



**BELVOIR ST  
THEATRE**

# LEARNING RESOURCES

## THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

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17 AUG -22 SEP 2024





# BELVOIR PRESENTS

## THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

Based on the novel by **Mark Haddon**, adapted for stage by **Simon Stephens**  
Directed by **Hannah Goodwin**

This production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* opened at Belvoir St Theatre on Thursday 22nd August 2024.

**Set & Costume Designer** Zoë Atkinson  
**Lighting Designer** Kelsey Lee  
**Sound Designer & Composer** Alyx Dennison  
**Choreographer** Elle Evangelista  
**Puppetry Director** Alice Osborne  
**Vocal Coach** Laura Farrell  
**Assistant Director** Margaret Thanos  
**Stage Manager** Luke McGettigan  
**Assistant Stage Manager** Zoe Davies

With

**Nicholas Brown** as Mr Shears and others  
**Roy Joseph** as Policeman and others  
**Tracy Mann** as Mrs Alexander and others  
**Brandon McClelland** as Ed  
**Daniel R. Nixon** as Christopher  
**Matilda Ridgway** as Judy  
**Ariadne Sgouros** as Mrs Shears and others  
**Brigid Zengeni** as Siobhan

Principal Partner | **Ord Minnett**

*We acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation who are the traditional custodians of the land on which Belvoir St Theatre is built. We also pay respect to the Elders past, present and emerging, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

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## ABOUT BELVOIR

**ONE BUILDING.**

**SIX HUNDRED PEOPLE.**

**THOUSANDS OF STORIES**

When the Nimrod Theatre building in Belvoir Street, Surry Hills, was threatened with redevelopment in 1984, more than 600 people – ardent theatre lovers together with arts, entertainment and media professionals – formed a syndicate to buy the building and save this unique performance space in inner city Sydney.

Thirty years later, under Artistic Director Eamon Flack and Executive Director Aaron Beach, Belvoir engages Australia's most prominent and promising playwrights, directors, actors and designers to realise an annual season of work that is dynamic, challenging and visionary. As well as performing at home, Belvoir regularly takes to the road, touring both nationally and internationally.

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## BELVOIR EDUCATION

Our Education Program offers students and teachers an in-depth look into the work of Belvoir and the theatre-making process.

Belvoir Education offers student workshops, teacher professional development workshops, work experience, VET placements, archival viewings and a wealth of online resources designed to support work in the drama classroom. Our arts access programs assist schools in Regional NSW and Western Sydney to access the company's work.

Explore our education pages at [belvoir.com.au/education](http://belvoir.com.au/education)



# CAST AND CREATIVE TEAM



**Simon Stephens**  
Playwright



**Hannah Goodwin**  
Director



**Zoë Atkinson**  
Set and Costume Designer



**Kelsey Lee**  
Lighting Designer



**Alyx Dennison**  
Composer & Sound Designer



**Elle Evangelista**  
Choreographer



**Alice Osborne**  
Puppetry Director



**Laura Farrell**  
Vocal Coach



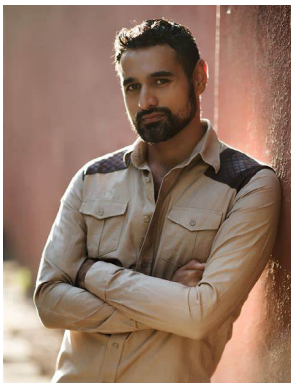
**Margaret Thanos**  
Assistant Director



**Luke McGettigan**  
Stage Manager



**Zoe Davies**  
Assistant Stage Manager



**Nicholas Brown**  
Mr Shears and others



**Roy Joseph**  
Policeman and others



**Tracy Mann**  
Mrs Alexander and others



**Brandon McClelland**  
Ed



**Daniel R. Nixon**  
Christopher



**Matilda Ridgway**  
Judy



**Ariadne Sgouros**  
Mrs Shears and others



**Brigid Zengeni**  
Siobhan

# SYNOPSIS

*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, has been adapted for the stage by Simon Stephens from Mark Haddon's novel. The play centers around Christopher, a 15-year-old who is exceptionally intelligent and brilliant at maths, but struggles with social interactions.

When Christopher discovers the lifeless body of a neighbour's dog, he embarks on a quest to uncover the truth behind the dog's death, despite warnings from his father to leave the mystery alone. As Christopher navigates the investigation, he unravels family secrets that challenge his understanding of trust and safety, leading him on a journey of self-discovery and personal growth.

## CURIOUS INCIDENT | A BILDUNGSROMAN STORY

Bildungsroman, German for "**novel of formation**," captures the transformative journey of a protagonist from youth to adulthood. It's more than just coming-of-age; it's a narrative evolution where characters **confront challenges, make mistakes, and ultimately grow**. Think of it as a literary **cocoon-to-butterfly tale**, where each trial and triumph shapes not just the protagonist, but also the reader's understanding of resilience, identity, and the human spirit's capacity for change.

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As you watch Belvoir's production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, **consider the ways in which this story might be considered a bildungsroman narrative.**



*Daniel R. Nixon (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*



## KEY CHARACTERS

**Christopher:** The protagonist, a 15-year-old boy who is exceptionally intelligent and brilliant at maths, but struggles with social interactions.

**Ed:** Christopher's father, who cares deeply for his son but grapples with his own challenges in understanding and supporting Christopher.

**Judy:** Christopher's mother, now living in London.

**Siobhan:** Christopher's teacher and mentor, who guides him through his journey and serves as a narrator in the play.

**Mrs. Shears:** Christopher's neighbour, whose dog Wellington is found dead at the beginning of the story, setting off Christopher's investigation.

**Mr Shears:** Mrs. Shears ex-husband.

**Mrs. Alexander:** Christopher's neighbour

**Policeman:** A local officer who questions Christopher during the investigation into Wellington's death.

**Reverend Peters:** A vicar who is asked to supervise Christopher's A-Level exams.

**Toby:** Christopher's pet rat.

**Various Ensemble Characters:** These include classmates, train passengers, drunks, policemen, duty sergeants and others.



*Tracy Mann, Ariadne Sgouros, Nicholas Brown & Roy Joseph (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

# LEARNING ACTIVITY 1: TELLING THE TRUTH

In *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, truth plays a central role as Christopher navigates a world often seen through a lens of logic and honesty. Christopher's unwavering commitment to truth challenges societal norms and personal relationships, revealing the complexities of honesty in a world where deception and misunderstandings are all too common.

**As a group, read this poem aloud and discuss what it says about the nature of telling the truth.**

## Tell all the truth but tell it slant — (1263)

By Emily Dickinson

Tell all the truth but tell it slant —  
 Success in Circuit lies  
 Too bright for our infirm Delight  
 The Truth's superb surprise  
 As Lightning to the Children eased  
 With explanation kind  
 The Truth must dazzle gradually  
 Or every man be blind —

1. What does it mean to tell the truth “slant” according to the poem?
2. How does the truth affect an individual if it is, “Too bright for our infirm Delight?”
3. Explain the simile, “As lightning to the Children eased with explanation kind,” and how it relates to the poem’s advice on telling the truth.
4. Do you agree with the poem’s perspective on how one should approach telling the truth? When do you think it’s appropriate to tell the truth “slant”?



Daniel R. Nixon & Matilda Ridgway (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)



## AS A GROUP, READ ALOUD THE FOLLOWING EXTRACTS:

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### EXTRACT: 1 GARDEN

**POLICEMAN 1** Would you like to tell me what's going on here, young man?

*Christopher lifts his head from the ground. There is some time. Christopher looks at the policeman. There is some time.*

**SIOBHAN** I do not tell lies. Mother used to say that this was because I was a good person. But it is not because I am a good person. It is because I can't tell lies.

---

### EXTRACT: 4. POLICE STATION

**DUTY SERGEANT** I've spoken to your father and he says you didn't mean to hit the policeman. Did you mean to hit the policeman?

**CHRISTOPHER** Yes.

**DUTY SERGEANT** But you didn't mean to hurt the policeman?

**CHRISTOPHER** No. I didn't mean to hurt the policeman I just wanted him to stop touching me.

**DUTY SERGEANT** You do know that it's wrong to hit a policeman don't you?

**CHRISTOPHER** I do.

**DUTY SERGEANT** Did you kill the dog Christopher?

**CHRISTOPHER** I did not kill the dog.

**DUTY SERGEANT** Do you know that it is wrong to lie to a policeman and that you can get into a very great deal of trouble if you do?

**CHRISTOPHER** Yes.

**DUTY SERGEANT** Do you know who killed the dog?

**CHRISTOPHER** No.

**DUTY SERGEANT** Are you telling the truth?

**CHRISTOPHER** Yes. I always tell the truth.

**DUTY SERGEANT** Right. I'm going to give you a caution.

**CHRISTOPHER** Is that going to be on a piece of paper like a certificate I can keep?

**DUTY SERGEANT** No. A caution means that we are going to keep a record of what you did, that you hit a policeman but that it was an accident and that you didn't mean to hurt the policeman.

**CHRISTOPHER** But it wasn't an accident.

**ED** Christopher, please.

---

**EXTRACT: 19. SCHOOL**

**SIOBHAN** Did it make you sad to find out that your mother and Mr Shears had an affair?

**CHRISTOPHER** No.

**SIOBHAN** Are you telling the truth?

**CHRISTOPHER** Yes, I always tell the truth. It didn't make me feel sad because Mother is dead. So, I would be feeling sad about something that isn't real and doesn't exist and that would be stupid.

*How does this excerpt illustrate Christopher's cognitive processing of both real and imagined information?*

---

**EXTRACT: 26. HOME**

**ED** Look maybe I shouldn't say this, but...I want you to know that you can trust me. Life is difficult you know. It's bloody hard telling the truth all the time. But I want you to know that I'm trying. You have to know that I am going to tell you the truth from now on. About everything. Because...if you don't tell the truth now, then later on it hurts even more. So...I killed Wellington Christopher.

*What is Ed's relationship with the truth in this moment?*

---

**EXTRACT: 40. INSIDE JUDY'S HOME**

**JUDY** You never wrote to me.

**CHRISTOPHER** I know.

**JUDY** Why didn't you write to me, Christopher? I wrote you all those letters. I kept thinking something dreadful had happened or you'd moved away and I'd never find out where you were.

**CHRISTOPHER** Father said you were dead.

**JUDY** What?

**CHRISTOPHER** He said you went into hospital because you had something wrong with your heart. And then you had a heart attack and died.

**JUDY** Oh my god.

*Judy starts to howl.*

**CHRISTOPHER** Why are you doing that?

**JUDY** Oh Christopher, I'm so sorry.

*What impact does Ed's dishonesty have on Judy?*

---



## EXTRACT: 43. JUDY'S KITCHEN

**ROGER** What's he going to do? There's no school for him to go to. We've both got jobs. It's bloody ridiculous.

*He gives him a strawberry milkshake.*

**JUDY** Roger. That's enough. You can stay as long as you want to stay.

**CHRISTOPHER** It was Mother who gave me the milkshake.

*They look at him.*

It was Mother who gave me the milkshake not you.

*Judy picks the milkshake up.*

You need to shout more loudly at him. Like you're really angry with him not just being nice.

*Judy looks at him. Nods.*

**JUDY** OK.

*She puts the milkshake down. She's much angrier.*

Roger. That's enough. You can stay as long as you want to stay.

*She looks at Christopher examining his response. Expecting more feedback.*

*How does the moment when Christopher directs Judy onstage in the play adaptation allow for a deeper exploration of the relationship between truth and fiction?*

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## EXTRACT: 56. HOME

**CHRISTOPHER** I don't want to talk to Father.

**ED** I'll do you a deal. Five minutes OK? That's all.

*Ed sets the timer for five minutes. It starts ticking.*

Christopher, look... Things can't go on like this. I don't know about you, but this... this just hurts too much. You being in the house but refusing to talk to me. You have to learn to trust me ... And I don't care how long it takes... if it's a minute one day and two minutes the next and three minutes the next and it takes years I don't care. Because this is important. This is more important than anything else. Let's call it... let's call it a project. A project we have to do together. And it will be difficult at first because... because it's a difficult project. But it will get better I promise. You don't have to say anything, not right now. You have to think about it.

*Why do you think Ed decided to lie to Christopher about Judy's death?  
What consequences did this decision have for Ed?*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Christopher interact with the concept of truth throughout these extracts?
2. In what ways does Christopher's perspective on truth differ from that of the adult characters in the story?
3. The writer/adaptor employs verbal repetition and conversational mirroring at several points in the text. Can you identify any of these instances from the extracts provided? Why do you think the writer or adaptor chose to use this technique? What does it emphasise?

## LEARNING ACTIVITY 2 : PAGE TO STAGE

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



PHOTO: JULIAN VICTORIA

SOURCE: [HTTPS://CULTURALBINGE.COM/2023/09/08/INTERVIEW-PLAYWRIGHT-SIMON-STEPHENS-2018/](https://culturalbinge.com/2023/09/08/interview-playwright-simon-stephens-2018/)

One of my obsessions is the spelling of the word 'playwright'. I talk about the complicated presence of the 'ght' in that word all the time, which confused me for years. It doesn't make any sense until you realise that the verb from which it stems isn't the verb 'to write', like writers do, it is to 'wright' like a wheelwright has wrought a wheel, or a shipwright has wrought a ship. **So a playwright has wrought a play – we're shapers, we're makers. We're not writers, we're not people of letters – we make drama, we shape and craft it.** It's more like woodwork. 'Wrights' make things out of wood. If plays were made of iron we'd be 'smiths' – playsmiths. Like wordsmiths. Words are made of iron, plays are made of wood.

- SIMON STEPHENS



## FROM CHAPTER 211

Below is an excerpt from Mark Haddon's novel depicting the moment when Christopher arrives in London. On the following page is a section from Simon Stephen's adaptation, portraying the same scene for the stage.

be Mother and the policeman in Swindon had phoned her up with the phone number I told him. But he said, 'A policeman.' And I said, 'I know.' And he said, 'Oh. Right.' And then he said, 'You wait here, then, and I'll go and tell them,' and he walked back down the side of the train. So I carried on walking. And I could still feel the feeling like a balloon inside my chest and it hurt and I covered my ears with my hands and I went and stood against the wall of a little shop which said **Hotel and Theatre Reservations Tel: 0207 402 5164** in the middle of the big room and then I took my hands away from my ears and I groaned to block out the noise and I looked round the big room at all the signs to see if this was London. And the signs said

Sweet Pastries **Heathrow Airport Check-In Here Bagel Factory EAT excellence and taste YD!** sushi **Stationlink** Buses **W H Smith MEZZANINE Heathrow Express** Clinique First Class Lounge **FULLERS easyCar.com The Mad Bishop and Bear Public House Fuller's London Pride Dixons** **Our Price** Paddington Bear at Paddington Station **Tickets** Taxis **†† Toilets** First Aid **Eastbourne Terrace** **ington** **ton Way Out Praed Street The Lawn Q Here Please** Upper Crust Sainsbury's **Local i Information** GREAT WESTERN FIRST **@ Position Closed Closed Position** Closed Sock Shop Fast Ticket Point **2** **Millie's Cookies**

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Coffee **FERGIE TO STAY AT MANCHESTER UNITED Freshly Baked Cookies and Muffins** Cold Drinks **Penalty Fares** Warning **Savoury Pastries** Platforms 9-14 **Burger King Fresh Filled!** the reef<sup>®</sup> café bar **business travel** *special edition* TOP 75 ALBUMS Evening Standard

But after a few seconds they looked like this:

Sweathr **ow** **Aircheck-lagtory EAenceand taste** **YD!** suUser **Heesort CWHSmith EANEIN\$taInH\*ioeadBho** **athrnie Firlass LoULLERNreHeBSeasyCar.com TheMpanard** **Bebile Fuler's LonPrnd<sup>o</sup>idePaiesstrDzzixons OurisPPurdEboi** **ceicHousPatCngtoneaswatPoagtonTetsTaelFac†Toil** **eddists First** **BungfeFi5us\*\*HPDNLeTerrace** **ingtonW†astayStatio** **linkOutC** **losed** **†** **qed3iniBr1uowo[CliPraicxiskedPointDrS** **streetTheLyu** **awHea** **CrustMuflyB** **akl6dE** **TonClose** **excell** **e<sup>to</sup>essnQinrePlek4shSaiesUp** **†** **←** **pensbury'sLcidSoh** **ktClickmationREATM++ASTERCookiesWESTEFinsCojRN** **2FningSTanl@RST** **P0allInforositioNCH3<** **\*EnSTAYATS** **3hopFast** **Positd** **Penie** **→** **sPloNla8** **4** **tofoe9s** **Wef<sup>c</sup>cusCoffReosVeledPosi** **tnesskix** **edcoreShoj** **✕** **3** **mi** **5ALBiatedMiafébarbeeanCrKl'geing** **F3illeFFT0UR** **mEGL** **Es9TEDFrese** **sanaltyFarmingSa** **vous<sup>pa</sup>stri14Bur** **zd!the** **resit** **rh** **aspectionTOP&UMSEyedard**

because there were too many and my brain wasn't working

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1. What are the unique characteristics, or *distinctive features*, of Mark Haddon's storytelling in this moment?

- 
- 
-

Now, as a group, read aloud these two pages of Simon Stephen's script. Consider how the playwright has **"wrought", or re-shaped Haddon's words.**

### 37. PLATFORM

SIOBHAN Left, right, left, right, left, right...

CHRISTOPHER Left, right, left right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left, right, left.

*These Voices are also recorded*

VOICE ONE	Sweet Pastries.
VOICE TWO	Heathrow Airport Check In Here
VOICE ONE	Bagel factory
VOICE FIVE	Eat.
VOICE THREE	Excellence and taste
VOICE FOUR	Yo! Sushi
VOICE ONE	Stationlink
VOICE TWO	Buses
VOICE FIVE	WH Smith
VOICE FOUR	Mezzanine
VOICE ONE	Heathrow Express
VOICE TWO	Clinique
VOICE THREE	First Class Lounge.
VOICE FOUR	Fullers
VOICE FIVE	easyCar.co,
VOICE TWO	The Mad Bishop
VOICE THREE	And Bear Public House
VOICE FOUR	Fuller's London pride
VOICE ONE	Dixons
VOICE TWO	Our Price
VOICE THREE	Paddington Bear at Paddington Station
VOICE FIVE	Tickets
VOICE ONE	Taxis
VOICE TWO	First Aid
VOICE FOUR	Eastbourne Terrace
VOICE TWO	Way Out
VOICE ONE	Praed Street

VOICE FIVE	The Lawn
VOICE THREE	Q Here Please
VOICE FOUR	Upper Crust
VOICE ONE	Sainsbury's
VOICE FIVE	Local information
VOICE THREE	Great Western First
VOICE ONE	Position Closed
VOICE TWO	Closed
VOICE FOUR	Position Closed
VOICE THREE	Sock Shop
VOICE FOUR	Fast ticket Point.
VOICE FIVE	Millie's Cookies
VOICE ONE	Coffee
VOICE TWO	Fergie to Stay at Manchester United
VOICE THREE	Freshly Baked Cookies and Muffins
VOICE TWO	Cold Drinks
VOICE FOUR	Penalty Fares
VOICE ONE	Warning
VOICE THREE	Savoury Pastries
VOICE FOUR	Platform 14
VOICE FIVE	Burger King
VOICE TWO	Fresh Filled
VOICE THREE	The Reef Café Bar
VOICE FOUR	Business travel
VOICE ONE	Special Edition
VOICE TWO	Top 75 Albums
VOICE FIVE	Evening Standard

*As the chorus becomes more cacophonous Christopher finds it more difficult to continue to walk. Christopher stops. Rests his head against a box. Puts his hands over his ears. A Station Guard approaches him.*

STATION GUARD                      You look lost.

*Christopher pulls out his Swiss Army knife.  
The Guard backs away.*



# PRODUCTION ELEMENTS

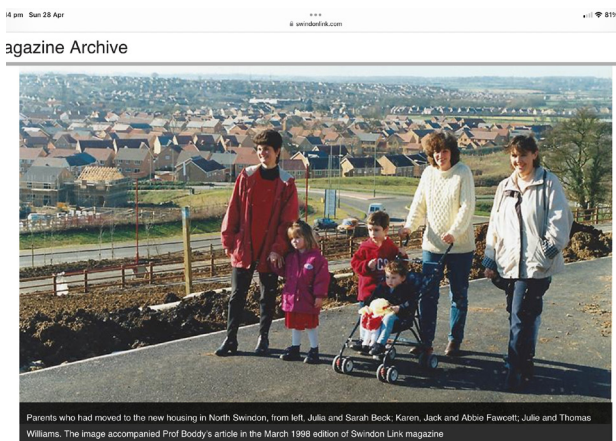
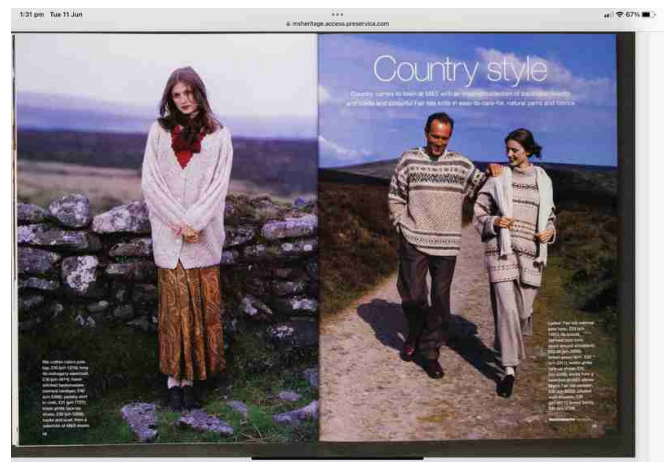
The elements of production are the technical and visual elements used to manipulate the elements of drama in order to effectively tell a play's story. In these notes we are going to look at the set and costume design from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

## SET AND COSTUME DESIGNER

**ZOË ATKINSON**

In preparing to design costumes for *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, designer Zoë Atkinson drew upon a variety of sources to capture the distinct sartorial flavour of 1990s Swindon, England. Below are images she collected from magazine archives, clothing catalogues and archival footage from the Queen's visit to Swindon in 1998.

## REFERENCE IMAGES





Reference images are used by designers to communicate aesthetic concepts with the director or to the cast. These might communicate a moment in the play, or an overall texture or style.



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REGULAR: sizes S(8), M(10-12), L(14-16); XL(18-20). State S, M, L, XL.

40 E 82074F-Royal/Black/Red jacquard

40 E 82077F-Jade/Royal cable

40 E 82076F-Red/Black cable

40 E 82078F-Black/Red cable

Wt. 0.50 lb ..... \$11.99

HUSKY: sizes M(10-12); L(14-16); XL(18-20); XXL(22). State M, L, XL, XXL.

40 E 82079F-Royal/Black/Red jacquard

Wt. 0.50 lb ..... \$13.99



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1998 JCPenney Christmas Book Page 261

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Size Catalog No. Each 2/more, ea.  
Regular JP 525-3950 D 40.00 41.99

**B & C New Levi's® silverTab™ jeans and khakis.\*** Zip fly. Washable. USA, imported or imported of U.S. components. (1.50 lbs.)

**B Baggy-fit corduroy jeans.** Plain front, 5-pocket styling, 6-wale cotton/polyester corduroy. Not in waist 20.  
Colors: black, gray, green, tan.  
Size Catalog No. Each 2/more, ea.  
Regular JP 011-4454 Z 56.00 41.99

**C Cotton twill cargo khakis.** Baggy fit, full front 13 1/2" leg openings. Two front, two back button-through, and two side cargo pockets.  
Colors: moss, khaki, bone.  
Size Catalog No. Each 2/more, ea.  
Regular JP 011-1203 Z 50.00 41.99

**D New Levi's® silverTab™ polo shirt.\*** Chainstitch knit in 100% cotton jersey. Button placket. Stripe detailing on shoulders and sleeves. Washable. USA or imported. (1 lb.)  
Colors: 58 alaband; 04 cayun.  
Regular (S 8"-5 11/16"; M 38-40 chest); L(42-44); XL(46-48)  
Size Catalog No. Each 2/more, ea.  
Regular JP 525-4008 D 40.00 41.99

**E "Straight and relaxed" cotton denim jeans.\*** Relaxed fit with straight legs, 5-pocket styling, 17 1/4" leg openings. Zip fly. Washable. USA, imported or imported of U.S. components. (1.50 lbs.)  
Colors: black, dark indigo, lt. indigo, stonewash.  
Size Catalog No. Each 2/more, ea.  
Regular JP 011-4462 Z 45.00 41.99

**Sizes for B & C**  
Regular (S 8"-5 3/4"; Waist 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38 with inseams 30, 32, 34.

**Sizes for E**  
Regular (S 8"-5 3/4"; Waist 28 with inseams 30, 32. Waist 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 36, 38 with inseams 30, 32, 34. Waist 30, 32, 34, 36 with inseam 36.

\*Save on any combination of items priced "\$2 or more" from pages 250-259.

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**D Blonde Polo Shirt**  
**E Stonewash Jeans**

**Additional colors for E**  
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Dark Indigo  
Lt. Indigo  
Stonewash

men's 261

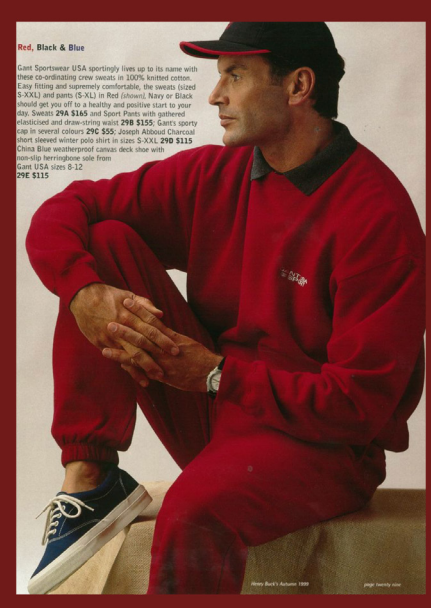
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"It is about not illustrating character. But rather, providing each performer with a set of clothing, a uniform, which has enough transitional capability for them to transform as they shift between different characters." - Zoë Atkinson



*Reverend  
Peters*



*Duty  
Sergeant*



*Drunk  
#2*



*Uncle  
Terry*

Take a look at the designer's costumes sketches for actor Nicholas Brown, playing four characters throughout the play: Reverend Peters, Duty Sergeant, Drunk #2 and Uncle Terry.

Costume Designs, by Zoë Atkinson



Now look at these four sketches for Roy Joseph, an actor playing three roles throughout the show: Policeman #1, Mr Thompson and Man with Socks. How has the designer utilised layering in order to give the actors felxibility to shift between characters?



*Policeman  
#1*



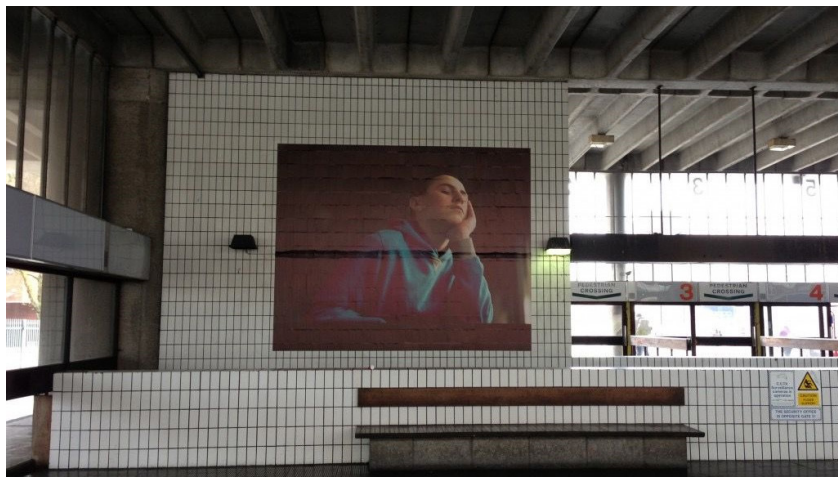
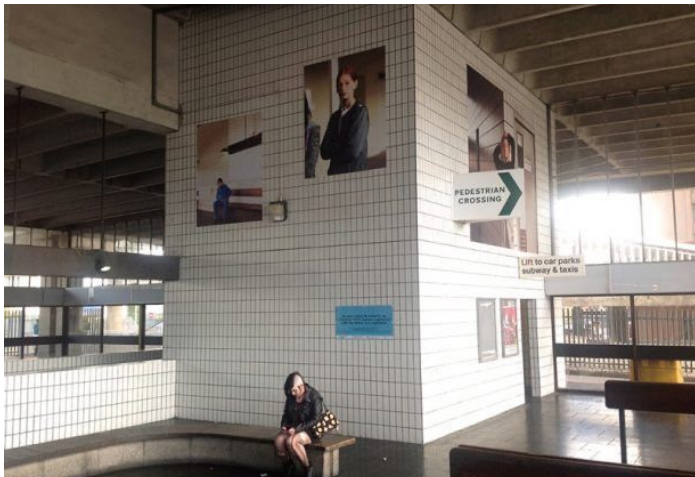
*Mr  
Thompson*



*man with  
socks*

## SET REFERENCES

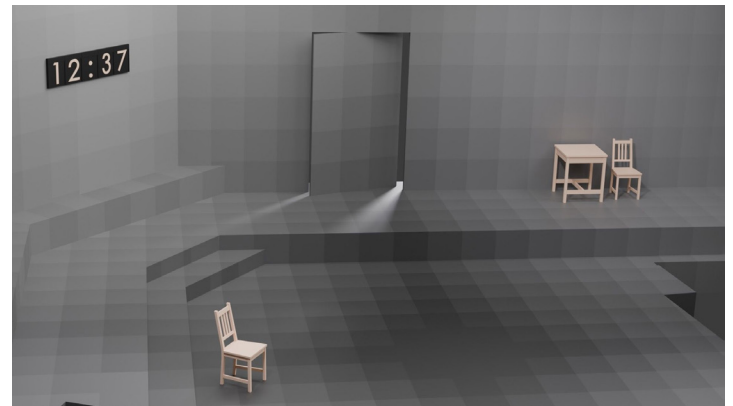
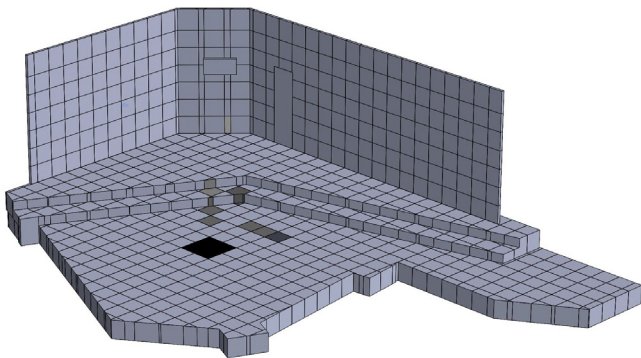
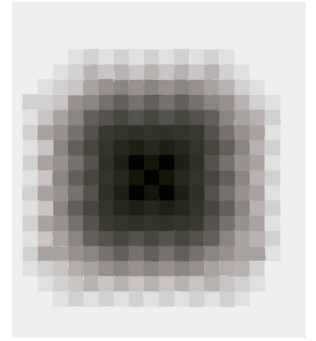
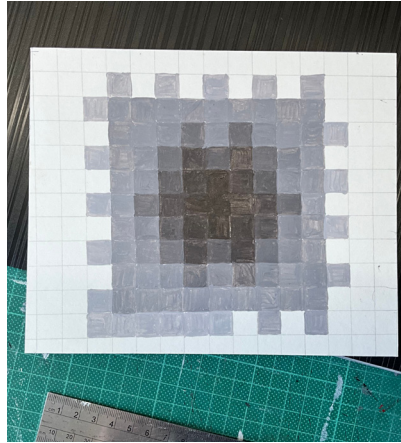
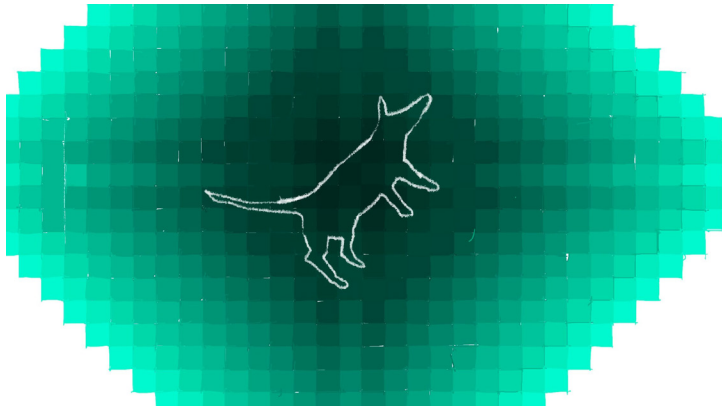
Zoë Atkinson, the set and costume designer, gathered these reference images while brainstorming ideas for the set design of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*. What visual elements do you think she was drawn to?



Reference images collected by Zoe Atkinson



# SET DESIGN



*Digital and hand-made set models for The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time by Zoë Atkinson*

1. What aspects of the designer's set design were influenced by her initial reference images?
2. What are some of the distinctive features of this set design? Consider her use of line, colour, levels and space.
3. Based on the images shown, what do you imagine the designer's process was in developing this design?



# IMAGES OF THE SET IN PRODUCTION



Set Design by Zoë Atkinson



*Set Design by Zoë Atkinson*

1. How is the set different from the early models?
2. Was there anything that surprised you about the way the set looked or worked?
3. In what ways did the set help the audience enter Christopher's perspective?
4. How were different locations represented on the set?



# REHEARSING: THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



*Brandon McClelland, Tracy Mann, Nicholas Brown, Roy Joseph, Ariadne Sgouros & Daniel R. Nixon (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

1. Describe what you see in the photo above.
2. What do you think is happening in this scene? Give reasons for your answer



*Brandon and McClelland and Daniel R. Nixon (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

1. Describe what you see in the photo above
2. What do you think the relationship is between these characters?





*Creative Team of The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

1. What do you think is happening in this moment?
2. What evidence is there that this is a rehearsal?



*Daniel R. Nixon (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

1. Describe what you see in the picture above.
2. What do you think is happening in this moment? Give reasons for your answers.

# INTERVIEW WITH SARAH WILSON

*Sarah Wilson is a playwright and PhD student at the University of Queensland. Her PhD investigates playwriting with autistic form, and her broad research interest is the impact of silencing and erasure on theatre by, for and about marginalised groups. She was invited by Belvoir to observe the rehearsal process of **The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time**.*

.....

## **What first sparked your interest in the intersection between theatre and autism?**

Although I have some family and friends who were diagnosed with autism in childhood, I was only formally diagnosed with autism myself in the middle of my Honors studies. At the time, I was already a working playwright, and my academic focus was queer theatre. A natural part of receiving an adult diagnosis, I think, is the phase where you keep looking back at your life through this new lens, making sense of things. I joke now that I got the diagnosis and thought, "I need to figure out what this means for my playwriting practice, so when I apply for my PhD, I'll make it about that and maybe get a stipend for figuring it out."

## **What can the experience be like for someone on the autism spectrum when their needs and perspectives aren't considered in the writing, devising, or directing process?**

Most often, as a theatregoer, it's some combination of frustrating and overwhelming, especially when the theatre is purportedly about an autistic person.

In terms of frustration: I'm resistant to simplistic ideas of "authentic" representation, but I think most people can understand why it's frustrating to see yourself represented inaccurately, shallowly, or exclusively in a tragic way.

In terms of overwhelm: A common mantra in the autistic community is "nothing about us without us." Although ideally, autism accessibility would be considered in all theatre productions, nothing says "without us" quite like a play about autism that is fundamentally inaccessible to autistic people. Sensory overload/overwhelm is exhausting and often painful. Unclear social expectations pose a logistical barrier and are also an entirely unnecessary source of anxiety.

As an artist, I can tell you that theatre is a hugely social industry with a lot of unspoken communication and ritual. I have low support needs, am speech-able, and have a high masking\* ability, but working in an environment where my support needs aren't met still burns me out quickly. Theatre is a special interest to me—like Christopher and his maths—and yet, despite enjoying myself thoroughly, I used to get horrible tension headaches or end up needing to sleep ten or more hours a night when I was in rehearsals for a show. In many ways, that's a privilege, too. I can mask and I can push through, whereas many other autists simply wouldn't have the opportunities I've been given because they are more visibly disabled or literally cannot participate unless the environment changes (no matter how much they want to).

All that said, I'm encouraged by the increasing prevalence of relaxed/low-sensory theatre performances, and that low/multi-sensory retreats at performance venues are becoming more common too. I've also had a wonderful, headache-free time observing *Curious Incident*, and I'm immensely grateful to Hannah Goodwin and the team for not only letting an academic in to observe their process but for how considerate and accepting they have been of my access needs while doing so.

(\*to mask = to disguise autistic traits)

## What are three key things theatre makers should consider when creating inclusive theatre?

If I had to give my top three tips for inclusive theatre-making, they would be:

1. Start thinking about inclusion from the beginning. Creatives don't use bright lights and loud music for no reason, so my research really asks, "What are you going to replace that with so that relaxed performance audiences aren't getting a worse version of the show?" Research in this area indicates that the earlier artists and companies start thinking about access, the more it becomes integrated into the show rather than feeling like a disjointed afterthought.
2. Imagine the people you're trying to include as individuals. This goes both for the way you think about characters and how you imagine people who will be trying to access your show. For example, I think it's much more instructive to think "Sarah really hates the smell of herbal cigarettes and haze" than "autistic people can be hypersensitive to sensory input," whether you're trying to represent me or trying to work out how to make sure I can see your show without becoming overwhelmed.
3. Get excited! I think people often feel like making their theatre more inclusive means getting told off or having their creative vision spoiled by the no-fun police. In my experience, it really helps to shift your perspective and get excited about learning new things, trying new techniques, and seeing how many more people can now participate in creating and conversing about your art.

## Can you share some of your observations from the *Curious Incident* rehearsal room?

Put simply, my research looks for plays that use autistic communication traits to convey dramatic meaning. I have a number of specific things that I look for (called "autistic poetics"), but of course, the *Curious Incident* team isn't familiar with these. One of the most fascinating things to observe has been how the team nonetheless keeps getting drawn to moments of autistic poetics and expressing a sense that they are particularly important.

A really beautiful observation I've made, which is technically outside my scope of research but is nonetheless encouraging as an autistic artist, is how much the whole rehearsal room has benefited from accessibility measures like the breakout room, stim toys/fidgets, and the single conversation rule (to name only a few). While the benefit to neurodivergent artists would be reason enough to implement these, it's great that other people in the room have been able to recognize these as things everyone can utilize to produce their best work.

## What are your hopes for the future of Australian theatre?

My biggest hope is that disability access of all kinds becomes increasingly normalised. It's my opinion that art is a fundamental human need, and so it's also my opinion that everyone deserves access to art as part of a recognition of their humanity. My other big hope is that neurodivergent and disabled artists will increasingly be able to tell stories informed by these identities but not solely defined by them. Being a woman, queer, and autistic/having ADHD all affect how I move through the world, and so of course they influence my artistic practice and of course I love to see these identities celebrated! That said, marginalised theatre makers aren't just good at telling marginalised stories. We are artists for all occasions!



2024, Photography by Brett Boardman



# DISTINCTIVE FEATURES: STANDARD ENGLISH EXERCISE

What does it mean for something to be distinctive?

Something that is distinctive is **interesting or unique**. It implies that the thing (whether a novel, play, or film) possesses **strong characteristics, features, or qualities** that **make it stand out**.

Identify five key moments from **Mark Haddon's novel** in the table below. Then, in the second column, jot down some of the **distinctive features** of these moments.

KEY MOMENT	DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

Now, reflect on these **five key moments** in Belvoir's stage adaptation of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*.

Next to each image, note what you recall as the **distinctive features**: Ask yourself, "What was memorable about this moment?" This might involve aspects of lighting or sound, decisions made by the costume designer, or notable actions performed by the actors on stage.

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.





# POST SHOW DISCUSSION

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



*Daniel R. Nixon (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

**How does the play explore themes of self-discovery?**



*Daniel R. Nixon & Matilda Ridgway (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

**How would you describe the relationships between the characters in this play?**



*Daniel R. Nixon & Brigid Zengeni (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

**How does the play explore themes of isolation and connection?**



*Brigid Zengeni, Brandon McClelland, Tracy Mann, Nicholas Brown Ariadne Sgouros, Daniel R. Nixon & Roy Joseph (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*

**How did your perception of the characters change throughout the show?**



What moment in the play had the most impact on you and why?

PROGRAM

TEXT

DESIGN

PRODUCTION

MEDIA



*Daniel R. Nixon and cast (2024, Photography by Brett Boardman)*



## LIVESTREAM RECORDING

Hear from some of the artists involved in creating *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime* at the Belvoir Briefing.

[WATCH NOW](#)

## VISUAL STORY | ASSESSIBILITY GUIDE

This guide provides information about Belvoir St Theatre and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*. Becoming familiar with a new environment or situation makes it more predictable, thereby helping to alleviate anxiety and stress.

[READ NOW](#)

## DIRECTOR INTERVIEW

Listen to Director Hannah Goodwin talk about her production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*.

[WATCH NOW](#)

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