

Abstract Artistic View on Autism: Performers on the Spectrum

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Research Essay

Actors with mental disabilities have the power to change the mindsets of the audiences watching their performances. Stories on stage featuring characters with mental disabilities, alongside performers who experience mental disabilities themselves, have the power to open their audiences' eyes to a different point of view about what it is to live differently abled.

One example of this is the musical *Dear Evan Hansen*, which deals with Social Anxiety Disorder. The character Evan Hansen has Social Anxiety Disorder. His psychologist suggests that he write a letter every day to himself to make sure that he is okay. Evan tries every day to make some friends. The only friends that Evan makes were Jared, Alaina, and Connor, who is also a loner. Connor writes his name on Evan's cast on his arm, which signifies that Evan finally has a friend to call his own. Then Evan finds out that Connor has committed suicide. This inspires Evan to create the Connor Project to make sure that Connor's memory was alive and everyone matters. The Connor Project shows the characters in the show that people mattered in life. It also allows Evan to take action. The project was his chance to make his presence known. He did get help from his other friends, Alaina and Jared to make the project. The three friends went to the Murphy house to tell the Murphy parents what they had planned for the project. The parents thought the friend's idea was a really good one. Cynthia Murphy gave Evan Connor's necktie as a sign of remembrance and honor. I noticed that in the musical there was a sense of disappearance. There was the song "Disappear", when the character Evan is worried that he might be forgotten. The event started off with an assembly. Evan talked about how he was alone and he and Connor

were friends and tells the Apple Orchard story. The video of the event went viral. Letter exchanges between Evan and Connor that were going back and forth to show Connor's parents that Evan and Connor had a friend connection between them. Life for High School students is already hard enough. Evan and Alaina launched a Crowdfunding campaign to reopen the apple orchard. Evan and Alaina need to raise \$50,000 to reopen the orchard.

In the case of this play, Evan Hansen was a high school student, 17 years old who probably had more struggles than the others in the entire play. Once you've experienced life in the shoes of someone who is disabled, when you get back in your own, you'll realize your life isn't so bad after all. The Actors who are playing these roles in the movie was a little bit of a problem because they probably weren't autistic in real life despite their great portrayals and their great work, which was probably a threat and an insult to the autistic community. The play explores the things that people do when the social anxiety diagnosis hits: Stuttering, messing with ears, trembling fingers are clear signs when the social anxiety is triggered. Some sources claim that the movie version of *Dear Evan Hansen* are very controversial. The Washington Square news called the movie an "Embarrassment". "Dear Evan Hansen" made Ben Platt shine on Broadway, but the film breaks him into pieces. The director, the creative team and the producers — one of which is his dad — decided that 28-year-old Platt was the best person to play a 17-year-old high schooler. They were wrong. Caked under a thousand pounds of makeup, Platt looked like a cross between a horrifying monster and a slice of angel food cake" (Lay). The producers had an idea to reprise Ben Platt for the film version of *Dear Evan Hansen*. It feels like Evan Hansen was in a deep pit, and all the lies that he was

experiencing was getting deeper and deeper. The post found these scenes “Cringeworthy.” Turns out in the Movie, Ben Platt actually looks older than his Character. “Having first played the role onstage in workshops at age 20, the now 28-year-old Platt looks 40” (Lay). The producers didn’t even pay any attention to the other qualified actors which is kind of upsetting because they work just as hard as Ben did to fill his Shoes. There was nepotism that was used because Ben Platt’s father was the leading producer for the show. Another source says that the movie version was horribly developed and the plot line was confusing enough. There was also a lot of backlash the actor faced from Twitter and the 2021 international Film Festival early on. According to the Iowa Daily, Ben doesn’t have mental disabilities in the first place. He just uses Acting Techniques on stage, as for film cameras it was probably too much Drama. “It was also noted that he seemingly was using acting techniques that would probably work for the stage where the audience was seated quite far away, but for a film camera, seemed too dramatic” (Scott). Even though Ben Platt is a terrific actor and singer, he is too old to play a high school character. Looks like Ben Platt peaked when it came to the High school age. The Idea of Ben reprising his Role proved less effective. It didn’t work.

Another example of a play, with a disability in it is *Next To Normal*. It is about a woman who suffers from Bipolar Disorder. Her name is Diana Goodman. She lived in the suburbs while she was diagnosed with this disorder. She was having delusions of her dead son, Gabe: she thinks that he is alive when in reality he died 16 years ago. He died as a baby, but Diana Goodman saw him as an 18 year old teenager. Diana visits Dr. Madden, despite many attempts of treatment, nothing has changed. Diana decided to leave Dan, and move in with her parents for a little while. With this move that she

made, looks like a blessing in disguise. She could get away from all the drama she faced, all the problems she had to deal with and all of the bipolar episodes she had to endure during her time in the Goodman household. The play has a bittersweet ending. Looks like Dan was turning back time as he went to see Gabe as he looked back during his life time, they finally see each other, talked for a bit and then Gabe vanished. Kind of like a Christmas Carol reference when Ebenezer Scrooge who face his past which looks like a dream sequence. Only difference was Dan could see Gabe. In Ebenezer's past, people couldn't see or hear the present Scrooge at that time. With this Dan, must have been dreaming too, not just Diana. Turns out Diana also used prescribed drugs that deal with her Bipolar disorder. Her drowsiness and sexual dysfunction shows in her character. Maybe Diana's under a lot of stress. Many mothers and women experience stress in making sure their children will succeed in life. According to the Nola Website and Karen Baker, there was an actor from that play who was actually diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder. His name is Shannon Williams, who played the Role of Dan Goodman. He had Bipolar Disorder for 25 years and was Struggling for some time. To him, being in the *Next to Normal* play was very personal to him. "This is very much a passion project for me," Williams said. "I've been bipolar for 25 years; I've been on the round robin of meds. It's funny — we have a song in the show called my psychopharma; it lists all the drugs Diana (his wife in the show) has been on. ... I've been on all of them but one" (Baker,1). This made the play more effective because the actor Shannon Williams could relate to the play more often. He knows what it's like and living in the play is second nature to him.

One more example of a play with a mental disability is called *All in a Row*. It premiered at the Southwark Playhouse in London in 2019. The theatre only has 100 seats in the small Blackbox and 200 seats in the large Blackbox. *All in a Row* was performed in the large 200 seat Blackbox Space. It was one of the lesser known plays that was yet to be discovered at the time. It's a small production that uses a puppet to represent an 11 year old boy with autism. Turns out that the main character Lawrence who lives in a world where people treat him different just because he's different from everyone else. Lawrence Represented the puppet of the autistic boy. Also, there was the time that Laurence and his family were watching the film *Finding Nemo*. Those two shows alone were really similar. Both of them have caring nurturing fathers that care a little too much. In the end, they both learn to let go, and somehow let them fly free. Laurence's body is somewhere in the middle when it comes to being a kid who exhibits good behavior and bad behavior. In his case he is in the gray area. One moment he is a good kid, next thing you know he lashes out of nowhere. The two parents, were doing all they could to help their autistic son.

Ultimately, it was revealed that Tamora calls the Social Services for residential schooling. Turns out the bite mark on her was the last straw when it came to taking drastic measures. She didn't know what else to do to make the pain stop and help her son. As it turns out, the call to Social Services for residential housing served as a blessing in disguise. Even though Tamora and father Martin loved their son very much, they couldn't take much control of him forever. They realized that he had to grow up sooner or later and to get help from professionals. Who knows maybe there are other people in the residential school that were just like Laurence who are suffering from

autism themselves. They could relate to Laurence and turn into lifelong friends. As for the parents, at least things worked out for them. They made up just like any parental couple would. As they were sitting now watching the end of *Finding Nemo*, they knew that they need to let him go. There was a Helen Keller Reference when it came to the Bruised Cheek. Laurence tried to fight his mother over something happening. Kind of like how young Helen Keller tried to fight Anne Rice once. But at least the characters won't stay mad at each other for long. He lines up cakes showing his obsession for neat things. The way he lines up cakes is very similar to that of a neat freak. A person who loves nice and neat and organized and made with perfection. There was also a point when Tamora was in the gray area between being a good and bad character. Laurence and Tamora were in the middle. Not too bad, but not too good either. When Martin said this "It's OK to love somebody, and wonder what it would be like if they were someone else" it was like she was experiencing two emotions at once. One was she hated it because the truths hurts and it's hard to hear the truth sometimes, and at the same time she loves him for reminding her soon enough. It was a way for Martin to help ease her pain because she probably been through so much. In the long run, Laurence will realize that his mother making the call for residential schooling will do him a huge solid. She was trying to save him even though she couldn't save herself. There were two producers that Alex Oates convinced to help make the show. They were both autistic. He did not want to name them because of respect of privacy. According to the Evening Standard in the UK, The Actress, Charlie Brooks(Tamora) said that she didn't have experience on the Autism spectrum before she got the job. She is still experiencing what autism was like for as long as she could. "She admits that she knew little about

autism before she accepted the part of Tamora. Now, she says, she is “learning every day” (Allfree). I didn’t think having a puppet represent an Autistic boy was such a good idea after all. In the production it looked like the autistic puppet boy was mind controlled and trapped. A puppet who’s made of cloth that has no feelings and is controlled by a puppeteer. The character should’ve been a human being. The autistic character being a puppet should’ve been approached differently.

There should be more autistic people trying out for Broadway plays. If the actor is autistic, that makes the character that he/she plays more authentic and believable. People who don’t have autism who play the characters that do insult the entire mental disability community by acting like they can inhabit those characters. Their performances feel like the characters are being made fun of, not taken seriously and laughed at. Luckily there has been success when it came to the recognition of the Autistic actors on the Broadway stage. There was the Actor Mickey Roe who has been cast in a play called *Curious Incident*. What was even more emotional than that was he learned that his character Christopher was diagnosed with Autism. The character was 15 years old. Turns out he related to him even more because Mickey was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 21. He was making history by becoming one of the first Autistic Actors to play an autistic character on stage, let alone the first one to play the role of Christopher. He will make his debut as Christopher at the Indiana Repertory Theater and then travel to Syracuse. He had never had such an honor like this. For most of Mickey’s life he felt vulnerable and lonely for most of his life According to the HuffPost: “The young actors in this country who have a disability need to see positive

role models who will tell them that if you are different, if you access the world differently, if you need special accommodations, then theatre needs you” (Rooney, 10)

Another act of success for actors with Autism is Kayla Cromer: Kayla Cromer was diagnosed with Autism at the age of 7 and she auditioned for the role of Matilda who was also Autistic. She was in a show called *Everything’s Gonna Be Okay*. After she auditioned for the role, the producers made the life changing decision of giving her the part of Matilda Moss. When Kayla was reading the script for the pilot episode, she could relate to it so much. She saw how quirky the show was and how quirky she is because the actor and the character itself were very gifted people. Now Kayla works as an Activist for autistic rights so that she along with others could end the mark of disgrace for autistic people according to the LA Times: “Inclusion is key if that feeling is to keep growing. Because there is power in coming together. In welcoming others without trying to change them. In speaking out with one voice” (Cromer).

Another actor on the spectrum who is succeeding is Andrew Duff. Andrew too, was diagnosed with Autism at an early age. He was in the *Uncommon Sense* play, a play that explores four different stories of people on the Autism Spectrum. The play was written by Anushka Paris-Carter and Andy Paris. They also directed the play as well. Luckily the New York Times took notice of that play. It explored the journeys of four people living on the Spectrum: Moose, Lali, Dan and Jess. Moose is a spirited, curious and quiet young man who doesn’t speak much. He likes playing with Jellyfish and water and like visiting the aquarium, and he is autistic. Jess is a college student who has some troubles with her speech and having trouble talking to people, she also likes reading anime and playing video games. Lali is a teenager who likes doing things

herself and has a unexpected sense of humor. She likes playing with dry rice. She always likes wearing a helmet just to be safe. She doesn't speak much because of her sensory and motor issues. Dan was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome along with autism. He identifies with himself. Even though he had a good education and had many degrees in his college days, he still lived a simpler life by working as a Grocer at a super market. Dan uses a lot of complicated words and likes Horses and Toxicology. He is looking for a Girlfriend who shares those same interests. Like Lali, Dan also has sensory and motor Issues. He doesn't use forks or knives to eat, instead he uses his hand to enjoy his food. Especially when he goes out with his future mate. Sure these characters don't talk much, but it doesn't make their tales any less impactful. They are learning and growing and developing new traits and interests just like anyone else is. Some of the actors involved have Disabilities; Andrew Duff was Diagnosed with autism. The actress who played Lili (Jill Frutkin) was diagnosed with synesthesia which deals with raised levels of Nervous Activity in the body. Scott Barrow and Jessica Almasy are not on the Spectrum. Some of the Cast have disabilities which helps with the show's authenticity. This choice makes it effective because the ones that don't get to learn something new as the play goes on. The creative team should be commended for their casting because it shows that they raise awareness for people with mental disabilities.

A transgender woman who was also autistic learned that Sia was casting someone who was on the spectrum in her new film production of "*Music*". Sia claims that she cast a beautiful woman who was on the spectrum who couldn't talk. Turns out all the stress and the unpleasant experience got to her so she decided to cast someone

else. This sent a bad message, saying that autistic people shouldn't tell our own story. Zoe Gross, who was the Director of the Operations of the Autistic Self Advocacy Network, did not take this news well. She went on ABC News to talk about Sia's tweet. She said "That really speaks to a patronizing view of autism and the idea that we shouldn't be the people telling our own stories". (Graham) Autism Speaks, another Organization didn't like this tweet of Sia's, responded: "Representation matters, and we believe autistic actors should always be given opportunities to play autistic characters." (Graham) Just goes to show, if the right actors were cast in the right shows, it would be more authentic and believable. If there is a character who's Autistic, they should find autistic actors to play them, if there's a Character who's black, find a black actor, etc. The actors who are not on the spectrum who are playing characters with mental disabilities make stereotypes about autistic people and treat them differently from everyone else and less than human. This needs to stop. Accurate characters and representation matters.

In conclusion, serious changes need to happen to the casting lists for productions with disabled characters. There were and are so many performers with disabilities, that have yet to be discovered, especially for people on the Spectrum who are diagnosed with Autism. We need to do whatever we can to give them a voice and let them tell their story. The people who were performing who are on the spectrum will serve as inspiration for future kids to come. With authentic and appropriate casting, the real people who are performing the roles that were meant for the actors will help change the minds of people and the audience, thus experiencing life from the actor's different point of view. We have to do our part to make sure that people, especially those who

are on the Spectrum will have a fair chance of making their debut in the performing world. The world is changing as we speak, and we need to be more compassionate for actors and actresses who are on the Spectrum.

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Artistic Aims

My Senior Project represents my life's work, my life story and what I've been through up until the very end of my college career. With this project, I wanted to do something different, something out of the box and unique. I have never done an autobiographical project like this before and the Fall 2021 Semester is a good time to show it off. For as long as I've been in the Theater and Performance program at SUNY Purchase, I've been rejected from one audition after the next, one production after another, Senior Project after Senior Project. But in a sea of no's, the project was a yes opportunity waiting to happen: a devised Senior Project about my life story. Thankfully it got accepted.

What I hoped to accomplish was sharing my story of personal experiences with an audience, who will then understand where I'm coming from. I hope my story will one day inspire kids like me to tell their own story, in more ways than one. With this project underway, my senior year will go out with a bang. The staging, the sounds and the music of the project can help bring my story to life. Movers and actors could help me tell it. The shows that inspired my project are *Hamilton* and *In the Heights* which both have diverse casts and communities. I would like my project to also have a diverse company. Purchase is a diverse school where many different kinds of people come together to make great things greater. I aim for my project to make an audience and Purchase come together like the diverse place that it is. Who knows, maybe there are other people like me. Maybe there are other people who come from the same background. Maybe there are people who are black creators living in the United States, trying to make theater, or people who are Hispanic who want to go back to their roots. There are

people with autism who have trouble communicating with others just like me. I feel like I'm representing these three types of people because I am those three types of people. If this project goes well, not only will people like it and learn about me, I could become more established in my craft as a performer. It's not every day that future projects like mine are considered for approval. The even harder part is to get the faculty convinced to let my project to perform in a Black Box Space. Once we get the green light for rehearsing and performing in there, my cast and creative team and I will be in good hands. Once the audience will stand up and clap and cheer for us, we will know that we've done something right after all.

The script uses my own original poetry. I thought of words that rhymed with each other as well as finding songs that relate to my story. It was hard enough just deciding on a song from one of my favorite musicals because there are so many of them. Ultimately the final choice was mine when it came to choosing the songs. I had to choose the right ones for my project to work. I used music and rap in my project in a fun, enjoyable and entertaining style. It was my only unique way of making art. It had a lot of movement and acting on stage as well as singing and rapping, which doesn't happen often in most plays. It was high time that I did something different. I wanted the chance to bring friends and family closer somehow. Ultimately, the final choice was mine when it came to which songs to choose. Some of the pieces that were shown in my show were poems that I used during my Performing Oral History and Poetry class. I've decided to try some of them out to see what the first reaction was. The good news was that everyone loved them and so I realized that I was doing something unique. Even though we didn't have any projections, we still have the music, singing and the

lights with the gels to help change the stage to different colors. Everything fell into place.

For some time now, I have enjoyed performing. I have been listening to *Hamilton*, *In the Heights* and *Dear Evan Hansen* for two years, and still to this day I enjoy every moment. Every time I listen to those three shows, I think back on my life, what I accomplished during my time on Earth. And I feel like I have accomplished quite a bit. Like those three favorite shows of mine, I tried to make my own devised piece as diverse as I can, because there are lots of people who deserves a chance to perform in our present world. The best part is that these people aren't just black, there were many races. This project was my first ever test when it came to performing in a college environment, combining all of my performing, acting and singing skills and collaborating with other people. There should be more projects like mine. It's no easy feat when it came to adding the unique movement to the music we already know. That alone took a lot of work. When it comes to these Senior Projects in the Theater and Performance Department, we like to think of them as practice for when we have to perform plays and musicals in the professional performing world. This senior project shows the growth I experienced taking classes that were more hands on. By creating a Devised performance, we were able to show how improvisation works. Not all people, will remember folks like me. I'm one of those hidden figures that have yet to be seen. There are people who do all the work in an historical moment, and are still treated like garbage. That has happened to all of the people before us who are not white. As for me, I am no different. I'm just an ordinary Black/Hispanic/Autistic man with an extraordinary vision in my head.

There are many elements in my show that have been used. Music, characters, spectacle and original writing. I created new characters by combining the personalities of old ones to make something new, used songs and movement, and also rewrote the lyrics to tell the tale of my life journey. I envisioned a Senior Project that could tell a person's life story while it pays homage to an influence that one loves the most. My project has a lot of excitement, comedic relief, heartbreak, and a legacy left behind: of someone doing something extraordinarily great, while the person started small in the process. If I learned anything during this process, I have learned that, like everything else on this Earth, a new legacy starts with you.

Technical Essay

It all started in Junior Seminar. My senior project was approved. Now I had a lot of work to do. I had to find a director and so I spoke to Tahlia Holmgren. I told them my idea on what my project was. Tahlia was so excited to learn more, so they wanted me to send them the script for my show. After reading the script, they were more than happy to take the job as the director for my show. Tahlia and I tried to find more collaborators. Many people wanted to help but different problems caused them to drop out. There was the Stage Manager Frankie Eisenhut, who wanted to do it a first, but her financial problems caused her to drop out. Another stage manager Norah, was originally planned to take part but she was called in for a rehearsal schedule for an earlier engagement so she could not help with my project. Then, I had some luck come for me; I managed to find one person who will be committed to being my stage manager, Nina Shatell. I told her about my idea one night, she was very interested in it. So I invited her to join my creative team. I was also looking for a lighting designer. Along came Jeremy Burd. He is a freshmen lighting Designer. Even though he was a freshmen, it didn't matter to me. All of that change when I got an email from Jeremy, saying he couldn't be my lighting designer anymore because he was being placed in a show the same time as my show. Olivier was taking Jeremy's place as the lighting designer for my show. There was also a person named David Abb, who wanted to be my sound designer. We decided to meet in the CMFT lobby. I wanted to know why he would want to take part in my show. He said that he was very interested in the concept and that one of the professors was telling his Design Tech students about it. He heard about my project and decided to take part in it. Zorell Havercome volunteered to be my assistant stage

manager for my show. My good friend, Trevor Duitz wanted to be the producer for my show. Fatou planned to be my choreographer for my show, but due to everything else she had on her plate, it proved too much for her to handle, so she stepped down.

The casting proved to be a very hard, long journey, but somehow I managed to convince some people to join. I've gotten emails from people saying they want to try for some of my roles, later they didn't want to take part. Fatou and I set up sign up slots online to have zoom appointment meetings. Refilwe Kekana got to play the role of Leondra, JaDonna Williams got to play the role of Nina, Osiris Warren got to play the role of Ivan Lesoski. Anya Fernandez was originally going to play the role of Maria, but she was too busy, so I convinced my other friend Rossy Veras to play Maria. I also got Kazuki Ono to play the Role of the Italian ICE Vendor. I was still looking for people to play the four roles I had left. The Roles of Shawn G, Pete Jackson, George Lasso and John Michaels were still up for grabs. I looked for a long time to fill those roles by sending emails and posting posters. Before the roles were cast, we needed to start rehearsals.

I was planning to do the rehearsals in the Campus Center South Space, but the stage Managers (Nina, Zorell) weren't having it. They decided to book the rooms. They knew a much better, more convenient place to hold the rehearsals. They held them in the CMFT Building, room 2032. We started rehearsing in late September. When we were first rehearsing, there was only a few of us who showed up. Regardless we went right to work reading the script while the music was playing. Fortunately, the cast loved it, and hoped to do it again. We decided to rehearse twice a week in that very place. Luckily Osiris came to one of the Rehearsals and was excited to play the role of Ivan.

There was a time when I was still looking to fill in the three roles that I have left. Ultimately, I had to make a decision, a decision to double cast some of the roles in my show. My stage managers suggested this to me and I had to think it over. Luckily this was taken care of. Kazuki was not only playing the Italian ICE Vendor, he was also George Lasso too. We also decided that there wouldn't be a John Michaels in my show because my stage managers and I couldn't find someone that's available to commit. Along came Bradley Rabinowitz who was shadowing my Senior Project. Ultimately, the stage managers decided to cast him as Shawn G. It was a good idea too because we needed someone to play the role and not much time was on our hands. We have also tried rehearsing on some weekends to make up for lost time.

In our rehearsals, we warmed up our voices and our bodies. We did tongue twisters, practiced our scales, spoke and clapped in rhythm. We couldn't find any projection designers. We also couldn't use any of the costumes from the prop shop because of a mold issue, so my cast and I had to bring whatever we could from our closets and wear it. We also had to bring most of the props ourselves. There were fake flowers, a binder, some sheet music and a piece of rolled up paper with some red ribbon on it, were examples of props we used. We were rehearsing in the downstairs classroom in the CMFT Building. We were doing so well that the managers wanted us to be off book. It was very hard at first but we've managed to pull through it. Zorell was taking over as choreographer, she was creating simpler moves for us to handle. We also had to submit our bios, for our project. One day, Peter Sprague called in a zoom meeting. He wanted to know how rehearsals were going. We said they were going fine. Peter suggested that my show be performed in the Studio Space instead of the performance space. He was

suggesting this because it had more seats, it looked bigger on the inside, and the creative team could easily set up the lights and set the sounds. I reluctantly agreed to this and deep down knew that it could work in the long run. Then tech rehearsal came. Abby Brady was recruited by Olivier to help with the sound board. I was bringing in the Italian ICE cart and the Coke bottles from the prop shop and put them into the Studio Space. Ultimately, since there was no one else doing the role of Pete Jackson, Zorell took over the role. At first Zorell was an assistant stage manager, then a choreographer and now she is playing for Pete Jackson. The Tech Rehearsals were longer than we thought. Osiris had to leave early from some of the runs because of a family matter. He told the stage managers ahead of time. We only had two dress rehearsals. Fortunately, all of the actors arrived for the dress rehearsals, the first dress rehearsal lasted for 34 minutes, the second Dress Rehearsal lasted for 36 minutes. Luckily the cast of *For Colored Women* came to watch the second dress rehearsal and loved every minute of it.

The faculty viewing was one of the most important performances of my life. Most of the Theater faculty came along with some BA students. There have been some hiccups along the way. Kaz didn't get the ICE cart on time. There was a box in the way he didn't see. Other than that the Faculty and their guests loved the performance my friends and I made. We were also invited watch the faculty viewing of *For Colored Women*, which was such an honor.

At last, opening day came. I've never felt more nervous in my life. It was one of those performances that we've worked so hard for. My cast and I were as nervous as ever. As the people lined up to get a seat, the FOH (Front of House) had to add more chairs. All of the actors came into the room to warm up. We went backstage to wait for

our cues. We knew that this is one of those performances where it would be now or never. We had to give it everything we had. Luckily, the audience was very responsive when it came to what we had in store for them. My friends and I were met with a standing ovation at the end. As the audience clapped and cheered, we beamed brightly. We couldn't have been prouder. At that moment, we were doing something right. Friday, November 19th ended well too, the audience went wild, especially with the ICE songs. Closing Night arrived, our final time to perform. The line at the door expanded quickly, which means more seats needed to be added, Olivier ran the lightboard since Natalie had a problem with it. Once again, the audience stood up, clapped and cheered. We were given a standing ovation on closing night. It was the last time I performed in the Black Box Studio space with my friends, and I've never had a more bittersweet feeling. This was my first(and last) time performing in that space. I will cherish this moment for the rest of my life. Sunday, load out took place. On Tuesday the 22nd of November, I returned the Cart and the bottles to the prop shop. I was missing them already. As I said goodbye to them and went on my way, I thought of the good times we had using them in the Studio space. But for now, it's time to let someone else use them for a bright glorious future.

Hunter X. Hollingsworth & Friends: who tells your Story?

(Senior Project)

Creator: Hunter Hollingsworth

Director: Tahlia Holmgren

Location: CMFT Studio Space

Dates: November 18th-20th, 2021

Link to Digital Program: <https://www.purchase.edu/live/profiles/4878-1>









Hunter X Hollingsworth & Friends; Who tells your Story

Starring Hunter Hollingsworth

An AutoBiographical Musical Project

A Senior Project Created by Hunter

Live show Hollingsworth

November 18-20, 2021

CMFT at 7:30 pm

Building, CMFT

Performance Studio

CMFT 2043

A SUNY Purchase Theater
and Performance Senior
Project