



WILDCARD

GIG THEATRE WORKSHOP

EDUCATION PACK

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INTRODUCTION TO WILDCARD

Wildcard (Charity No. 1170677) is a multi award-winning theatre company that was created in 2015 with a dual purpose: **to revitalise theatre and become a home for emerging artists**. We have a particular focus on telling stories centred around social issues, in ways that engage new audiences.



SYNOPSIS OF ELECTROLYTE

Electrolyte is a piece of gig theatre written in spoken word poetry and underscored entirely by live music. It follows Jessie on a journey through an episode of psychosis brought on by the death of her parents. A supporting cast of five multi-instrumentalists help her to tell her story. The piece ultimately champions recovery and the importance of friends, community and a sense of place. The response to the production at The Edinburgh Fringe was unbelievable with a number of audience members returning up to eight times. This is a necessary story which explores Mental Health sensitively for a contemporary audience.

WILDCARD IN ASSOCIATION WITH GLYNIS HENDERSON PRODUCTIONS PRESENT

ELECTROLYTE

BY JAMES METEYARD MUSIC + LYRICS MAIMUNA MEMON DIRECTION DONNACADH O'BRIAIN

WINNER
LES ENFANTS
TERRIBLES AWARD
2018

WINNER
PLEASANCE BEST
NEWCOMER AWARD
2018

WINNER
MENTAL HEALTH
FRINGE AWARD
2018

WINNER
STEPLADDER
AWARD
2018

WINNER
VOICE MAG
PICK OF THE FRINGE
2018

GIG THEATRE AT ITS FINEST

FRINGE REVIEW

★★★★★
BROADWAY BABY

★★★★★
THE SCOTSMAN

★★★★★
THREE WEEKS LATER

★★★★★
DAILY MAIL

★★★★★
VOICE MAG

★★★★★
TO DO LIST

★★★★★
ED FEST MAG

★★★★★
THE STAGE

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WILDCARD
glynis henderson productions ltd

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Enfants
Terribles

Mental Health
Foundation

THE
WATERMILL
THEATRE

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND
LOTTERY FUNDED

Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



INTERVIEW WITH CREATOR JAMES METEYARD

Who did you write this play for?

I wrote ELECTROLYTE for a few different groups of people. I wrote it for the general public to try and help people to understand the complexities of certain Mental Health Problems, specifically depression and psychosis, and show that they can take an active role in peoples lives to help them through small actions that go a long way. Even something as small as saying, are you ok? Or do you

want to chat about anything? Or you're looking great today can have a huge impact on peoples lives.

I also wrote ELECTROLYTE for people who might not feel that the theatre and plays is something that is interesting to them. Either because they've seen boring plays or they don't find the experience very welcoming or they feel judged when they go to the theatre. I wanted to create a show that looks at the human experience of people who are like the people that I know and put that on stage in a way that my mates would find cool and engaging. That's why I wanted it to have a heavy music focus and write it in spoken word/rap lyrics.

What reactions do you hope to evoke?

I wanted people to feel like Jessie was their sister or daughter or girlfriend... someone close to them in their life. I wanted the music to always capture either the environment that Jessie is in (like at a gig or when she goes to the warehouse) or to be an extension of her emotional experience. What I mean by

that is that you can feel what Jessie is feeling through the music. I wanted people to come away from the production and feel like they want to call their friends or family and say 'I am here if you need me. I love you and I care for you and I want you to know that you can always talk to me if you're ever feeling down or depressed'. I also wanted people who had experience with psychosis or depression to see the show and feel it represented them and their experience and feel that the message was a positive one. The message that people with Mental Health Problems can live perfectly full and wonderful lives and that we, as a community, can work together to overcome Mental Health Problems.

Why did you use Gig-theatre as a form to tell the story?

I love music. It just makes you feel so many emotions. It gets you pumped up and excited or can make you cry in an instance. I love theatre because it's the opportunity to tell different people's stories. To learn about the world from someone else's point of view. Gig theatre for me is the perfect blend of

music and storytelling. Above all, it celebrates the fact that we are all in a room together - it speaks directly to an audience without saying to them 'hey, we're all going to pretend that we don't know you're there'. Instead it goes, 'Hey! We're all in this room together! I know that and you know that! So let's go on a journey together.' I think it's unpretentious, fun, noisy and full of energy and I just love that!

What are the themes of the play?

Mental Health and the fact that they are commonplace within our society. Friendship. The importance of being there for one another, especially if someone is struggling.

What advice would you give to young people who are interested in playwriting?

Just write what you love! Writing doesn't have to be this big thing where you need to finish your 500 page novel or it's not worth it. You can write a 1 page poem about the adventure you think your cat might have gone on. Or a 10 page play about whatever you did at the

weekend. Or a 5 page story about the aliens that landed in your garden last week. It's totally up to you what you write. Do it for fun and don't get too bogged down in what the end result will be! You can always go back and change bits, add stuff in and play with the form or structure. The first thing I ever wrote was a random 3 page story about a boy who could do anything he wanted - he could fly, jump really high, walk through walls and teleport... plot twist... it turned out he was a ghost.

Music is a key element in the piece, how did you come to create it, incorporate it and find the right moments to place it?

Once I'd written the play I approached Maimuna Memon to compose the music. There were about six points during the piece where I knew I wanted there to be a song. But by the end I think Maimuna had written eight beautiful songs and I had written some additional rap lyrics too.

The development of the live musical underscore was led by Maimuna and

myself but was extremely collaborative. We discussed in detail the environments the characters were in and how best to capture them through music: from big expansive pieces for warehouses, to more intimate pieces for house parties, to soft beautiful pieces to encapsulate city streets at night or a gentle train ride to a city she has never been. We also discussed the feelings the character of Jessie was experiencing and how we could reflect them in the music. Sometimes we chose to go with the feelings e.g. soft, sad music for sad and lonely moments. And sometimes we chose to play against the feelings so the music was bright and upbeat despite the character being angry and frustrated. The development of music used a lot of 'trial and error' and lots of compositions we explored we didn't end up using.

We developed the music over eight months - at three different theatres: The Watermill Theatre for a week in January. Theatre Clwyd for a week in May and at The Omnibus Theatre for a week in July. We then rehearsed the show for three weeks in July before we opened in August.

WILDCARDS PROCESS: THE W.I.L.D. METHOD

FOUNDATIONS OF PLAY

- **We are respectful and inclusive.** We recognise that we are ambassadors for Wildcard. As such, we respect the participants we work with and the premises and its staff which we are on. Everyone has a right to be in our sessions and to take part regardless of age, background, socio-economic position, race, colour of skin, gender, sexuality or ability.
- **We are playful.** We recognise the importance of play when being creative. We always create a safe space to allow our participants and ourselves to be open. We reward participants when they take risks. We do not take ourselves too seriously. We are always open to playing 'on the level' with our participants.
- **We are responsive.** We understand that everyone learns in different ways and we are responsive and sensitive to each group's individual needs. There is no 'one size fits all' approach. We are ready to adapt and use our skills, tools and methodology to draw out creativity and passion from the group.
- **We are sensitive and aware.** We recognise that creativity and performance comes more naturally to some than to others. When we identify those for whom this may be more difficult, we aim to encourage their creativity with empathy and compassion.
- **We are equal playmakers.** We do not see our participants as any different from us. We do not patronise our participants. We challenge our participants to be better and we always get involved with games and tasks. We never ask anyone to do something that we wouldn't do and we allow our participants to lead when being creative rather than dictating their creativity to them.



OUR METHOD



WORDS

WORDS

We always start with the story/text/words

This will be either a set text given from your school or content created through the workshop by your students. If it is based on the text you have given us, the method will be about looking at this text through the lens of Wildcard's Gig Theatre Process.



INSPIRATION

INSPIRATION

Story Inspiration and Music Inspiration

The Facilitator will then choose a section of the text to work on or choose a piece created by the group(s). The Facilitator will ask questions such as:

- What is the character's emotional journey? Are they Happy/Sad/Angry etc.
- Where are there moments of change in emotion or action?
- Are there any changes in environment or location?

The Facilitator will then move on to talk about music. Examples will be presented to the students of pre-recorded music that has emotive qualities or qualities of physical space will then be used to help the students.



LINKS



DELIVERY

Play each track and ask the group what emotions or physical locations come to mind.

For example:

A piece of classical music - I Giorni by Ludovico Einaudi and discuss what feelings come out. Longing. Loneliness. Hope. Etc etc. What locations do they think of? An open field, a beach etc.

Or a piece of Drum and Bass – Sub Focus – Timewarp and discuss what feelings it evokes – anger, excitement, adrenaline. What locations come out? A spaceship, a rave etc etc.

The students will be offered to read their pieces of text over the different music pieces and discuss with the group how the music changes their delivery/the feeling of the piece.

LINKS

How the music links to the text and the text links to the music

Once it has been decided on what story the students want the music to tell the facilitator will play with how it links. Playing with:

Tempo, Rhythm, Volume, Layers, Choral or solo speaking/singing

The Facilitator will choose one piece of text and quickly create a short piece of underscore to go with it using the inspiration that the group has come up with. This will help demonstrate the different ways the music and text can link together.

The piece of text the group(s) have been working on will then have a go creating some music using some of the inspiration the group has discussed, allowing the students to lead and the facilitator will be on hand to encourage them where necessary. If working in smaller groups, each group will take it in turns working with the facilitator on the instruments whilst the others plan what they want to do. If it's a more manageable size, the facilitator will work with the entire group on the instruments, forming a 'band' whilst the others watch and then rotate.

Using their inspiration as a basis, the facilitator will help them build an underscore for their text. Pointing out possible links along the way. Where possible, when creating the music, the facilitator will start with a drum loop or something similar which can easily be triggered. Then a student with less immediate musical ability will take control over that trigger. One of the students will have a turn speaking the text into the microphone and others will be asked to join in where appropriate with instruments, singing or speaking.

If it is original text, the facilitator will work closely with the individual who created the text and help them to shape it

DELIVERY

The art of performing Gig Theatre

Now we are bringing all of the components together into a final performance. This will either be the whole group or one by one in their smaller groups presenting to each other. The key elements here are play and support!

Delivery is about stagecraft. For the students it will be thinking about presence, clarity and storytelling and the facilitator will be there to support and help them achieve this.





INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR DONNACADH O'BRIAIN

What attracted you to the script of *Electrolyte*?

I think it was the rhythm and the musicality of it that pulled me in, that's often what first grabs me. After that I think it was the character of Jessi, who was already very vivid on the page, and the prospect of telling her story, I found her really engaging and easy to connect with, even though we're very different.

How did you approach directing *Electrolyte*?

I worked with James - the writer - on drafts of the play in the months leading up to rehearsals, which was a continued process of refining the play itself, but also hugely important for me in learning what the play was, and getting as much insight as I could from James, which would help me be ready when rehearsals began. Once in rehearsals the essential thing for me was to find a language for the show, and the simplest way to put that was that whilst it was a play, I wanted it to operate as often as possible within the rules of a Gig, rather than a play, and in the process to find out in what ways it needed to be rooted in theatre conventions and in what ways in live music conventions. They are essentially two different ways of telling stories and connecting to an audience, and what I loved was the search to find an exact and new language which was the perfect balance of those two methods of telling a story, for this particular play, this story, this character.

***Electrolyte* is written in spoken word? How did you approach the rhythm/beat of the piece?**

This element was very collaborative, and led by James and Maimuna as writers of the text and music, but everyone was part of finding those rhythms and finding them, and honing them was a big part of the rehearsal process, though not a part of it that I needed to lead on. Liv, who created the role of Jessie, was also central to this, as her performance is integral to so much of the rhythm of the show. So, we found our way to it, through trial and error, and a lot of good listening to each other.

Live music was central to the piece, how did you find rehearsing and establishing the importance of it throughout the production?

It's completely pivotal to the show, so there wasn't work to do in establishing it as such, it's in the DNA of the thing. The rehearsals always moved from focus on music, to focus on telling the story, and back to music... they are both sides of the same coin of course, and any change made in Liv's performance

or the script, or the music, necessitated shifts in the other elements. We couldn't have done it had the company not been both hugely capable and hugely committed to the task.

How has the rehearsal process for Electrolyte been different when compared to your previous work?

The structure of rehearsals was much more like rehearsing a musical or with a band. When directing the play, the director tends to be leading rehearsals most of the time, and there is both a freedom and a pressure in that. In this project the role of leader moved between us constantly... at times Maimuna was leading and I was waiting, thinking, reading over sections, at times Liv and James would be leading, as they needed to try a script change, or a tricky section of language, at times I would lead, and at times several of us would co-lead for a time. There are so many moments where everything has to be in harmony and where we had to find the exact common ground that would lift all the elements. The constant need to negotiate roles and share leadership, was hard work at times, sharing can be hard! But it was also the only way to make this show, and one of the reasons we got the piece to where we did.

WHAT IS GIG THEATRE?

Gig Theatre is a combination of a music gig and a theatre production. It combines live music with spoken text and song to take an audience on a journey through a narrative. The musicians play an active role in the piece by providing the music and contributing to sharing the story.

Put simply: ***it is a band telling a story.***



EXTRACT FROM ELECTROLYTE **INSIGHT TO SPOKEN WORD**

Below is an extract from 'Electrolyte' this is an example of how the play itself was structured and what form the language had taken on the page. It stems from spoken word and when reading aloud, you should be able to naturally pick up the rhythm of the piece through how it's structured and the language.

This can be used as your source material for the W.I.L.D Method. Or alternatively a piece to help inspire your students to create their own content.

*And I couldn't have done it without my friends.
So I want to raise a glass and make a toast
To the most important people in my life.
Thank you for helping me through
The most difficult time I've ever faced.
There's really nothing left I can say
You two are perfect for each other
From party animals, to lovers and now soul mates
I wish you the best in all that life sends your way.
I love you. Thank you.*

*To the happy couple.
The whole room drinks.
I look at you all and once again I think:
We are made of stardust and dreams.*

*All that's actually there, is you and me.
And I won't waste this once in a trillion opportunity
I will be there for you,
Just as you have been there for me.*

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE PAGE

**Use the resources below
to find out more about mental health
and wellbeing:**

This [A-Z Guide](#) is a useful overview of key mental health topics.

[Young Minds](#) provide useful information for young people and their parents about mental health, seeking treatment and the mental health system.

[Childline](#) have lots of advice about managing different feelings as well as their phonenumber which is open 24 hours a day.

[Kooth](#) provide counselling support both face to face and online.

[Mind](#) have a whole range of information and support information for children and parents on their website.





WILDCARD

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