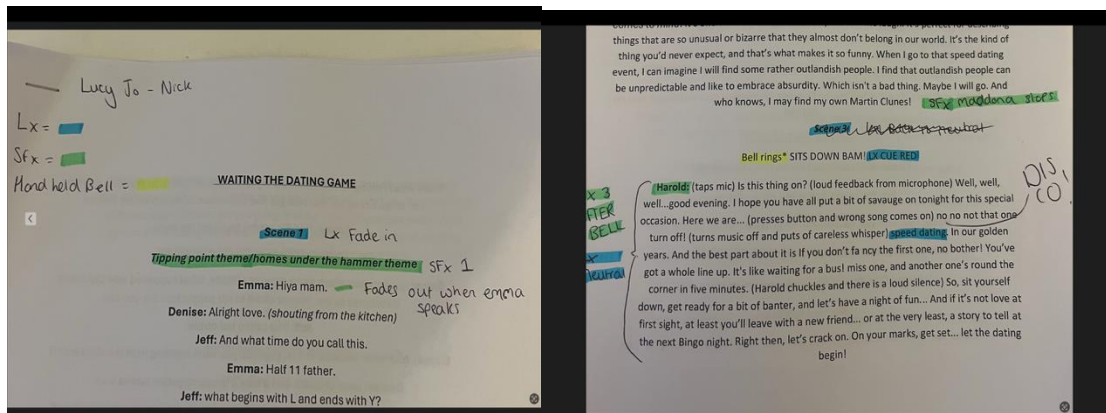
performance. In our third rehearsal, I aimed to run through the entire play without stopping to assess the cast's line memorization, the flow of the scenes, and how well they had grasped the blocking. However, we discovered that several details needed refining, which took time away from other areas. Once we reworked key scenes, especially the opening and final scenes involving the whole cast, I shifted my focus to working closely with Freya and Aimee, who portrayed Emma's parents. These characters are central to Emma's decision to attend the speed dating event, and I envisioned them as a unified force, almost like one mind. To visually represent this, I choreographed a sequence of movements for both actresses, integrating it into the stylized feel I aimed to achieve. This approach helped convey the parents' influence on Emma's choices.

Additionally, during this rehearsal, the cast heard 'Harold' for the first time. Jona's enthusiastic voiceover added energy and enthusiasm to the performance. I also focused on ensuring that all transitions in the play were purposeful to maintain a smooth flow. To avoid Emma always sitting in the same spot, I directed Dee to move around, capturing the chaotic and busy atmosphere typical of speed dating events. Once we had completed the working notes we were able to run and solidify my piece twice. I also timed

this performance and was happy to report it came in at 17 minutes. Finally, before going into tech, we did a whole cast run through the performance.

Dress and Tech

When I began working on the technical aspects of my piece, I had a clear vision for the atmosphere I wanted to create. Communicating this vision to Nick was straightforward, and we quickly aligned on the approach. One challenge I faced was the bell sound effect. Initially, I envisioned syncing a red light with the bell's sound, but this proved too complex for the available time. Nick suggested using a physical bell instead, which streamlined the process and saved valuable time. To ensure smooth coordination, I prepared scripts for Nick and Lucy Jo, who kindly assisted me. I highlighted lighting (LX) and sound (SFX) cues in the scripts and printed my own version to manage the bell cues. This preparation allowed us to follow the cues easily and stay on schedule during the tech session.



For Harold's introduction to the speed dating segment, I aimed to establish a romantic atmosphere. When Harold exclaims, "Ah, speed dating," I paired this moment with George Michael's "Careless Whisper" to underscore the romantic tone. To enhance this, I coordinated a lighting cue that transitions to a deep red, symbolising passion and desire. This combination of sound and lighting effectively sets the mood, drawing the audience into romantic dynamics. **Michael, G. (1984) 'Careless Whisper'. Available at:** <https://youtu.be/izGwDsrQ1eQ>

During our tech rehearsal, Nick and I carefully planned the lighting cues to enhance the emotional tone of each scene. For scenes featuring Emma and her parents, I chose neutral white lighting to reflect the mundane and uninspiring atmosphere of their interactions. This choice underscored the emotional distance and lack of connection between them. To differentiate

between characters and their relationships with Emma, we used distinct lighting colors. For instance, in scenes with Josh, I incorporated pink and red tones to symbolise Emma's growing interest and affection for him. These color choices helped convey the evolving dynamics and emotional shifts in the narrative. By thoughtfully selecting and implementing these lighting cues, we were able to visually communicate the characters' emotions and relationships, enhancing the overall storytelling of the piece. After finalising the lighting design, Nick, Lucy Jo, and I conducted a staggered run-through to familiarise ourselves with each cue. This approach allowed us to address any confusion promptly. Following this, we proceeded with a full dress and tech rehearsal, ensuring all elements were integrated seamlessly before the evening performance.

The performance

Reflecting on our final performance, I was thrilled to hear the audience's laughter, it confirmed that our comedy piece was connecting well. However, I believe we can enhance our delivery even further. Next time, I plan to discuss with Dee, Freya, and Aimee the importance of pacing and timing in comedy.

Allowing space for the audience's laughter not only acknowledges their response but also ensures that subsequent lines are delivered with clarity and impact. Rushing through moments of humor can diminish their effectiveness, as it may prevent the audience from fully processing and enjoying the joke. Incorporating pauses, moments of silence before or after punchlines, can significantly heighten the comedic effect. These pauses build anticipation and give the audience time to react, enhancing the overall rhythm of the performance. By practicing these techniques during rehearsals, we can develop a natural flow that aligns with the audience's reactions, creating a more engaging and enjoyable experience. Additionally, understanding the dynamics of our specific audience is crucial. Each audience is unique, and their responses can vary. By observing and adapting to their reactions, we can fine-tune our delivery to maximize the comedic impact. This adaptability ensures that our performance resonates with the audience, regardless of their composition. In summary, while the laughter we received was encouraging, there's always room for improvement. By focusing on timing, pacing, and audience engagement, we can elevate our comedic performances to new heights. I look forward to collaborating with Dee, Freya, and Aimee to refine these aspects and deliver even more compelling and

humorous performances in the future. I was delighted to hear the audience's laughter—it confirmed that our comedy piece resonated well. However, I believe there's always room for improvement, especially in areas like lighting and casting. If we had more time for technical rehearsals, I would have loved to incorporate additional lighting to enhance the atmosphere. In conclusion, while our performance was successful, there's always potential for growth. By investing more time in technical aspects like lighting and considering a larger cast, I could elevate my piece.

Through this creative journey, I've had the opportunity to delve deeper into the world of comedy, a genre I truly enjoy. Writing comedic pieces has allowed me to explore humor in various forms. Additionally, I ventured into directing for the first time, an experience that was both fun and enlightening. Seeing my written piece come to life on stage, with actors embodying the characters and delivering lines, was incredibly rewarding. This hands-on involvement provided a new perspective on storytelling, highlighting the importance of pacing, timing, and the interplay between dialogue and performance. Working with a cast brought its own set of challenges and joys. It was fascinating to witness how different interpretations of the same script could lead to varied yet equally compelling performances. Exploring themes like loneliness and

pressure within a comedic framework proved to be both challenging and rewarding. By juxtaposing serious topics with humor, we were able to create a piece that was not only entertaining but also thought-provoking. This approach allowed the audience to engage with the material on a deeper level, finding laughter in unexpected places. Looking ahead, I am eager to continue developing my skills in comedy writing and directing. The process of creating a piece that resonates with an audience is both fulfilling and motivating. I look forward to further refining my craft, exploring new themes, and collaborating with others to produce work that entertains and inspires.

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