

What I (Don't) Know About Autism **by Jody O'Neill**

Audio Description Programme Notes
for the performance in the Peacock Theatre
Friday 5th November 2021 at 8pm and
Saturday 6 November at 2:30pm.

A Jody O'Neill and Abbey Theatre co-production

Welcome to the programme notes for **What I (Don't) Know About Autism** by Jody O'Neill. The play is directed by Dónal Gallagher, and the choreographer is Cindy Cummings. The Set and Costume Designer is Medb Lambert. Lighting Design is by Eoin Winning and the Composer and Sound Design is by Carl Kennedy.

This production will be audio described live in **The Peacock Theatre** Friday 5th November at 8pm and at the matinee performance on Saturday 6th November at 2.30pm. An audio described on-demand performance will be available from 12th November to 20th November 2021. The performance lasts for one hour and twenty minutes, without an interval.

ABOUT THE PLAY

The return of our sold out 2020 production, What I (Don't) Know About Autism is a sometimes comic, sometimes heart-breaking journey into the world of autism, performed by autistic and non-autistic actors.

Sandra is looking for love. Gordon is seeking acceptance. Simon just wants these parents to stop talking for two minutes so he can get on with teaching their kids.

And Casper?

Casper is not here.

What I (Don't) Know About Autism takes the audience on a highly theatrical journey. Performed by a cast of autistic and non-autistic actors, it is a sometimes comic, sometimes heart-breaking look at the world of autism. The play mixes narrative, song, dance and direct address to explore this contentious and often misunderstood subject matter.

Inspired by the writer's own experiences with autism, the play celebrates autistic identity whilst offering deeper insight and understanding to non-autistic audiences.

All performances will be relaxed performances. This means there will be a relaxed approach to noise during the show and audience members are free to move about or leave the auditorium as they need. Each performance will be followed by a post-show talkback.

As well as live performances, **What I (Don't) Know About Autism** will also be available to watch as a captioned live-stream, and on-demand. Irish Sign Language, British Sign Language, American Sign Language, Captioned and Audio-Described performances will be available on-demand.

Content Warning:

Although the show contains many moments of humour and lightness, it also contains discussion of the killing of a child, mistreatment of children, ableism, and childbirth. Brief violence, profane language, ableism, and alcohol usage depicted on stage. This show is suitable for ages 14+. Any instances of loud noise and music are flagged in advance by performers each time during the show.

#WhatIDontKnowAboutAutism

Originally produced in association with Mermaid Arts Centre and The Everyman.

Funded by the Arts Council. Supported by Arts & Disability Ireland, AsIAM.

ABOUT THE SET

The Peacock Theatre seats 127, the seating is end on and the size of the stage is 15.6 metres wide and 7.5 metres deep. In this show the set is very simple - the basis is an admiral blue floor framed by white tape. The furniture in the first scene is made up of three blocks either side of the stage. They are curved and nestle into each other one in front of the other to make steps - characters stand and sit upon them. The top step about 1 metre high, each step about one metre wide. The taller steps have doors in the back where characters retrieve items from now and again. The blocks that make up the steps are on unseen wheels and can be taken apart and moved to create different scenes throughout the play. They are painted from the top indigo blue fading to a light blue at the bottom.

To the front far left and far right of the stage are whiteboards on black stands. On the whiteboards written in black marker the titles of each scene numbered – 1 - 12 on the left, 13 – 24 on the right. Written in blue above the scenes are the words "What I (Don't) Know About Autism. Near the back of the stage is a black linen backdrop, all the dialogue is captioned in white font upon it. Sometimes when light hits this large piece of cloth, we can see characters behind it.

The lighting in this show often has a indigo bluish hue to it which on occasion becomes a brighter white but more often lilacs and greens are introduced.

ABOUT THE CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

There are six actors in the play who each play a number of characters. Sometimes they step outside their characters to address the audience directly.

Eleanor Walsh plays **herself, Michael, Sandra (her), doctor, Gina.**

Eleanor is a woman in her twenties. She has a friendly face framed by her long dark brown hair pulled back into a loose ponytail. Eleanor wears a mustard-coloured cotton shirt dress, a belt around her waist with black tights and bright red under armour runners on her feet.

When playing the doctor, she wears a white lab coat with a black eye patch over one eye. There is a softness and a strength in her movements, she is animated in her gestures and speech.

Shay Croke – plays **himself, kid, waiter, Mary, Sam, Jonathan, Simon and Gordon.** He is a young man about twenty years old with mousey brown hair styled in a smart short back and sides. Shay wears faded blue drain pipe jeans and a navy blue t-shirt over which he wears an unbuttoned burgundy, navy blue and white checked shirt. On his feet white runners with forest green detail. Shay has a deep voice and a gentle look in his eyes. He sometimes stims with his fingers.

Jayson Murray – plays **himself, Alison, Harry, Colm (him), receptionist and parent.** Jason is a little shorter than Shay with broad shoulders. His shoulder length dark hair has tight curls which when released from the ponytail he wears it up in, appears wild. His round face is framed by a short beard and small moustache. He wears sienna brown chinos. A navy blue shirt decorated with tiny specks of white which is buttoned up to the neck and hangs loosely outside his trousers. On his feet yellow, red and green nike runners. Jayson is about the same age as Shay.

Matthew Ralli plays **Matthew, Megan, parent, waiter, Terence.** He's a tall thin guy, about forty years old with a slight twang of an Australian accent. He wears khaki trousers with a peach pink coloured polo t-shirt and blue runners. His brown hair is cut short.

Jody O'Neill – plays **herself, interrupting voice, James, piano teacher, waitress, mother, woman and doctor's assistant.** She is petite, in her mid to late thirties. She wears a stylish short sleeved cotton jump suit which rests at her shins. The jumpsuit is dark brown with large print flowers on it in azure blue and sienna brown.

Small yellow flowers are sprinkled here and there. On her feet green converse runners. When she plays the doctors assistant on her head, she wears a cartoon like nurses' cap with a red cross upon it. Her dusty blonde hair in a short bob, pinned back from her face frames her finely sculpted features.

Paula McGlinchey – plays **herself, Peter, teacher, Sandra's mum, parent, waitress, Beatrice** and **tv interviewer**. Paula has dark brown shoulder length hair which frames her round face and high cheekbones. She wears a paisley smock dress that rests just above the knee – aqua green with red, white, orange, and purple swirls with colourful plimsolls. Paula is about forty years old.

The voice of **Casper** is played by all of the actors. **Casper** is represented by an 8 year old child's red checked jacket with a black hood which stands centrally behind the black screen and appears when spoken about.

That concludes the programme notes for this production of **What I (Don't) Know About Autism**. They were prepared by Mo Harte. Audio description at the Abbey Theatre is provided by Arts & Disability Ireland with support from the Arts Council.

For updates about audio described and captioned performances, text **ACCESSARTS** to **51444** or head to **www.adiarts.ie** for more information. Thank you. Go raibh maith agat.



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