**Disability & Society**

**ISSN: (Print) (Online) Journal homepage:** [**https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cdso20**](https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cdso20)



**The entitled ally: authorship, consultation, and the ‘right’ to stage autistic people’s stories**

**Bree Hadley , Morgan Batch & Michael Whelan**

**To cite this article:** Bree Hadley , Morgan Batch & Michael Whelan (2020): The entitled ally:authorship, consultation, and the ‘right’ to stage autistic people’s stories, Disability & Society, DOI: [10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796](https://www.tandfonline.com/action/showCitFormats?doi=10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796)

**To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796>



Published online: 21 Jul 2020.



[Submit your article to this journal](https://www.tandfonline.com/action/authorSubmission?journalCode=cdso20&show=instructions) 



Article views: 86



[View related articles](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/mlt/10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796) 



[View Crossmark data](http://crossmark.crossref.org/dialog/?doi=10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796&domain=pdf&date_stamp=2020-07-21)



Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at

<https://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?journalCode=cdso20>

DISABILITY & SOCIETY

<https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2020.1794796>



The entitled ally: authorship, consultation, and the ‘right’ to stage autistic people’s stories

Bree Hadley , Morgan Batch and Michael Whelan 

School of Creative Practice at QUT, Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia

ABSTRACT

Theatre has a long tradition of presenting disabled charac-ters as plot devices to tell someone else’s story. A recent production, All in a Row, resulted in heated debate around this issue. This article examines not the play itself, but the conflict between those who objected to the play’s repre-sentation of autism, and its creators, who defended their choices by citing their disability-adjacent identities and processes of consultation. For critics, the fact that the crea-tors did not take the community’s concerns seriously was a source of trauma. This article uses this conflict to draw out lessons about how we might better negotiate the right to tell disability stories and strengthen frameworks to support that negotiation. We propose a decision tree diagram to assist artists in understanding the meaning, role, and most importantly the potential consequences of consultation – up to and including a community saying ‘no’ to an artist’s planned representation.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 August 2019 Accepted 6 July 2020

KEYWORDS

Allyship; autism; consultation; disability-adjacent identities; theatre

Introduction

Theatre has a long tradition of presenting disabled characters as plot devices to tell someone else’s story, or to tell a larger social story. It also has a long tradition of casting non-disabled actors to play the roles. This practice – called ‘cripping up’ and recalling ‘the outdated practice of white actors “blacking up” to play African American characters’ (Sandahl 2010, 236) – denies disabled actors the opportunity to play characters, presents characters from the perspective of research rather than lived experience, and, thus, potentially perpetuates problematic stereotypes (Johnston 2012, 2016; Kuppers 2003, 2017; Hadley 2014). It leaves theatre untroubled by the real visceral idiosyncrasies of the disabled body, and audiences untroubled by real visceral encounters with the disabled body. Over the last two decades, scholars have criticised how storylines that cast disabled people as objects of

CONTACT Morgan Batch  m2.batch@qut.edu.au  Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia.

2020 Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

2  B. HADLEY ET AL.

horror, pity, or inspiration (Kuppers 2003, 2017; Hadley 2014; Johnston 2016; McCaffrey 2019) and training, casting, and production practices that exclude disabled people (Sandahl 2005; Kuppers 2014; Johnston 2012, 2016) combine to create a ‘hostile’ (Johnston 2012) climate for disabled people in the the-atre industry. Initial influential studies by Petra Kuppers (2003, 2017), Kirsty Johnston (2012), Bree Hadley (2014), and Matt Hargrave (2015), and the first edited collections on the topic by Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander (2005), Collette Conroy (2009), and Bruce Henderson and Noam Ostrander (2010), focused largely on Western theatre forms. However, the most recent collections – including Yvonne Schmidt and Mark Swetz’s issue of Research in Drama Education on International Perspectives on Performance, Disability and Deafness in 2017, and Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald’s Routledge Handbook of Disability Art, Culture, and Media in 2019 – have demonstrated similar issues in non-Western theatrical representations and industry cultures. The extent of scholarship now available in this area notwithstanding, indus-try debate about these issues still typically gets ‘stalled’ between two sides, with two conflicting attitudes (Hadley 2020). For some, the nature of the the-atre craft, and the economic realities of the theatre industry, mean that non-disabled authors, directors, and actors should be allowed to represent whomever they want. This can even be a strategy to raise awareness about disabled people’s stories. For others, access and inclusion is what is required, and ‘research,’ ‘consultation,’ and ‘collaboration’ – which can run the gamut from a day’s Google searching, to a deep engagement with community over months or years – can never take the place of actual lived experience of a disability.

The debate around representation, self-representation, and consultation was brought to the fore with a recent production, All in a Row by British writer Alex Oates. The play tells the story of Tamora, Martin, and their strug-gles with their autistic child Laurence. The promotional blurb highlights the negative impact the child’s disability has on the parents’ lives as the focus: ‘Like any couple, Tamora and Martin have big hopes and dreams. But when your child is autistic, non-verbal, and occasionally violent, ambitions can quickly become a pipe dream’ (Southwark Playhouse 2019b). In All in a Row, Tamora, Martin, and social worker Gary are played by human actors, but Laurence is played by a puppet. This raised major concerns for critics, blog-gers, and social media commentators – including many who identified as neurodiverse themselves (Ryan 2019; Dex 2019; Saville 2019; May 2019; Thom 2019). The hashtag #puppetgate was used during the debate on Twitter throughout May 2019. A website - [www.allinarowisableist.com](http://www.allinarowisableist.com) – was established to collate a number of reviews and responses from activists, statements from those involved with the production, and a link to a petition to pull the show. In response to the controversy, the playwright and others

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  3

involved in the show defended their choices on two fronts: first, they have personal experience in care roles and, second, they carried out consultative processes that guided the work’s development. The conflict between the neurodiverse community, critics, and activists, on the one hand, and the cre-ative team, on the other hand, raised a series of interrelated questions. The most critical related to 1. whether proximity to disability as a parent, partner, sibling, or carer affords special permission to speak about disabled people’s lives, 2. what sorts of consultation processes an author needs to undertake to tell the stories of others, and 3. what responsibility an author has to act on feedback given during a contested consultation process.

In this article, we take All in a Row and the debate it sparked as a case example, and use it to unpack these three questions, and the broader issues around representation and authority they raise. We examine various contri-butions to the debate to ascertain what constitutes good versus poor practi-ces amongst would-be non-disabled allies. Literature exists on disability allyship, though the concept has not previously been explored in relation to how it plays out in a disability arts context (Hadley 2019, Hadley 2020). In a disability context, an ally is typically defined as a non-disabled person who seeks to raise awareness about issues faced by and/or advise, support, and advocate for a disabled person. However, as we have noted elsewhere, ‘the work of would-be allies can also raise concerns, and even accusations of exploitation of disabled artists, in practices ostensibly designed to facilitate their inclusion in the industry’ (Hadley 2020). Our focus here is not on the show itself, on the show’s representation of autism, or even on what the show can teach us about representations of autism in performance. It is, rather on ally behaviours, what the manoeuvres in the All in a Row debate reveal about how allies negotiate the right to tell disability stories. We hope, by examining this example, to understand how we might strengthen frame-works to support that negotiation, across a whole range of different disabil-ity arts practices, in a context where poor ally behaviour can produce trauma of the sort seen in this example. As such, this one case of a group of non-disabled artists taking – or failing to take – responsibility for consulting and collaborating with the community they represented, has the potential to become educative for all practitioners working with lives and stories other than their own. We write from the perspective of three scholars, who, thanks to our location in Australia, have been witness not to the show itself, but to the debate. We write from three distinct perspectives on the issue. Bree Hadley identifies as an expert in disability arts and a disabled person. Hadley’s disability is primarily a mobility disability. While her lived experience does include sensory processing differences – dyslexia, dysgraphia, left/right confusion, and poor proprioception, for example – it does not include aut-ism. However, because the concept of neurodiversity did not emerge until

4  B. HADLEY ET AL.

the late 1990s, after Hadley’s diagnoses, she did not acquire that identifica-tion. Morgan Batch is an expert in representations of dementia and cognitive decline in theatre, who has as part of her allyship written about the dehu-manising use of puppetry to represent people with dementia. Michael Whelan is an artist and the parent of 23-year-old son with autism. All three of us identify as allies, with a desire to work in respectful, productive, and empowering with disabled and d/Deaf artists in our practice, research, and service to the field – be this autistic artists, other neurodiverse artists, or other disabled artists – avoiding exploitation, tokenistic forms of consult-ation, and other phenomena by which allies take agency away from those they claim to support. We hope, by examining the debate around one par-ticularly controversial show from our tripartite perspective, to argue the need for a clearer understanding of what the term ‘consultation’ means amongst would-be allies, and what the consequences of such a ‘consultation’ may be – whether changing or cutting parts of a story, or not telling a story at all. We propose a decision tree diagram as a mechanism for clarifying the meaning, role, and potential consequences of consultation amongst would-be allies, including clarifying who has the right to tell certain stories and who has the right to approve or veto certain representations amongst artists, communities, and other stakeholders. While such a mechanism is important for all artists and storytellers, it is, we conclude, particularly important for those who occupy disability-adjacent identities, and, as a result, become most likely to – wittingly or unwittingly, with more or less potential to trau-matise – infringe on the rights of people with disabilities by speaking on their behalf. Our analysis, conclusions, and contributions thus lie not in the field of autism studies, critical autism studies, or autism in performance stud-ies – fields already addressed by others more qualified than ourselves in this and other forums (Woods et al. 2018; O’Dell et al. 2016; May 2017) – but rather in the field of allyship studies, proposing approaches by which artists.

All in a row

Alex Oates’ All in a Row is ‘primarily about the parents and carers of a severely disabled autistic 11-year-old child’ (Smyrnios 2019). Autism is typic-ally defined as a developmental disability which has an impact on how an individual speaks, communicates, and interacts with others and with the environment. As Andy Kempe says, the ‘community and medical profession’s understanding of ASD [sic] continues to develop’ (2019, 91), making it diffi-cult to define autism in any singular or homogenising way. Additionally, aut-ism is understood differently in different parts of the world – for example in Australia, from where we write, as compared to in the UK, where All in a Row was created. As in many disability communities, the autistic community

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  5

faces barriers in the form of social, institutional and architectural systems that fail to accommodate neurodiversity, more than neurodiversity per se. This understanding of disability as a social construct is not, however, the focus of All in a Row. Rather, it is intended as a comic but confronting look at the parents’ life as it unravels. The play asks ‘[W]ho is the victim here? Who was the traitor? And who do you blame when you can no longer cope?’ (Southwark Playhouse 2019b) – the ‘traitor’ referring to the person who called social services and the description generally placing disability firmly within a narrative of – to paraphrase Victoria Lewis (2006) – victims and villains. The work is, according to Alice Saville (2019), ‘deliberately warts-and-all’, showing a violent child, frustrated parents, and the failures of the social services system and rules meant to support them. This includes Laurence’s biting and his parents’ endeavours to restrain him ‘in ways that leave bruises’ (Saville 2019). Saville (2019) ventures that such moments ask the audience ‘to silently decide whether you think they’re right’ and says that the play ‘might be very cathartic for people who are struggling to care for disabled people’. This said, critics consistently emphasised the repulsive-ness of the characters’ behaviours, be it the child’s acting out, the parents’ action to restrain him, or the drink and drugs they use to find relief. As HJ Ellis (2019) observes, ‘by the end of the play the support worker has left and the two parents are either stoned or drunk, neither in a truly fit state to be responsible for a child as vulnerable as Laurence’. Saville (2019) suggests the break-up of the family at the end, while problematic, for its suggestion that the parents will now be better off, is perhaps not wholly so given what has come before. What seems to have been an overwhelmingly negative por-trayal of living with an autistic family member sits in contrast to narratives that focus on loving parents who fight for the rights of their children with autism, for example Sarah Ryan’s Justice for Laughing Boy (2017). A small ethnographic study carried out in Korea by Se Kwang Hwang and Helen Charnley (2010) reflects similarly nuanced experiences of siblings of autistic children who ‘argued that living with an autistic brother or sister is not the entirely negative experience implied by predominant [stigmatised] cultural interpretations’ (585). It is, conversely, negative cultural understandings that reigned in All in a Row.

All in a row: the critics’ response

Many critics felt Laurence was a mere ‘catalyst’ for the main plot, there to drive the parents’ drama, not a person with feelings or rights (Saville 2019); a parent-as-victim discourse plays out frequently in Western culture. Moreover, dialogue and actions throughout the play –potentially presented to prompt spectators to reflect – reinforced problematic perceptions of

6  B. HADLEY ET AL.

disability. In one scene regularly cited by reviewers, Laurence’s carer, Gary, describes him as being like a puppy, saying ‘disabled people are animals reincarnated as humans by mistake’ (Saville 2019; May 2019). The parents challenge the sentiment. Yet, as May argues, ‘Gary suggesting this did not contribute to the plot in any way, and its only dramaturgical function seems to be to get audience laughter when the parents respond with disgust’ (May 2019). In another scene, Tamora, who turns out to be the one who phoned social services, ‘wonders whether her son’s autism was caused by some kind of divine punishment because of things she did in the past, and she guiltily expresses that she’s a little excited about a future without him’ (May 2019). Again, critics say, though this might be recognisable, comic, or even cathartic to some spectators, an opportunity to subvert damaging narratives about dis-ability-as-punishment was missed (Saville 2019; May 2019). The behaviour of Laurence’s father Martin is consistently cited as amongst the most troubling in the play: discussing ‘grotesque sex acts in front of his son’ and apparently ‘past caring whether his words are having an impact on this seemingly-not-lis-tening son’ (Saville 2019). Lastly, Martin has been defecating on his wife’s pillow and blaming his autistic son (May 2019), seemingly out of frustration with his home life. Yet, as May (2019) notes, no explanation is explored as to why Laurence may ‘wee on mummy’s pillow’ (Southwark Playhouse 2019b). Examples like this meant, for May (2019) that ‘ableist tropes and stereotypes’ went largely unchecked and without subversion throughout All in a Row. Cathartic moments for carers frustrated with their disabled children were not sufficiently balanced with a disabled person’s perspective.

Another problem for critics is that, even if the problematic representations of disability replayed for the audience are partly challenged at some points, it not by a disabled person. Within the world Oates presents, Saville (2019) says, Laurence’s ‘subjective experience still isn’t made visible’. Laurence has no voice, agency, or relationships with which to accrue agency. Thus, accord-ing to those who saw the work, the dramaturgical and theatrical choices for an imagining of what an autistic child’s world might look like, and how they might express themselves within it, were very limited. For critics, the ques-tion of who speaks onstage dovetails with questions about who speaks in a larger sense in All in a Row – that is, questions about non-disabled authors, directors, and actors telling disabled people’s stories. Saville (2019), for instance, saw lack of effort to engage neurodiverse people in the conceptual-isation, realisation, and interpretation of the work as a root cause of many of the plot problems. ‘By excluding the people you’re talking about from the room,’ she says, ‘you create a space where ableist views can be aired unchal-lenged’ (Saville 2019).

For May (2019), the lack of effort to engage neurodiverse audiences – beyond one relaxed showing in the three-week run (Southwark Playhouse

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  7

2019b) – undermined the ethos that Oates and his company were trying to project with the show. Developed in the wake of an incident in London, where an autistic boy and his family felt discriminated against during a visit to a West End theatre in 2011, relaxed theatre conventions include less rigid conventions around seating, stillness, sound, movement, entrances and exits, more information about what will happen before hand, information in accessible forms like visual stories, and support from staff on hand (Kempe 2019). For May (2019), the spectatorial engagement strategy of All in a Row was limited in its efforts to engage with conventions comfortable for a neu-rodiverse audience.

All in a row: puppetry

Aside from offensive aspects of the script and its characters, the primary cri-tique of All in a Row – levelled by some before the work’s premiere – was based on the puppet playing the role of Laurence, while live actors played the neurotypical characters. As noted, disabled artists have struggled to be cast in both disabled and non-disabled roles (Sandahl 2010, 236), given rea-sons for which include cost, commercial appeal, and the capacity to do things like dream sequences or before-and-after accident sequences – although the audience’s ability to suspend disbelief and accept a manifestly artificial world as real is fundamental to live theatre (Johnston 2019). For Johnston (2019, 2016, 2012), Hadley (2014), Sandahl (2005), and others, the reason theatre training, casting, production, and representation prefer the able body is because it is thought to slip more readily behind the veil of – and thus not disrupt – the illusion. Puppets, too, are perceived to have this capacity to support illusion, as the puppeteer – clad totally in black in the Western tradition – disappears into the background to allow the puppet to take on its own life in a fictional world. The disabled body is presumed incapable of disappearing into the story world in this way.

Though accepted as a kind of actor by audiences, ‘the puppet’s lack of life, or its belonging to a different kind of life’ (Gross 2011, 69) is also univer-sally acknowledged by theorists. For Eileen Blumenthal (1997, 18) puppets are ‘inanimate objects endowed with vital force’ that exist between human life and non-human life or non-life. Practitioners may enlist puppetry pre-cisely for its capacity to convey non-human Otherness, yet the producers of All in a Row seem not to have been cognisant of its dehumanising potential. In an Instagram post published during the work’s early development, puppet designer Si^an Kidd shared a picture of a granite-grey puppet, with empty cavities where eyes would normally be, captioned ‘Finished. Non verbal aut-istic child for a developing new show … #watchthisspace’ (cited Lynch 2019). In a promotional video she added:

8  B. HADLEY ET AL.

Laurence is nonverbal, and the power that puppets have is that they explore movement and can – just with a turn of a head or some degree of small movement – give life and character in a way that you wouldn’t achieve with a human actor. And so, it’s provided a platform for us to explore the characterisation of Laurence in a way that doesn’t feel insensitive. (Kidd in Southwark Playhouse 2019a).

The show’s puppeteer Hugh Purves agreed, saying ‘[h]aving a puppet on stage, telling a story like that of Laurence is, I think, one of the more honest ways that we could portray Laurence’s story without falling into the traps of stereotypes’ (Purves in Southwark Playhouse 2019a).

Kidd’s and Purves’ explanations for the puppetry are contrary to how many critics received the work. In an article for The Guardian, Frances Ryan described casting the ‘grey and mawkish’ puppet as a ‘grotesque step back-wards’ (Ryan 2019). In a context where our culture already sees neurodiverse people as antisocial, insensitive, and even inhuman, this use of puppetry ‘goes to the heart of the dehumanisation that disabled people face – quite literally by representing us as other than human’ (Ryan 2019). Some defended the production by claiming that critics ‘don’t understand or appre-ciate the artform of puppetry’ (May 2019). May (2019) met this defence, stat-ing that ‘on a technical level’ the puppetry was mediocre and distracting: lacking a full body, Laurence was a torso, arms and a head attached to Purves’ waist. May (2019) does concede that the puppet seemed ‘less grey under the theatre lights’ than it did in the press images. Saville (2019) agrees the puppet ‘allows for more subtle characterisation than the press images suggest’. Notwithstanding, May, Ryan, Saville, and others maintained that even if this had been a lively and well-presented puppet, the dehumanising connotation would still constitute problematic representation. It is not that puppetry per se is problematic. The critical point, rather, is that Laurence is represented by, at worst, an object, and at best, a puppet/human hybrid.

The criticism of the puppetry was compounded by the fact that the remaining roles were played by live actors (May 2019). If the story world were exclusively populated by puppets, standing in for all characters, even when puppeteers were visible to the audience, then the puppet’s life-less or life-adjacent status would be less relevant. Both Frances Ryan (2019), and dis-ability researcher Gill Loomes (cited Dex 2019), suggest All in a Row could have been more thought-provoking had it been cast this way. Instead, how-ever, All in a Row establishes exactly what Paul Piris expects spectators to see in a world co-populated by live performers and puppets: ‘a relation of self to Other between the two beings that are ontologically different: one is a subject (in other words, a being endowed with consciousness) and the other one an object (in other words, a thing)’ (2014, 30). While the puppet Laurence may be animated, the very fact that he is a manipulated object

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  9

highlights his Otherness and his lack of agency, compared to the rest of the characters in the story world.

As autistic-identifying scholar Melanie Yergeau says, ‘[m]edical and other dominant narratives efface the personhood of autistic people: autism is med-ically construed as a series of involuntarities- of thought, mode action and being’ (Yergeau 2018, 7). This, for autistic-identifying scholar, critic, and the-atre maker May (2019), ‘is context that Oates should have been aware of when writing this play’. However, Oates’ and his team’s puppet portrayal of Laurence perpetuates this problematic stereotyping of autism, via discourses such as Ole Ivar Lovaas’ descriptions of autistic children as lacking psycho-logical personhood (cited May 2019). Whatever Oates and his company were trying to communicate or bear witness to, for many they failed in their ally-ship to be even aware of significant discourses related to autism.

All in a row: the creators’ reply

Oates, and the Southwark Playhouse, were naturally quick to respond to criticisms of All in a Row. Throughout the debate, the company defended their choices. Their reaction to the criticism of theatre scholars, reviewers, and the autistic community revolved around two main points.

First, both Oates, and Southwark Theatre Artistic Director Chris Smyrnios, stressed that the play is about the parents’ experience, and that ‘theirs was an important story to tell and as valid as anybody else’s’ (Smyrnios 2019). Oates, as author, insisted he had the right to tell the parents’ story, based on his experience as a paid carer. For Oates, the fact that an autistic person might have concerns about co-option of their identity in service of some-body else’s narrative was apparently not enough of a problem to warrant any reconsideration of how one might tell the parents’ or carers’ story. In an interview with the BBC, he conceded that ‘people are making the point that we’re dehumanizing him [Laurence] … and, you know, in a way we are’ (cited May 2019). For Oates, the benefit of telling his story outweighed the risk of engendering negative consequences for the autistic community, in terms of trauma and negative perception of their identity. For commentators, how-ever, this was a ‘missed opportunity when the playwright has talked of want-ing to challenge ideas about disability’ (Ryan 2019), a missed opportunity in which a group that claimed to be allies in fact caused trauma to the autis-tic community.

Second, Oates and Smyrnios (2019) argued that Laurence had to be repre-sented onstage but could not be played by a neurodiverse performer, because of the themes and the physicality in the work. This raised questions about the team’s dramaturgical decisions. As noted, some reviewers found Laurence peripheral to the plot, and were not convinced that the child-

10  B. HADLEY ET AL.

parent violence needed to be portrayed, or portrayed realistically, particularly if this was the main reason a neurodiverse child, adolescent, and/or adult actor could not be employed. In general, much contemporary disability per-formance moves away from realistic representation, precisely to avoid trap-ping disabled people into dominant culture narratives of trauma, tragedy, and pity (Hadley 2014). Laurence’s casting also raised questions about the capacity of neurodiverse actors, and how closely an actor’s disability should align with a character’s to constitute ‘authentic’ casting. Many industry stake-holders, reviewers, and researchers felt the company were ‘underestimating neurodivergent performers’ (May 2019), pointing to the plethora of perform-ers with neurodiversity, developmental disability, learning disability, and intellectual disability – in the UK and globally, from late teens through to late adult – producing high quality performance. They had no doubt a neu-rodiverse artist could play this role, particularly if the company were open to a slightly older actor, an adult playing a child, or an actor with one disability playing a character with another disability, or any combination of those options. Clearly, autistic actors are not a homogenous group, and not all aut-istic actors would have capacity to take on this type of role, but, equally, there are not no autistic actors with capacity to take on such a role. For actor Daniel Monks, the critical aspect of casting disabled characters relates to lived experience of disability, but, he says, this need not be lived experi-ence of the same disability – for instance, in this case, the exact same pos-ition on the autism spectrum. Referring to his own performance as Joseph Meyrick in The Real and Imagined History of the Elephant Man, Monks notes that ‘my walking gait is pretty much identical to his. I have hip dysplasia like he does, and my disability affects my right side as his does’ (cited Malthouse Theatre 2017). For Monks, the parallel experience – ‘the lived experience of living in the world as a disabled person and being Other in the world’ (cited Malthouse Theatre 2017) – is the critical factor in authentic casting, not the exact same diagnosis, given even two people with the same diagnosis are unlikely to have all the same issues, particularly with spectrum conditions like autism.

In Twitter responses to the reviewers who raised the ‘nothing about us without us’ slogan central to disability activism, both Oates and the show’s producer Paul Virides returned repeatedly to the suggestion that the ‘authenticity’ in their work came from their disability-adjacent identities – as people who had worked as paid carers – and their consultation process (Saville 2019; May 2019). Oates had been inspired by the plight of parents and carers of people with autism he observed during a decade working in the latter role (Saville 2019). In a statement posted as series of Tweets, and later reposted in full on the All in a Row is Ableist website, Virides says Oates took five years to write All in a Row, first consulting family and friends with

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  11

autism, and parents of autistic children he had been paid to care for, then inviting (unspecified) autistic people to see a workshop, then making ‘the effort to reach out to specialists or activists, who’ve also given us some important feedback’ (Virides 2019). The latter presumably refers to the National Autistic Society (NAS) (UK), who did later comment on their involve-ment in the consultation and their decision not to support the work (Dex 2019). Virides (2019) goes on to note that ‘[t]here are two members of the team with autism, and a long series of people who’ve acted as consultants during rehearsals who are [autistic], too’. Virides (2019) adds that ‘puppet designer Si^an Kidd is a former carer herself and has used her experience to inform every aspect of Laurence’s development and portrayal’, emphasising her extended research process, without ever specifying the nature of it. Virides (2019) insists that ‘the fingerprints and feedback of autistic people are all over this play, which has been read and reread by so many autistic people, all of whom we are very grateful for’. He declares that Oates and the team were responsive to the feedback of the estimated 40 to 50 autistic people consulted via the process outlined here.

The account of the consultation process Oates and Virides offer is difficult to evaluate. Much of it is framed in terms of unspecified informal feedback from unspecified family, friends, former employers, team members, consul-tants, or ‘specialists and activists’ they reached out to, and unspecified research processes, feeding into the show in unspecified ways, at unspecified points. The one major agency that did participate in the process – appar-ently providing an audience for an early workshop – was not able to support the work. Director of External Affairs for the NAS, Jane Harris, gave a diplo-matic statement on the Society’s involvement with the performance:

The production company behind this play contacted us and we arranged for autistic and non-autistic people to give feedback. We are pleased the production company made two changes in response — one for accuracy and another around representation. However, while recognising some of the play’s strengths, we decided we could not support the play overall due to its portrayal of autism, particularly the use of a puppet to depict the autistic character alone. (Harris cited Dex 2019)

While Virides (2019) says that the team ‘changed some key parts of the script’ in response to feedback and offers this as a sign of effective consult-ancy, the modifications – even if they were presumably satisfactory to others consulted – clearly were not enough to earn the support of the NAS. Here, again, the fact that key stakeholders had problems with the work did not outweigh the creators’ desire to present the work in the way they had chosen. This left commentators and activists suspicious about the level of due diligence underpinning the consultation process.

Throughout the debate, the producers refused to engage with the critics beyond the points outlined here. Rather, they fell back on stock statements

12  B. HADLEY ET AL.

about this being a difficult topic. They urged audiences to attend, become part of the conversation, and then make up their own minds. As Smyrnios (2019) put it ‘we would encourage people to experience the play first-hand and to have a constructive discussion (about what we got right, as well as what we got wrong) and how disability, and particularly in this case, pro-found disability, is represented on stage’. The marketing team then added strategic quotes from less critical reviewers and members of the target audi-ence to the show’s web page, to turn the controversy into ticket sales. On social media, the creative team positioned themselves – whether deliberately or simply ironically – as ‘victims’ doing their best in a difficult situation: they knew this would be a difficult show to do, but they were happy they had done it, despite everything, because the positive responses they did receive validated their efforts.

Consultation, disability adjascent identities, and allyship

Clearly, the debate around All in a Row, and the manoeuvres the producers and their critics took throughout it, represented a clash between two pas-sionately held points of view. Alice Saville, Shaun May, Frances Ryan, and other critics thoughtfully and compellingly describe the problems All in a Row presents, and the pain it has the potential to cause. Some are so wor-ried about this that they include trigger warnings to let neurodiverse readers know the summary of All in a Row they present may be upsetting. ‘The out-pouring of pain by the autistic community shouldn’t be dismissed’, as Jess Thom (2019) says, because it signals that poor representation is not simply an academic problem, it has real impact, on real people, in the real world, both in terms of reinforcing oppression, and in terms of retraumatising. The critics acknowledge that making theatrical work about and/or with and/or for disabled people is difficult. It would, as Saville (2019) notes, be much eas-ier to keep making the stories about white, straight, cisgender, able-bodied people and their attitudes towards the disabled we have always seen onstage, and/or keep having abled-bodied actors present disabled people onstage, for able-bodied audiences to forget or forever delay difficult ques-tions about how we might, for instance, create platforms for non-verbal per-formers to share their experience of the world with us. With All in a Row, what causes such upset is the feeling that the producers are not just rein-forcing oppression, but doing this under the guise of supporting, advocating, or sharing allyship with disabled people, while failing to listen to or acknow-ledge the perspectives of those they claim to support. ‘The conversation around All in a Row is’ thus, above all, as Saville (2019) says, ‘a challenge to its makers to listen’ to a community that does not feel it has been heard.

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  13

Oates, Virides, Smyrnios, and the rest of the production team clearly felt their efforts to consult with family, friends, former employers, an agency, and at least consider feedback – even if they rejected it – did constitute consult-ation. Moreover, they clearly felt their experience of the ‘other side’ of dis-ability trauma, as carers, was important enough that the final choice should be left with them. Their perspective raises two sets of questions that are use-ful to unpack for their potential to point to a mechanism for clarifying the meaning, role, and potential consequences of ‘consultation’ – if not a more fulsome set of principles, protocols, and processes in the future – that may be useful for all those whose work involves telling stories other than their own.

The first set of questions is about what constitutes ‘consultation,’ and whether ‘consultation’ is enough to ensure appropriate engagement. The dis-ability activist movement of the last 50 years, including the ‘nothing about us without us’ slogan, and the emphasis on speaking and choosing for one-self, had led disability social service agencies – particularly government and NGO agencies – to include formalised ‘consultation’ processes in policy, plan-ning, and decision making processes (Goodley 2005). The consultations respond to concerns about government making decisions that impact the lives of disabled people by allowing self-advocates a say in those decisions. Though well-intentioned, these processes have, as Goodley (2005) says, drawn critique. First, consultations can allow government to co-opt the lan-guage of the self-advocacy movement, to give disabled people a limited window to speak back to policy that effects their lives, without actually giv-ing them any opportunity to lead policy or programs. Second, consultations can allow parents and carers to co-opt to language of self-advocacy and lived experience, to speak for disabled people, as though their viewpoints were always the same. This is a particular concern in consultations run by agencies working with people with intellectual, developmental, or learning disabilities. The difficulty is, as Goodley (2005) notes, that parents, partners, siblings, children, and carers who travel through life with disabled people do come to know the barriers they deal with, by proxy. As a result, they want to share those stories too. However, they can forget that their experience is at a remove from the actual experience of disability, and that their advocacy

– from a non-disabled position, with all the extra power and resources that brings – can get so loud that it drowns out the voices of the very people they wished to serve.

This phenomenon, where consultation provides only a narrow window for feedback that does not really change the shape of a program, and where a carer speaks for disabled people, appears to have been part of the problem with All in a Row. The producers’ background in disability social services gave them an awareness of the need for consultation. However, according

14  B. HADLEY ET AL.

to their own statements via Twitter, it seems they did not follow formal mechanisms to gather, record, and respond to feedback, or give parameters to guide decisions about what feedback would or would not be actioned, when, how, and why. Instead, they favoured informal feedback from family, friends, former employers, or unnamed team members and consultants. As May (2019) notes, ‘friends and family are not impartial, and there are reasons why they might say they agree even if they don’t’ – a phenomenon well understood in post-show foyer praise in the theatre industry, and circum-vented in formal consultation processes by things like facilitators, facilitated focus groups, varied response collection tools, or sessions where producers are not present. It seems the All in a Row producers felt their disability-adja-cent identities gave them special insight, and thus did not see a lack of structure, a limited scope for feedback, or proceeding in spite of negative feedback, as problematic. This raises the question of whether a more struc-tured consultation process – including predetermined ways of dealing with stakeholder feedback, and predetermined ways of responding when stake-holders say ‘no’ to a proposed strategy – might be equally if not more important, perhaps counterintuitively, for those with disability-adjacent iden-tities when writing disabled characters. Because, unlike those who may be writing disabled characters with no knowledge at all, who may know what they do not know, authors who feel they are entitled to tell these stories may be less likely to listen to stakeholders saying ‘no’, and thus less likely to see trauma of the sort sparked by All in a Row coming.

The next set of questions the case of All in a Row alerts us to, then, is about the part allies – particularly allies who occupy disability-adjacent iden-tities – play in telling disability stories. And, more specifically, what consti-tutes ethical practices when disability-adjacent allies like Oates decide to write plays like All in a Row. Does an ally with proximity to a disabled person have an automatic right to tell a disabled person’s story, and make the most private and personal details of their experience public, or do they in fact need a stronger and more firmly scaffolded consultation process to avoid ethical issues? Does this work raise awareness, going beyond medical dis-course, to give insight into the person, their family, and their life? Or do they simply turn a disabled person’s life story into a spectacle, or a symbol, or a moral lesson for the majority, reminiscent of what Karyn Ball (2003, 745) called ‘[t]he trauma craze that took hold of critics [in life writing] in the mid 1990s [which] has sometimes led to aggrandizing appropriations of tragic history as a source of moral capital’? As John Paul Eakin says in his study of the ethics of life writing, navigating the ethics of telling stories that belong at once to oneself and to another – in this case, both Oates, as a carer, and the autistic children he cared for – is especially difficult. ‘Because we live our lives in relation to others,’ he says, ‘our privacies are largely shared, making

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  15

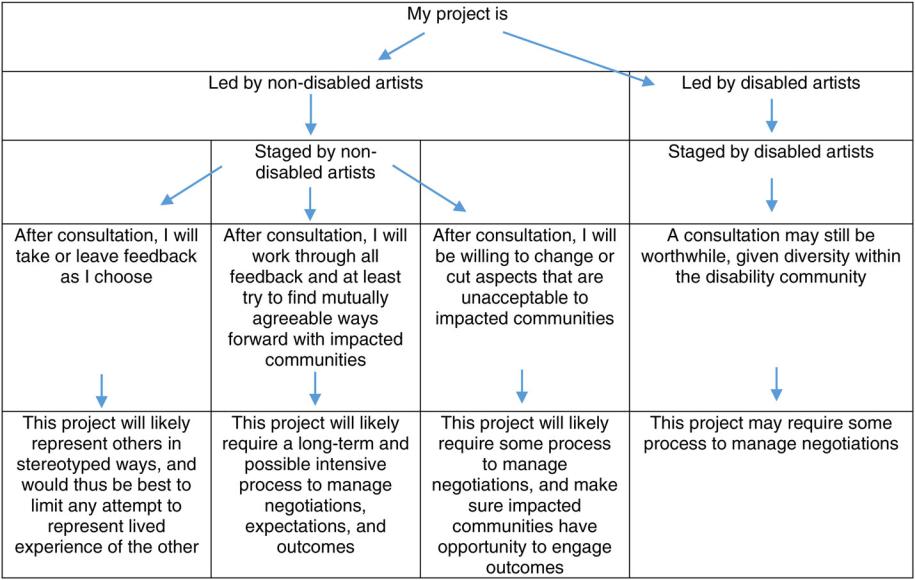
it hard to demarcate the boundary where one life leaves off and another begins’ (Eakin 2004, 8). The concern is particularly acute when the others about whom one writes are disabled, G. Thomas Couser says, because ‘people with disabilities are less likely to live the sorts of lives considered narratable, and are less likely to be encouraged to display themselves in the medium of personal narrative’ (Couser 2000, 307). As a result, the risks, and ethical questions, are in this case heightened, as the disability-adjacent ally’s narrative becomes more prominent than – and even a replacement for – the disabled person’s own narrative in the public imagination.

Though there is a lot of literature on disability allyship generally, there has to date been little direct engagement with the question of how this the-orisation applies in an arts context, particularly in a disability arts context (Hadley 2019, Hadley 2020). For non-arts theorists like Nancy Evans, Jennifer Assadi and Todd Herriott (2005), becoming an ally is not a natural, normal, automatic process, and is thus not as simple as being a parent, partner, child, or carer of a disabled person. Indeed, these theorists – like the com-mentators who critiqued All in a Row – argue that becoming and being an ally is in fact quite difficult. Truly working with disabled people to change oppressive social systems often results in difficulties and drops in one’s own agency and status, to a far greater degree than if one was simply working to share information about disabled peoples’ cause, showing sympathy towards disabled people’s plight, or telling one’s own relational story from one’s own point of view. This, for Alice Saville (2019), Shaun May (2019), Jess Thom (2019), and the other critics, seems to be the main area in which Oates and his team have gone awry. Allowing people with lived experience of autism to lead, or be more empowered collaborators – or even consultants, with the power to veto certain choices – would be more difficult, costly, time-con-suming than telling a would-be ally’s story based on their own sense of insight or entitlement. It might result in different casting, character, drama-turgy, or spectatorial engagement choices, a different depiction of the autis-tic child, and thus a very different version of All in a Row. But this, at least according to non-arts theory, is what differentiates true allyship from mere altruism, advocacy, or narration of one’s own story in which a disabled per-son happens to play a catalyst role. It is what differentiates true allies from ‘allies of convenience’ (Hadley 2019) who align themselves with disability sto-ries because it serves their career or financial interests, or, worse, ‘pseudo allies’ (Evans, Assadi, and Herriott 2005) who claim allyship but undermine the cause they say they support.

Matthew Bolton (2018), an autistic researcher, calls for an altogether bet-ter-balanced conversation around autism activism, observing the ‘growing hostility toward autism professionals and researchers’ (2018, 980); his own position is one that advocates for collaborative research and applauds

16  B. HADLEY ET AL.

agendas for collaborative research with autistic individuals (Bolton 2018). What the trauma seen in responses to All in a Row makes plain is that if a would-be ally is serious about good practice – whether raising awareness of ‘the other side’ of disability, telling disabled people’s stories more directly, or developing platforms to include disabled people in the theatre – mecha-nisms to clarify the meaning, role, and consequences of ‘consultation’ before-hand are critical. The kind of debate seen in response to the play should take place before problematic representations find their way into the world. What is needed, at least, is a mechanism like the decision tree diagram we suggest below, as a sort of common-sense guide for artists and storytellers, to inform the structure of their consultation process, and – based on the commitment to implement feedback – manage expectations around the resulting work. It is also important to acknowledge here the heavy critique levelled at unethical demands for unpaid, informal consultation and educa-tion often expected from disabled and otherwise people (Findlay 2014). As such, fair compensation for collaboration and consultation is implied in the below model.



The critical aspect, with any consultation process, is clarity around where the decision-making power lies. Accounts of the All in a Row consultation process are conflicted, but it appears that Oates and his team did not imagine the community ‘consulted’ might have the power to veto aspects of the show, such Laurence’s puppet portrayal. In future processes, even a sim-ple mechanism, like a decision tree diagram, would allow stakeholders to be clear in their negotiations beforehand. The producers could be clear if they intend or wish to change their representation. The other stakeholders could,

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  17

in turn, be clear if it is or is not a good idea to be telling a story other than one’s own in this way. Whether strengthening frameworks or scaffolds for the consultation process might have made a difference in this case is impos-sible to know – but, in future, it could offer an opportunity to move towards better practice for a range of practitioners involved in this sort of work.

Conclusion

Asking theatre makers to improve their representation of, and relationships with, people with disabilities is, as we noted at the outset, a work in pro-gress. With All in a Row, Alex Oates and his collaborators have produced a work which they say is designed to tell the story of ‘the other side’ of aut-ism, based on a special insight – a special entitlement – they have accrued while employed as paid carers for autistic people. Despite the creators’ stated good intent, the outpouring of pain on sites like the All in a Row is Ableist website shows that, when it comes to representing disabled people on stage, the intent does not change the impact. The neurodiverse commu-nity was clearly hurt by the way they were represented in a work designed to serve someone else’s needs. In responding to the show, neurodiverse commentators asked Oates, his team, and the public at large to listen to them, as those with lived experience of what it is like to be labelled other, less than human, and animal. As the debate played out online, the neurodi-verse community – supported by a host of other disabled and non-disabled theatre artists – took on the role of self-advocates, demanding the space and opportunity to speak that the did not feel they were afforded in All in a Row itself. They also destabilised some of the producers’ claims about neuro-diverse people’s lack of capacity being a factor in decisions about the way this show was produced, and the types of consultancy that therefore stood in place of fuller engagement with autistic performers in leading roles. The authors, and at least some of the other self-identified parents, carers, and stakeholders who claimed the worthiness of the show, did not seem to understand the depth of this pain. Perhaps because, unlike the autistic peo-ple, they do not occupy marginalised identities themselves, only various rela-tionships to those with marginal identities. Some, unfortunately, fell into the language of the pseudo ally, telling neurodiverse people they did not under-stand the point of the work, did not understand the puppet theatre tech-nique, or were being too sensitive about the play.

In this article, unpacking the issues the All in a Row debate raised has led us to propose that a mechanism for understanding the meaning, role, and potential consequences of consultation – up to and including a community saying ‘no’ to an artist’s planned representation – is important for all artists. Such a mechanism is particularly crucial for those who might feel some

18  B. HADLEY ET AL.

special entitlement to tell disabled or otherwise diverse people’s stories. We have presented the beginnings of what such a mechanism might look like, in the form of a simple decision tree diagram, designed to make the poten-tial points of conflict plainly apparent for all stakeholders from the start. For those looking to tell the stories of others, or tell the stories of their engage-ment with others, without infringing on their right to speak for themselves, having this conversation is, we would propose, is a critical step in the pro-cess. Without it, the theatre industry is sure to see repeats of the serious trauma that All in a Row caused for the neurodiverse community, both as a result of the play’s representation, and as a result of the creators’ reluctance to more fully engage with the community on the issues they had with that representation.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Bree Hadley  http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1923-6481 Michael Whelan  http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0776-4228

References

Ball, Karyn. 2003. “Topologies of Trauma: Essays on the Limit of Knowledge and Memory.”

Biography 26 (4): 745–748. doi:[10.1353/bio.2004.0006](https://doi.org/10.1353/bio.2004.0006).

Blumenthal, Eileen. 1997. “The Life and Death of Puppets.” American Theatre 14 (1): 16–19.

Bolton, Matthew J. 2018. “With the Silence of a Thousand Cries: Extremes of Autistic

Advocacy.” Disability & Society 33 (6): 980–984. doi:[10.1080/09687599.2018.1454381](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1454381).

Conroy, Colette. 2009. “Disability: Creative Tensions between Drama, Theatre and

Disability Arts.” Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and

Performance 14 (1): 1–14. doi:[10.1080/13569780802655723](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569780802655723).

Couser, G. Thomas. 2000. “Introduction: The Empire of the "Normal.” American Quarterly

52 (2): 305–310. doi:[10.1353/aq.2000.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2000.0017).

Dex, Robert. 2019. “Critics Say New Play That Uses A Puppet to Portray an Autistic Boy ’Dehumanises’ Those with the Condition.” The Evening Standard, February 8. [https://](https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/all-in-a-row-autism-puppet-southwark-playhouse-a4061241.html) [www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/all-in-a-row-autism-puppet-southwark-playhouse-a4061241.html](https://www.standard.co.uk/go/london/theatre/all-in-a-row-autism-puppet-southwark-playhouse-a4061241.html)

Eakin, Paul John. 2004. “Introduction: Mapping the Ethics of Life Writing.” In The Ethics of

Life Writing, edited by John Paul Eakin, 1–16. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Ellis, H. J. 2019. “All in a Row—An Autistic Review.” HJ Ellis - Finding the Balance between Autism and Life, 16 February. Blog. [https://hjellis.blogspot.com/2019/02/all-in-row-autis-tic-review.html?spref=tw](https://hjellis.blogspot.com/2019/02/all-in-row-autistic-review.html?spref=tw).

Evans, Nancy, Jennifer Assadi, and Todd Herriott. 2005. “Encouraging the Development of Disability Allies.” New Directions for Student Services 2005 (110): 67–79. doi:[10.1002/ss.](https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.166) [166](https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.166).

DISABILITY & SOCIETY  19

Findlay, Carly. 2014. “Don’t Expect Me to Work for Free.” Ramp Up, June 10. [https://www.](https://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2014/06/10/4022534.htm) [abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2014/06/10/4022534.htm](https://www.abc.net.au/rampup/articles/2014/06/10/4022534.htm)

Goodley, Dan. 2005. “Empowerment, Self-Advocacy and Resilience.” Journal of Intellectual Disabilities : JOID 9 (4): 333–343. doi:[10.1177/1744629505059267](https://doi.org/10.1177/1744629505059267).

Gross, Kenneth. 2011. Puppet: An Essay on Uncanny Life. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Hadley, Bree, and Donna McDonald, ed. 2019. Routledge Handbook of Disability Art, Culture, and Media. London: Routledge.

Hadley, Bree. 2014. Disability, Public Space Performance and Spectatorship: Unconscious

Performers. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hadley, Bree. 2019. “Advocacy, Allies, and ‘Allies of Convenience’ in Performance and Performative Protest.” In The Routledge Companion to Theatre and Politics, edited by Peter Eckersall and Helena Grehan, 85–88. London: Routledge.

Hadley, Bree. 2020. “Allyship in Disability Arts: Roles, Relationships, and Practices.”

Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance 25 (2):

178–194. doi:[10.1080/13569783.2020.1729716](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2020.1729716).

Hargrave, Matt. 2015. Theatres of Learning Disability: Good, Bad, or Plain Ugly. Basingstoke:

Palgrave Macmillan.

Henderson, Bruce, and Noam Ostrander, ed. 2010. Understanding Disability Studies and Performance Studies. London: Routledge. doi:[10.1080/10462930701754267](https://doi.org/10.1080/10462930701754267).

Hwang, Se Kwang, and Helen Charnley. 2010. “Making the Familiar Strange and Making the Strange Familiar: Understanding Korean Children’s Experiences of Living with an Autistic Sibling.” Disability & Society 25 (5): 579–592. doi:[10.1080/09687599.2010.489305](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2010.489305).

Johnston, Kirsty. 2012. Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre. Montreal: McGill University Press.

Johnston, Kirsty. 2016. Disability Theatre and Modern Drama: Recasting Modernism.

London: Bloomsbury.

Johnston, Kirsty. 2019. “Great Reckonings in More Accessible Rooms: The Provocative Reimaginings of Disability Theatre.” In The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media, edited by Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald, 21–35. London: Routledge.

Kempe, Andy. 2019. “Beauty and the Beast: Providing Access to the Theatre for Children with Autism.” In The Routledge Handbook of Disability Arts, Culture, and Media, edited by Bree Hadley and Donna McDonald, 89–99. London: Routledge.

Kuppers, Petra. 2003. Disability and Contemporary Performance: Bodies on Edge. New York:

Routledge.

Kuppers, Petra. 2014. Studying Disability Arts and Culture. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Kuppers, Petra. 2017. Theatre & Disability. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lewis, Victoria. 2006. Beyond Victims and Villains: Contemporary Plays by Disabled

Playwrights. New York: Theatre Communications Group.

Lynch, C. L. 2019. “I Read The Script For #Puppetgate and It’s Worse Than We Thought.” The Aspergian, April 26. <https://theaspergian.com/2019/04/26/script-for-puppetgate/>.

Malthouse Theatre. 2017. “The Real and Imagined History of the Elephant Man: Interview with Daniel Monks/Malthouse Prompt.” Vimeo video, August 2. [https://vimeo.com/](https://vimeo.com/228013076) [228013076](https://vimeo.com/228013076).

May, Shaun. 2017. “Autism and Comedy: Using Theatre Workshops to Explore Humour

with Adolescents on the Spectrum.” Research in Drama Education: The Journal of

Applied Theatre and Performance 22 (3): 436–445. doi:[10.1080/13569783.2017.1329651](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2017.1329651).

20  B. HADLEY ET AL.

May, Shaun. 2019. “All in a Row Review.” Shaun May, February 18. Blog. [https://shaunmay.](https://shaunmay.co.uk/allinarow/) [co.uk/allinarow/](https://shaunmay.co.uk/allinarow/)

McCaffrey, Tony. 2019. Incapacity and Theatricality: Politics and Aesthetics in Theatre

Involving Actors with Intellectual Disabilities. London and New York: Routledge.

O’Dell, Lindsay, Hanna Bertilsdotter Rosqvist, Francisco Ortega, Charlotte Brownlow, and Michael Orsini. 2016. “Critical Autism Studies: Exploring Epistemic Dialogues and Intersections, Challenging Dominant Understandings of Autism.” Disability & Society 31

(2): 166–179.

Piris, Paul. 2014. “The Co-Presence and Ontological Ambiguity of the Puppet.” In The Routledge Companion to Puppetry and Material Performance, edited by Dassia N. Posner, Claudia Orenstein and John Bell, 30–42. Oxon: Taylor and Francis.

Ryan, Sarah. 2017. Justice for Laughing Boy: Connor Sparrowhawk – a Death by Indifference.

London: Jessica Kingsley.

Ryan, Frances. 2019. “Casting a Puppet as an Autistic Child Is a Grotesque Step Backwards.” The Guardian, February 12. [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/12/casting-puppet-as-autistic-child-step-backwards-new-play-row-other-actors-played-by-humans) [2019/feb/12/casting-puppet-as-autistic-child-step-backwards-new-play-row-other-actors-played-by-humans](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/feb/12/casting-puppet-as-autistic-child-step-backwards-new-play-row-other-actors-played-by-humans).

Sandahl, Carrie, and Philip Auslander, ed. 2005. Bodies in Commotion: Disability and

Performance. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Sandahl, Carrie. 2005. “The Tyranny of Neutral Disability and Actor Training.” In Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance, edited by Carrie Sandahl and Philip Auslander, 255–268. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Sandahl, Carrie. 2010. “Why Disability Identity Matters: From Dramaturgy to Casting in John Belluso’s Pyretown.” In Understanding Disability Studies and Performance Studies, edited by Bruce Henderson and Noam Ostrander, 454–469. London: Routledge.

Saville, Alice. 2019. “All in a Row.” Exeunt Magazine, February 20. [http://exeuntmagazine.](http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/all-in-a-row-theatre-review/)

[com/features/all-in-a-row-theatre-review/](http://exeuntmagazine.com/features/all-in-a-row-theatre-review/).

Schmidt, Yvonne, and Mark Swetz. 2017. “Editorial.” Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance 22 (3): 301–304. doi:[10.1080/13569783.2017.](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2017.1338650) [1338650](https://doi.org/10.1080/13569783.2017.1338650).

Smyrnios, Chris. 2019. “A Statement from Our Artistic Director about All in A Row.” Southwark Playhouse website. <https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/latest-news/all-in-a-row-statement/>

Southwark Playhouse. 2019a. “All in a Row j Southwark Playhouse j 14 Feb - 9 Mar.” YouTube video, February 6. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L865C2PBYBs>.

Southwark Playhouse. 2019b. “Paul Virides Productions, Evelyn James Productions and United Theatrical Present: All in a Row.” [https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/archive2019/](https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/archive2019/all-in-a-row/) [all-in-a-row/](https://southwarkplayhouse.co.uk/archive2019/all-in-a-row/)

Thom, Jess. 2019. “Who’s in the Rows.” Touretteshero, February 17. Blog. [https://www.tour-etteshero.com/2019/02/17/whos-in-the-rows/](https://www.touretteshero.com/2019/02/17/whos-in-the-rows/)

Virides, Paul. 2019. “Statement from Producer.” [Originally posted to Twitter]. All in a Row is ableist. <https://allinarowisableist.com/statement-from-producer/>

Woods, Richard, Damian Milton, Larry Arnold, and Steve Graby. 2018. “Redefining Critical Autism Studies: A More Inclusive Interpretation.” Disability & Society 33 (6): 974–979. doi:[10.1080/09687599.2018.1454380](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1454380).

Yergeau, Melanie. 2018. Authoring Autism: On Rhetoric and Neurological Queerness.

Durham, NC: Duke University Press.