

Discussion following sharing of development opening scene, song and cut to spasticity sequence and song...

Audience -

The way that disability is portrayed in film and other mediums I think it is really funny to have the two sided conversation of "how do we do this!? How can we be this perfect kind of display of disability?" And they are just getting it wrong and it's that whole thing where people are trying to help but they don't actually know how to fully engage - that dialogue is captured really well in the song and in the scene and it's really cool to see. It will be really interesting to see how you bring it out later in the play.

Robert -

Yeh (laughter)

Audience -

Really nice to see the uncovering of the physicality that able-bodied folk have to use to try to reach something to get there (laughter). In the films like My Left Foot you only see the result you don't see the horrible like steps that must be - it's really nice to see that.

Robert -

Audience -

From a BSL integration point of view that seemed to be happening quite a lot until Amy quite agilely ninja slid because Nat was so busy doing the spastic dancing (laughter 'you said it not me'). That's intriguing to me because how are you dealing with that

Natalie -

It's only just happened like that for me this morning - it won't be like that in the show

Audience -

For me from an integration point of view - is the interpreting happening all from you or how is that happening?

Robert -

We've got this concept in the show that the character called Nat has come along to the club to donate her time and develop her skills as an interpreter so she will do the bulk of the interpreting. I think in the songs there will be other little bits but mainly it will be Nat because there is a lot in this show to keep it all together.

Audience -

In terms of cast wise - how do you guys feel tackling this kind of subject?

Cast -

Shit-scared (laughter)

Cast -

Monday morning was quite interesting

Cast -

We were given this song for the first time and we were like - ohhhhhh!!! You just don't know how it's going to go, cos there's going to be so many people seeing it you just don't know what the reactions going to be

Audience -

You kind of, It's almost like trying to work out which point is a step too far.

Cast -

Yeh, that's what we have been doing for the last couple of days.

Audience -

And I don't know, that must be so hard for you - you are real in the thick of it and then to see it from an outsider's perspective

Robert -

What points too far and then how do we get there?

Audience -

I actually think it's got a real nice balance because some else's step too far is someone else's relation so there were things that would be someone's step too far and then as someone who has got cerebral palsy I go, I relate to that and that's not a step too far and actually I find that funny. So actually keep that balance don't ever lose that and don't be afraid because you won't ever be playing to just an abled-bodied audience.

Cast -

It's be the able-bodied people that will have a problem - you taking the piss?

Audience -

There's n step too far

Cast -

Not when Robert's in the room (laughter)

Robert -

It's about how we earn the right to go to that place - it's not about is it too far - what do we do before we go there that gives us the right to go there - is the question I constantly ask myself. So there has to be heart in this show, there has to be characters you engage with and we want to succeed and then when they go too far we go with them and then that helps to justify it think - either that or I never work again.

I guess there is something around that for me to do with offence and realising we are going to cause offense and sort of going with that. One of the questions for me is why is this any more offensive than Daniel Day Lewis in the film - this is what he was doing - he wasn't doing it to big show tunes - maybe that was the problem

Audience -

It might seem offensive but are you actually slapping the majority of your audience with a massive wet fish

Audience -

That's why it sort of works with me because you do sit with your mates with disabilities and talk about this kind of things that go on in this film it's just not the kind of conversation that goes on in able-bodied spaces so using the show tunes you are just uncovering something that is already happening

Robert -

And that's what show tunes let you do, they let you go to places that you couldn't in dialogue

Cast -

To be honest so far you were the audience we were most worried about. We did a presentation this afternoon to the NTS but because you have come from the building across the way and stuff like that this could be the one big tester

Robert -

But actually, but it's funny because the laughter tonight was different to this afternoon. It's always the challenge at BOP to make work for a disabled audience and a non-disabled audience and have people laughing at the same time.

Audience-

Marion is typing - a lovely response I think

Cast -

What happens if it's not

Robert -

You were all shit!

Anyone else while we wait?

Audience -

I just wanted to say that I really enjoyed the reality of the choice of choosing to engage with the physicality through a choreographic number - to chose to use that as a way as opposed to the drama way in - what is it to approach in a choreographic sense. For me crippling up, there is a greater awareness of it in drama but but in dance it isn't and people still don;t acknowledge that it happens. It's a really entertaining way to come at it and go this is about the body and therefore what it we look at it as a dance number. There is also another thing for me that choreographers are not admitting that this happens 'oh isn't this interesting, the physicality of this body" "let's restrict our bodies and find interesting chorographic material". It's a real source of lots of inspiration for lots of choreographers but its not acknowledge or recognised as crippling up in the way that - while mainstream drama recognises it and maybe doesn't do anything about it they at least start to acknowledge that it exists. For me, that I liked.

Robert -

I think that's the thing, that character of Gillian that sort of movement director who thinks great so this is what we do, okay in for a penny in for a pound, let's go there. And then she's like "oh fuck"

Audience -

It's really nice because when you started that scene you were like 'okay I am a movement director so I have to make something" It's an addition when actually it's an addition when actually it might be a restriction. What else is really interesting is that you have hardly moved yet, I think you stood up once and yet I am so intrigued to see what your actual movement is around the stage

Cast -

I'm just lazy, I wasn't told to stay seated I just made it happen (laughter)

Audience -

I was wondering if you are going to touch on other subject as well as the physicality

Robert -

Yeah, there is another scene - if you know the film like I now know the film there's a whole speech therapy scene that will be a beautiful moment of awkwardness. Speech and movement there's actually a lot to get through in a 90 show - more of the wonderful world of CP!

Audience -

Will the language all be non-PC?

Robert -

Pretty much, yeah. I guess what I am always interested in is when does the language do too far? And that's what we figure out as we go forward. We have spoken a lot about it this week about giving permission to use language and then mocking that at the same time and that is quite a big theme for me in the show and we will see where that goes.

Audience -

Is there some language Rob that you have used in a non-PC way and some of the cast have gone what the fuck did he just say?

Cast -

Yes!

Audience -

That kind of intrigues me because then I go what is un-PC language?

Cast -

That's what this show is about

In the grand scheme of life why is it okay?

Audience -

The songs, that spasticity song blasts through contexts. I had a meeting where a staff member used the word spasticity to refer to me but because they were able-bodied it was totally not okay but if I use it it's fine

Cast -

We've been talking about how now you try to use words that are PC, that are researched and you can go okay - Sometimes you end up offending by trying not to offend - and then you are in this pure muddled state "I just want to die right now!" (laughter)

Robert -

Language is important yes, but it is only important so far, there's a point where actually it is about what you mean, what your intention is and hopefully the intention of this show allows us to use whatever language we want because the heart is there and the intention is good and what we have to balance is that people don't go out at the end of the day and call everyone a spastic and that is a wee bit of a danger!

Audience -

Walking down the royal mile signing spastic!

Audience -

I think from the development that I have seen what is really relevant and clever and you should keep, in a kind of foundational level, is that you are using the language that people go "oh no we shouldn't do that!" But actually you are making me listen super super hard and that's what's really clever about it... form an able-bodied point of view that's what they might do form a cerebral palsy viewer I was just having a fucking great time! Having someone who is able-bodied on stage trying to do something PC, I just thought that was funny.

Cast -

I would like to say just in myself that my signer came out and when Abbie came in the room - wait she's going to come in and she's going to think I taught everyone how to sign spastic - I was so glad when Mairi said I think we should do a wee catch up.

Robert -

Wimp!

It is hard in this short format to show you how we are trying to earn the justification to go that far cos I think if the audience in the actual show left at this point they would go "oh my god!" but at the end of it they are going "...alright okay..."

Audience -

The language thing reminds me of the same thing you are doing with films because you are framing it critically, you are framing the use of the language not as in this is bad but think about why we are using this language and what it means so you are having to earn the audiences commitment to that framing.

Robert -

That sounds like a really academic way of saying I was going for a gag! (laughter)

Cast -

That's your programme notes right there

Robert -

I'm just looking for a cock gag at any point!

Audience -

Is there anything that you would like to know?

Robert -

That I would like to know?

Cast -

Whose best?

Robert -

They were all equally wonderful! I think it has been good to get your responses. For me a lot of it is hearing where you laugh and where you don't as you are watching it so I was watching you as you were watching all of that - what works, what doesn't work. I am aware there is a lot of cutting to do to tighten it up and make it work better but that's the whole point of development.

Audience -

I love this - you never get to witness something like that

Robert -

I think that again going back to the whole point of Birds of Paradise - these stories never get to be told. What we get is the kind of Daniel Day Lewis version of this story, you get his interpretation. I guess for me this about reclaiming a bit of that - I think that's where the character Chris wants to reclaim that story from this big hollywood star who made it all about him - and we can make it all about me!

Audience -

It's really refreshing and really exciting -it's really cool that it is going to be at the Fringe, I honestly think it is going to make like such a big splash because it is that whole thing of taking ownership of the story and the language and kind of like Elliot was saying there, I have friends that are able-bodied they've known me for a long time now so we can joke you know about terminology and stuff like that and you know it's creating that discussion and breaking through those taboos. You know you just get so sick, and you've said it the couple of scenes there, you know the whole inspiration porn, the sympathy that is wrapped around everything and nobody wants that they just want a bit more understanding. I can only speak for myself but when you see a lot of other interpretations and plays you just get so sick of the whole kind of 'poor me' angle and you just want to go this is a story and we are going to tell it and people are just going to have to come along for the ride and buckle up - it really seems that this show is going to do that and make like a zillion people lose their minds (laughter) some serious journalist from the herald will go I don't know who to write this! Well just write what you see!