



MAGGIE & ME | RESOURCES TRANSCRIPTS

MAGGIE & ME | DAMIAN AND JAMES

The memoir has been around now for 10 years and there's been lots of discussions about different lives for it, so it was a it was a radio, not a radio play it was a book at bedtime on the radio, so it's sort of been adapted for for radio and I've done radio plays before so that was interesting to hear it in that way.

There's a lot of discussion about whether or not it would be a film or a TV series or several TV series and actually I had admired James's play Love Song to Lavender Menace and he had asked me to play the role of the visiting writer in it, which I couldn't do but it meant that we got to know each other and it was we only just really realised it was actually during lockdown that we started to have the conversation about maybe doing a play together, it wasn't actually Maggie & Me it was just a collaboration of some kind and then very quickly it was like well we've got Maggie & Me there and and so for me and this has changed so much during the process cause I think the the work changes as you do the work and as you collaborate and all of that.

For me there were questions I hadn't answered in the book so there were things I still didn't really understand about my life or didn't understand about myself, there were things about I wanted to understand about how I'd grown as a person since I'd written that book so you know for that's where the idea of having two DBs came from it was like I'm in conversation with myself which I think we all are all the time and so I wanted there to be two DBs, and James was like well what if we brought Maggie to life you know that's who you see on stage so I think it's taken four years probably from the initial discussion to opening night.

Do you remember this we asked the people involved in the process if they could email us what they thought the book was. What the key moments from the book was.

Yeah ,I still have those notes yeah yeah yeah-

And they sent them through and it was really interesting so everyone was like the Grotto, the Craig, the young consumer, the key people- Mark Heather, you know of course Mike didn't exist as a character that he was the person behind the book you know making it happen and stuff so-

he's mentioned at the very end,
mention the very end he's mentioned the very very very very end-
and so that we had that we were like okay so this is what what it is for people in terms of moments but what is the feeling that we want, cause we were like, we established halfway through want people to leave the theater with the same feeling that they have when they finish reading the book, which is that was hard but I loved it, it was worth it, I loved it worth it and so that's kind of what we wanted people to have, very Scottish experience.

I would say had many misunderstandings about what adaptation actually is and it's your adaptation and so-

like it was a master's in adaptation, continues to be it continues-

but like it's not it's not adaptation, such a rubbish word for like a process that cause what you're thinking you're doing is you're sort of in some sense you know taking a thing that already exists and put putting it into a different art form so it's like you're sort of translating it perhaps is what people might think that it is, that's actually not true it's a new work, it's a new piece of art-

Especially the way that Damian's approached it which is kind of like, really brave like you never just wanted to do a straight scenes from the book on stage and that, the play is about the origin story like how Damian like confronted his past-

I think we never were interested in that either and actually you never ever wanted that, I didn't want that but you know an NTS didn't want that, but also you know they had to take a punt on what it was that we we wanted to do, so we we started off by initially we thought it was going to be a two-hander didn't we or a three-hander, what was that what was happening there?

Yeah just wee DB and Maggie-

yeah and then I was like but what about DB and then it was like okay so now it's a three-hander and it was like right and then who, who, who else is there anybody else that we like no no no no for quite a long time it was three hand and three acts and then it was five acts and now there are seven actors and it's a massive production and it's all over Scotland and the UK and all the rest of it, so I mean it really has grown but the iterative nature of it the kind of draft draft draft draft does get you there's this sort of like panning for gold in a way, hoping there is gold but but also where the gaps are where the double beats are, where you know- cause at one point the script was like it 130 pages and we cut some together and then I went I went through I think was reading it like 4 hours at one point

yeah yeah and actually I'm I have no problem cutting like that's not, I'm actually very brutal about that I'm not precious about material it's just like it's got to go, it's got to go, it's got to go but there are certain things about it that for me are the play, and that will not go unless they aren't working for some reason and and actually Suba has really listened and you have too cause I know that you felt differently about some bits of it, but where I'm just like no for this play to be my story it has to we have to see this moment, we have to see this moment and actually people have taken a leap of faith in me with that.

When I was writing the memoir one of the people involved in the process said to me you know that isn't a big coming out scene like why is it, you know we feel were really missing that and I was like you think that that's what happens to, you think there's a moment where we like go out we like you know we just like photocopy a thing that says I'm gay hand it to all the people in our lives and it's done-

No and in the in the play like Wee DB comes out several times because that's what happens like, we're like I you still choose whether to come out, don't you it never, National Coming Out Days every day if you can and sometimes it's not and that's okay but the thing that was really important and this was a thing that I remember sitting in here and I was trying to work it out and and then I remember you know I remember sitting down and writing it not getting it right first time talking about it with you going back to it and being because for me this is a kind of the emotional excavation it's like I can't write the lines until I've understood the feeling or until I've got through it and sometimes I write it as a way of understanding it and it's not right and I'm going backwards and forwards and backwards and forwards and with DB the moment is it's so- Wee DB comes out to Heather in Brighton but DB comes out to Heather and says I'm- he comes out and says I'm ashamed that I didn't tell you sooner, are you angry with me, I'm upset I feel bad about that and so and that that felt like a real breakthrough writing that felt like a real breakthrough-

And then Heather comes out and it's like I didn't have a problem with it which is also part of the process as time went on it was like Damian this has to be Damian's voice it's his book and like we were making structures and like a lot of stuff changed from it was like a structural exercise of going right we've got these five acts, this has to be here and that it has shifted more than any play I've ever worked on, yeah definitely because I feel like even at the start of rehearsals like it's changed massively hasn't it like yeah yeah it really and it's been lovely to watch Damian like grow was a playwright as well.

I think that you know we've we've said it all along it's like it's would be so easy and lazy to characterise her as just this one note baddy, very you get a laugh and then what how does that go, how do you- where do you go with that character if you start off with she's a baddy yeah and it's like what you start off with is everybody coming in thinks she's a baddy and we play with that notion of people and her saying things like I just want the best for you, I've always wanted the best for you and her believing that is really fascinating because it's like, yeah you might want the best but you're not giving the best that you are not being helpful. Section 28 not helpful, closing the steelworks not helpful, but seeing it from her like the way that we've written it from her perspective that it is that she thinks she is being helpful and then you go oh yeah like obviously she didn't think I'm going to try and ruin people's lives and make the world a nightmare which which is what she really did yeah but those kind of good and like the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

I never wanted to do this on my own and I didn't ever want anybody else to do this on their own, TV actually not so much I don't mind but but with the play because again I was going into it to do that work for myself emotionally that was that was important, so yeah, yeah we are you know very and we have very different processes too I think as well you know, James is much more like sometimes he'll be like all these things are thrown out there and then, then there'll be a thing there that he'll want to refine and hone in on and get to that and he'll go into this kind of zone- hyperfixation- where he'll just kind of go he'll sit there like that and he's like and you're talking to him and you realise he's actually not listening he's not um because he's pursuing a thought or a thing.

Yeah like Damian's so fast and I'm like not-
I think you are fast-

Yeah sometimes but I do I'm like sometimes I'm like racing to keep up with-

but I think also though why that's also true though because I'm living and experiencing and I'm sometimes more ahead of that because I know you know but whereas I don't I don't have that thing I'll sometimes be like, I'll there be a lot of thinking and a lot of like right okay and actually I'm pretty clear like when I when then when I've got the thing that I want to do or say like when I was thinking about like Act Three with when I finally go into thinking I'm going to write about my mum I'm going to write about my mum, my older sister who's died and I'm wanting there to be a conversation about that again nothing that's one line in the book-

like I feel like that play has been in Damian's head and it this process has been about like taking it out of your your head-

I think laterally it has been yeah I think at the beginning I sort of I I didn't see the full potential for it to be a new thing a thing on its own and I think as that has gone in I mean I remember you know getting the first draft from you of the bits that you had written and you was quite a nervous moment I sending that to each other because it's like- oh my God I hate it you know- and actually that didn't happen but what was really exciting about it was it was like oh right oh so we can really go wild with this we can actually really do all these things and say all these things and you know and NTS got that first draft and we're just like we're making this this is happening.

Yeah I think Suba is amazing that he like went with what was on the page like a lot of the stage directions where we want to have all this stuff on the stage, the Bing and like remnants of the Ravenscraig and The Grotto and it was all there and like when we were writing it I was like I don't know if we're going to get this size of set and Suba was amazing to like really go with that and the whole team like Kenneth's design is so faithful to what was on the page and it's been a really careful process and and really caring about you like it's Damian's life and the whole team going, how do you

want your life to look on stage like yeah-

They have, I, all the people that he just named are incredible and there are many many others and I hope that people go and look at the website and see the creative team and look at the work that they've done cause it's not like they're just taking a thing and making it real they're they're bringing again their reference points and their stories and and their you know understanding of what it was like an there's one point where there's a Dalek on stage and I got an email about the Dalek and it was like do you want it to be a dalek from the 1960s or do you want it to be a late '90s and I was like it's a 60s Dalek

It's a play that's full of you know stuff happens there's always stuff happening and you know and the memoir is packed with incident but the play has got to communicate some of the incident, the key moments of the memoir but it's also got this whole other extra layer which is DB's story of well can I find my voice, can I tell my story should I am I allowed to, what's the cost of that, what's the impact of that, what's it like being stuck in your past when you want to get back to your present never mind your future so there's all that extra stuff to do cause home is such an important part of the the story because home means so many different things it was really important to me that we have this scene right at the very beginning with Wee DB and his mum so you see this loving moment of home and that that point nearly disappeared there was pressure at points to can we start in Brighton it's like no actually we need a just a moment from the past where we see that things are good and lovely and there's a loving relationship here and then we get to Brighton and we see again like a good happy loving relationship which is not something we've discussed this a lot that we see as queer people on stage you do not get to see like, somebody your boyfriend bringing you fish fingers and chips,

Yeah and I think like excavating that extra layer of yeah DB like revisiting trauma and and like the way that we've kind of looked at retraumatisation as a theme in the play like yeah that's all additional to the Memoir isn't it like and and like watching it I was struck I was like oh it's kind of like the origin story of Maggie & Me in a way isn't it like the way it ends with like yeah starting writing Maggie & Me so I remember very clearly I remember writing that scene, that scene is a scene that hasn't changed ever it's never really changed and it's always been the same and because that's what the story is it's like you turn the corner you meet yourself coming back the other way and how have you changed how you know so you know how is DB changed through the play how is wee DB how have all the characters changed but then how do people coming to see the play feel differently about their own story at the end of it and that is that's the thing that's really special about it I think is that it holds this mirror up I wrote that line stories are mirrors and you see you can see people reflecting but also you know the sense that his home life is somehow unreal or unstable because this unresolved trauma, these nightmares PTSD you know and um and that being the thing that he wants to save you know that's what's motivating him um and that's that's why it's so important and beautiful I think at the end to get back home, but home is more vivid, the shelves, the objects on the shelves are more vivid they're they're even more vivid they're more real and um and there's a sense that they're in that they're there together and that that home is unshakable.

I think there's some important distinctions to think about before you embark on on this kind of work so the first thing I would say is is like all art is autobiographical cause it all comes from your life, so James has made autobiographical plays right they're not his life but they're from his life and he's you know where else could they come from right but let's be clear about that the myth of so much art which is so like cis, white, privileged art is that inspiration strikes and it comes from without and you're simply a vessel for channeling that story that's bullshit right, it's all art is autobiographical and we have to be clear about that which means again it's your story but there's a distinction between autobiographical art and memoir right so in autobiographical art you can hide, wealth is not James right James is not wealth and the me of Maggie & Me, is me right it's me it's a version of me it's a character of me it's a, but it is me and so with fiction or autobiographical drama you have a veil that you can draw whereas when its memoir there is no veil and you are, or it is necessary for you to

be exposed and vulnerable as part of that process and you know that has been lonely for me, that has been scary for me, there is nobody else in this process who has to walk into that theatre and people go that's him, that's him there's nobody else who walks out of that theatre into that street and people see them and they say that's him he did this, he did that, he did that which creates this huge imbalance between you and everybody else in the world, everybody else knows more about you than you know about them so it's it's a very curious thing and it is, it is not self-indulgent people are like memoir can be self-indulgent you know it does contain the words Me and I but it's the least self-indulgent thing that I think you can ever do because you know kind of you're giving people a gift of saying here's my story, what's your story but it's it's the hardest thing- writing the memoir I thought the time was you know was the hardest thing I and then I wrote a novel- You'll be safe here which people are like oh it's set in South Africa it's a story about Empire it's over a 100 years it's so different from your memoir and I'm like are you kidding it's about mothers and sons it's about abuse and survival it's about resistance it's about joy it's about books these are the these are the things I'm interested in and will always be interested in and so but with with the novel though I could hide behind it and I was like oh this is great like people like there literally there are scenes that I cut from Maggie and Me and dropped into into the novel, people just never know they never question it and whereas with the memoir like I there's nowhere for me to hide in this process there's you know there have been days where I have come into this building and I have wished that I could shrink myself to the size of a pea and hide inside a box that is then buried in outside 100 meters below the ground, it is exhausting but it is also energising because I've let go of a load of stuff I realised so much stuff through this process that I was like oh my God I didn't realise like so those big speeches about shame that that like putting that let's put that in the play and also I can kind of let go of that and I'm watching Gary perform it or Sam perform it and you know and it's in a room with all these people and actually they're not judging me I'm safe it's all right so you know I wouldn't recommend it as a form of therapy but I can say that it is therapeutic yeah for sure it's therapeutic.

So like telling your own story knowing that's valid, like knowing that queer stories can be like coming of age romance, like everything and that and horror or whatever that you have access to that yeah so yeah that's the big takeaway from me, like queer stories can be anything it doesn't have to be coming out.

Writing the play has helped me find my voice, reconnect with parts of my voice and find new bits of my voice and I'm writing a novel just now and it's really interesting watching how the writing of the novel has changed through the writing of the play so yeah I think I want people to come away having laughed a lot and having cried a lot, laughter through tears is my favourite mixed emotion that's what Dolly Parton says and that's the vibe.

MAGGIE & ME |

KENNETH MACLEOD

I had read the memoir before and I was a huge fan of it and then basically when NTS announced it I was really cheeky and sent an email and said hey can I be considered for this and I had a great sit down with Suba the director and kind of chatted through what we liked about the memoir and where the where the play was going to go got copy of the script I think the start of this year and then that was really launching point into chatting with Suba and trying to work out where it was going to go and and the script at that point was far too long and far too complex and unstageable really we it wasn't really at a point that we could get in and start

making proper decisions about it so we chatted really broadly about what the kind of overall arc was going to be and what the sort of key points were that were going to stay the same probably through the scripts development and so we identified those key moments you know looking at what DB's original writing space was what that explosion into the next act was and some of those key locations like Carfin Grotto and Ravenscraig because we knew that they weren't going to go anywhere so we really focused those moments and worked out how we could give ourselves a bit of structure by having everything revolve around those key decisions.

Process really begins sitting down with the director this case Suba and sitting down with our text and really interrogating it going through what the the kind of emotional intent of each scene is but also talking about the real practicalities of do you need levels do you need furniture what do you need in the scene and trying to get head start on all those things I then go away and kind of take it all and try and absorb it and I start off with very kind of broad strokes, kind of shapes in the space working out kind of what I'm trying to find that kind of magic number where's our back wall how much how much space do need to at the side for actors to get through and then what does that leave us for set what are the limitations on our on our flying and then I start to arrive at something that feels like it's kind of the right shape and between myself and Suba we start to fine tweak that I tend to start off doing lots of 2D work I start was doing quite broad renders of the space and then from there start to get into more detail I do some 3D models and physical models and at the same time working with our production team here and production manager working out if we're in the right ballpark in terms of budget and time and making sure that we're going to hit our theatre green book quota as well and then from there on it's kind of my job to try and generate all the material that can then go to the people that are going to help us source and make it so I have a big period of doing all the drafting doing all the scenic art references drawing up all the costumes and where I can getting to sort of site visits for research or checking out the Tron and from that point on it's a case of presenting it back to the NTS team to the production team and then of course when we hit rehearsals presenting it back to the to the cast and crew as well

and then through rehearsals I kind of support rehearsals best I can we will normally be doing fittings for costumes in that time site will be getting built off site with the set builders and I'll kind of be there to kind of respond to any changes as well that that happen through the design and then before you know we're we're in the Tron we're in the venue and we're getting in our set our lighting designer is going to be focusing around the set and building their lighting design around the final space sound designer's going to be in there placing speakers and doing their work and it's the chance for the cast and the crew the movement director everyone to get on the space and find it out find out as best they can and apply the kind of final touches before opening night.

The world that we had here to kind of draw on was was huge and that we had we had the text that Damian and James had written we then had the memoir obviously we refer back to and get even more details from and then we had the resource that was Damian himself in his entire life so there's

a huge kind of wealth of information there of kind of looking at not only the kind of pop culture references of the era but also the kind of specifics about what was going on in that part of Scotland at that time was going on in Damian's life and so yeah it was a huge kind of pool to kind be able to draw on. The text changed a lot of during rehearsals the cast were finding out things about the text and the characters and as well Damian and James and Suba were also reinterpreting the whole thing and where it was going in general from that point on that process was fairly standard it was It was kind of not having the final text before that

kind of that kind of delayed us slightly in terms of rehearsals it was just the kind of standard process of kind of rehearsal notes but you had you kind of had all the requirements of the text as it began with which was huge and then you had all the demands that were coming out rehearsal so you kind of had these two big lists and you were trying to kind of overlap them and work out right what is the actual essentials out of these are we still holding on to this from before and so it was that kind of just making sure that we were all on the same page about does this replace that previous version and that old idea and so it was good to be making those decisions with everyone in the room you know you can't always do that in the in the pre-production process but in this case we had we the cast we had movement director we assistant director all the rooms be able to help make those make some of those decisions so in a sense it was very different and in another sense it was It was kind of getting down to it and as it as it kind of normally pans out we knew that we were going to have a a big cast kind of by comparison other shows but still in terms of shifting scenery or doing big scene changes and still a fairly small cast and the pace of the writing was such that you know we were never going to be able to achieve full changes of the space so in the really early planning days with Suba it was about kind of going through the text and working out what the most important beats were and sometimes that was about committing to we're going to go to that location but we don't necessarily know what the emotional beat is going to be so that's also part of the reason that you know Ravenscraig is represented by a plat piece up at the back we didn't know exactly what the what the structural things that we needed for that scene were going to be so sometimes it was about yeah sort of anchoring those four or five sort of key places and keeping the bits between it much more flexible and also embracing the fact that it was this kind of memory piece that we were able to jump back and forth through time it's a piece about a younger version of DB helping older version of DB and even Damian being fan of Doctor Who you can kind of see the sort of similarities there so there was also a sort of a tone as well that we were trying to get right as well about making sure that that we had humor and that we also had opportunities for scariness and for threat as well so our kind of toolkit was the shelves covered with items that were from from DB's past that was something we thought we could be able to work out really early on we thought able to write we'll place the items we'll get them rehearsals and then we'll be able to fill in the gaps and work out where cameras can go or where lighting can go and in reality it was just something that kept changing all the way through as rehearsals changed as mine and Katharine's decisions about lighting changed it was a constantly changing feast which was great right up till tech we were we were moving things and changing things we started off with I think a core few items from the text that we knew be in there we knew that DB's mum's word tin would be important his dad's British steel hard hat Kay's catalogue and then it was about trying to find other things pull other things from the text and sometimes we found that we didn't end up with as many important items as as we thought we would and so we were able to draw on the memoir or on or Damian's life and then also in there is this kind of lighting toolkit as well that helps us move through spaces so Katherine and I sat down and worked out what are the sort of qualities of light in these different locations what are the way that we want to pick out these really important items and in the end found some brilliant sort of museum size lighting that gave it this kind of almost presentational exhibit feeling yeah kept shifting and changing the sort of real estate on the shelves is so precious Catherine also has booms coming from the side to get side side light on on the performers and so it's kind of down the millimetre sometimes where something's placed so that it'll mask a light but still like the performer and yeah we kind have a a mix there of items from DB's present in 2008 in Brighton and from his past in the '80s in Motherwell it end up being this kind of big toolbox this kind of pallet that we

were able to play with and take us through the different locations. A huge part of working for NTS is making sure that we implement the Theatre Green Book which is making sure that at least 70% of the total kind of material in the show as had a past life was able to have a future life and so that is kind of just a constant in your head through through the whole process you're looking at how you're able to give as much impact visually on stage but also thinking very carefully about what those materials are NTS has a brilliant store of metal work and set from from previous productions so we were able to to tap into that our Bing-PILE-scape at the at the back of the stage was all made from flatwork from previous productions and also knew that we had you know the kind of prop stores here that we could draw on and I think the more that we move down the route of the space initially opening in this kind of memory space and the idea of populating it with things that were part of Damian's

world and life so that felt like the right way to go that was a good visual design but also a good sustainable design as well.

The sort of key sort of inciting moment in the text is at the end of act one there's a huge explosion it's the Brighton bombing and we're sort of catapulted back into Damian's memory and crashed on stage is this wardrobe which Maggie Thatcher then bursts out of so this kind of huge kind of seismic kind of physical change on stage kind of had to be the thing that we pinned everything around we're of course going to tour and no two venues in Scotland are anything even vaguely similar but we...something playing in our favour was that we were opening on the Tron stage which a quite a small space tight space and not a lot of wing space a brilliant height but we knew that thankfully because we're starting in our trickiest venue we knew that everywhere else after was going to be much easier so if we could make it work with the Tron we could make it work anywhere and so part of that was also thinking how do we maximize the space as much as we can that involves you know trying to work out how do we use forced

perspective to our advantage when making our Bing-scape and our backdrop as well helped a lot in kind of giving us depth there that isn't actually there so it's kind of the process of design is that you tend to find I think bit of a bit of a magic number you find what your what your biggest restraint is and you build around that and part of that was the space of the Tron which has a larger stage left side than a stage right side so we knew that if we were going to strike a large piece of set it was probably going to stage left and so that that large piece of shelving going in stage left was kind of the the Crux of the transition we knew that we didn't have a huge amount of crew on tour and also our cast would also be probably really busy so it was trying to keep the the amounts of moving pieces as minimal as possible and even then you know we've got the large shelves moving we've got tabs that open and but even still the the explosion lasts maybe a minute, a minute 30, so it's still it's still a big transition to happen and that was of a process and also finding out you know it's an explosion but how long can we make this explosion last and thankfully Suz and Tim on sound and video also filled in that explosion and made it made it brilliant as well as Struan's movement so the explosion was yeah the kind of core part of the show and everything sort of fell into place once we knew how we could kind of pull that off.

As much as we had this kind of huge resource in the script and the memoir and and Damian himself there was always a point that we had to stick to just the script there was a cut off point that realised if we tried to get in every everything we actually knew about that person then not only were we going to probably confuse things with the audience but we were trying to make a person as opposed to a character that is on stage and I think sometimes even though it's based on a on a real life sometimes we have be quite cold and say right but it's a character there's a function there to the plot and there's a very quick short hand that the audience need to get a short time so sometimes it was about taking all in and then knowing what to ignore and what was what was the sort of core thing to to get right I think there's a there's a case to be said for getting the gist of something kind of right and then the audience maybe lets you off in sort of other ways and certainly we were designing Maggie's costume that was a really brilliant process working with Beth and trying to work out what what do folk

remember what do they think they remember and also we've not got Maggie we've got Beth we've not got Damian we've got we've got Gary what works for them as people and how do work with them what they bring to the party with their looks and their and their faces

is you know we're not going to go full prosthetics or anything like that we're going to play with what we've got and we're going to fill in the gaps and that was a really important process I think.

Mary the Canary absolutely brilliant I think we had a few notions about where her costume design might go quite early on that we just chatting about we knew that Dolly Parton was the main the main reference there and we hadn't quite settled on a notion it was a rehearsal note that came out that said somewhere between a auxiliary nurse and country singer and it was like oh that's it so that evening good it sketched up and Elsa and I our wardrobe supervisor we sat down the next and chatted it

over and Joanne pulls it off fantastically. It's a really magic moment that I think I see that the that the wardrobe team have done really well with it and it's Heather getting splashed with her pink milkshake onto her school skirt I think bang up job a really well made skirt really well painted and Joan does a really good job of pulling it off as well it's a very clever flip panel on the on the front of her skirt that we've cleverly hidden behind the seam between the sort of pleats of her dress.

Our final design opens really in DB's safe space it starts off in his writing space and it's bit of a kind of memory space as well he is he is going through

his memoir going through his memories and his life and so we're trying to kind of physicalise that on stage and that's where we we be getting a kind of very safe space and then as sort of the past kind of starts starts to kind of haunt Damian DB because the memories get stronger and stronger and the pull into his into his past gets stronger as well and there's this blast that takes us into into 1984 and so that is probably the biggest change we strike part of the shelving units and we reveal the the kind of upstage Bing scape and then from that point on it's kind of about trying to reuse that this sort of memory Fantasy Land in as many different ways as possible so we kind of augment the space with different sliders as well as flying in pieces as well and then at the very end we kind of restore the space again as DB reaches his personal conclusion as well. A really tiny thing that that I just enjoy is there not cuz you can see it at all but we custom made sort of prayer candles that light up when we were in Carfin Grotto and I got to make some custom labels for those and there's a quote that that Damian wrote on one of his school jotters when he was at school I really liked which was 'the geek will inherit the earth' and so all these little catholic candles all say 'the geek will inherit the Earth' on them.

MAGGIE & ME|

SUBA DAS

The script was still quite a way off on the first day of rehearsals and everyone was prepared for a certain amount of table work I guess or just script development work but I had them up on their feet almost immediately because I think that's where plays live they live on their feet so the relief I think for them in terms of getting up and actually embodying and kind of going moving through this space where am I trying to get to what do I want to achieve all of that was kind of what pulled us forwards but yeah the script development continued quite extensively through rehearsals and that's challenging and terrifying for the actors incredibly difficult for our design departments because I mean I think there's a number of costumes that were just never made it onto stage and that was just something we to hold really carefully and that's much more a producing challenge than a directorial challenge in a way because it's about you know you know fear always exists when you're making a show it's this kind of weird strange unknown thing and will you get there and will it work and how will it meet its audience so just trying to ensure that there was as much practicality and solidity wherever possible I sort of felt coming in I was saying earlier that I got them on their feet really quickly because I really just wanted to ensure that everything felt like it was practical and building up and that there was security and certainty at a point where scenes might evolve and shift and just go through everything really had to go through a filter of exploration in the room and I guess entrusting the actors to frame as clearly and cogently as possible what was or wasn't working or helpful or useful for them or where the opportunities might be to kind of and it felt really important for the writers to hear a little bit more about some of the jumps where the actors couldn't quite join up a journey from I'm so is you know emotionally there and now I'm here which is just part and parcel of that kind of condensing exercise so ensuring that those questions could be heard and acted upon but also within that they're not wanting to kind of open Pandora's Box and suddenly everything's up for grabs we'd still be in rehearsals having to say at points to the company I understand that request or I understand why that might want to shift along that do not touch and it was kind of like playing five-dimensional chess at times because there was stuff that I knew I was planting into the show as we moved through chronologically scene by scene that was relevant and necessary and that would be returned to and there was one conversation in the room about Mark's journey character Mark and that he and DB arrive at high school and they've been friends and then kind of go their separate ways and then suddenly he's back at the climax and it feels like there's a lot that's been jumped and as a kind of cold read Grant I know found that like quite a huge how do I get from there to there I knew however that there were going to be a couple of the camera sequences that we have in the show and there's a sort of journey to an extent of those going from being kind of quite anonymously operated to then being really inhabited by characters and I knew that just pure mechan-... like what Grant only person who could like operate a camera in this bit but I knew it meant that I was going to put wee DB and Mark back on stage together for a kind of tender emotional moment before hitting that last chunk of the play and that that would help Grant get to where he needs to yeah kind of deploying all of that to ensure that they felt within it and that worked thank God so sort of things like that so those sorts of things to overcome which are very much you know that's really practical dramaturgy in a way

One thing I said very often to the team in the process as well is you know fundamentally Damian lives longer with the impact and the consequences of this work that any of us will so although you know I kind of feel like there's so much value in telling a queer story and getting to do it at this sort of scale other ones will come around at a certain point whatever but this is you know this is Damian so really wanting to take care around that and also knowing that you know as the writer of the memoir and a first time stage playwright he's written radio plays and things that you know there's a risk of something appearing like some kind of vanity project in a way and wanting to ensure that we protected Damian from that which entails always having you know kind of rigorous conversations about okay this means a lot to you how can we ensure that it means as much to an

audience attending and and a thing I kind of held really fast to was that although I'm certain a huge percentage of the audience will be people people who know the book the play has to stand on its own so therefore kind of feeding in what is it we need to ensure that as I say people care so that felt like a real responsibility you know a memoir gets to be this happened, then this happened, then this happened, and this happened, a play has to really fashion that into a kind of protagonist arc I think that took a lot of soul-searching at points for Damian because you know some of the realisations that the character DB has during the play are actually realisations that Damian only had at the point of working on the play so you know 10 years later and his journalistic brain is sort of such that you kind of go oh but I didn't know that then or I didn't and you kind of go you just sort of helping lead him towards kind of an acceptance that actually while that might not make the play entirely like accurate in a documentary style it made for the most compelling drama and all had a truth in it you know it's sort of a kind of distilled sort of version of that of that truth so yes so all of those sort of cares and concerns and then class actually and you know I'm one of still comparatively few directors in the UK who was brought up on benefits and ensuring that that was represented with care and sensitivity as opposed to some of the slightly glib patronising ways that theatre can handle that so that felt like a huge responsibility as well and it's such a kind of vast dramaturgical challenge turning a memoir into a play an adaptation as a form and as a skill is and I think a lot of people think adaptation is easy um because oh there's already a book uh it's much much much harder because you can't imagine your way out of dead ends and I think hopefully part of what we've achieved with with this production is a real sense of theatricality and you could do a version of the show which is just here's a thing, here's a thing, here's a thing, here's a thing, you know the show is already about 2 hours 45 I think it's a whole life I mean it's 20 years you know of Damian's life it would yeah it would run for days if you tried to dramatise all of that so there has to be a kind of filtering mechanism there has to be a motivation for why certain episodes certain things are handled and it felt really clear that that the boys as I call them needed some support in that so that's sort of why I ended up kind of hopping on and the rest is history.

Grant's name was on a list of CVs I was given to look at and I sort of went I think this energy feels right I've never met him he came in for kind of workshop day and he came in and Damian grabbed me and said he looks exactly like him it's him it's like he's you know and he has the energy and spirit of of that person so it's sort of there have been so many little things like that I mean there are lots of different shades and levels to the casting journey so there's a lot of doubling in the show necessarily cast of seven for I think about 40 different characters that appear so looking for actors with that kind of technical versatility and I think you know probably our greatest kind of representation that within the company is the phenomenal Nicola Jo Cully who plays mum and virtually everyone else at times I mean a few things I believe in ensemble as a kind of principle and I knew that I given what the discussion in the rehearsal room would be and the responsibility of telling a kind of queer working class story well I was just sort of subtly through the casting process not kind of doing a kind of values check but I was interested to open up that conversation as part of the process and see what that meant to people because you know sort of I didn't it's not like I'm trying to lead people into war or whatever but it's always especially with new work it's there's always going to be kind of gritting your teeth and like digging deep to get through to the finish line so it felt important that everyone in the space really got that and Damian was was very generous about how the casting would work and understood that with the multi rolling and such like people weren't necessarily going to be kind of perfect match but he very much wanted to have quite understandably approval on the two actors playing the different hims, and Mum and Dad like how is that family going to be represented so he had some specific prompts and steers around and I always kind of try to lead a writer more into talking about kind of energy and certain quality as opposed to being like a direct physical carbon copy because that's even less important in theatre than it would be in TV or film and you know so Grant he met and just you know like he's he's Mark and I knew from then working with him that he was going to leap into lots of different roles and bring like you know Grant has performed in tons of musical theatre so I knew that he was going to bring a lot of additional skills into the room and I didn't necessarily anticipate just how many song and dance numbers there were going to be at the

outset but I thought it might not be a bad idea to have that available and it was really interesting in the casting of Gary as DB who the older DB I think delivers one of the most extraordinary performances I've ever seen really and it's got so little to do with me so it's it's been a privilege to see that develop and grow and what Gary brought in as an actor was you know DB has these like massive epic speeches and and again I think possibly because of the very toxic heteronormativity of our society actually just coming in who were giving us the kind of full Hamlet version of DB and actually I think it feels very clear that Gary is at all times playing a gay man and within that is accessing all of the kind of heights and depths of emotion and despair and tragedy and humour dry wit and all of that and that felt really important that it felt like a gay man as hero and Gary just brought that in with him and I know Damian sort of like he's not as tall as I am, you know Damian is gargantuan and I said it doesn't matter that's not what matters and Damian was kind of willing to get on board with that and then the next thing alongside that was ensuring that wee DB be kind of matched and there was a moment where our absolutely excellent casting director Orla O'Connor brought a load of wee DB options and some of them were taller than Gary and this is really I was like it's not going to work that's not I because there's just that risk of it being a thing that pulls an audience out of the moment you sort of go so what point did he shrink and so I'm not going to just have him standing on a box throughout am I so that's where we got hyper specific and brilliant Sam who I'd worked with before is just brilliantly physical has trained as a movement director in his own right and I knew that my instinct was that part the contrast between the two representations of DB would be one leading with his brain and the other leading with his body so I was very keen to have Sam in the mix and height played to my advantage and I think the performances speak for themselves now and then we found Beth who, goodness me, just I still can't describe it what she does and how she does it so successfully because it's not an impression she's not dwarfed by it this total clarity of objective she's bloody hilarious at points and terrifying I just knew really obviously she's physically as a you know flamehaired temptress as I've called her before you know this sort of a closer physical resemblance to Maggie than I had necessarily thought we needed but it's just I don't know I mean there's a bit where she comes in The Grotto scene and she just storms in and starts talking about pubes and I was thought this is just I mean massively camp but held so seriously so yeah so you know Maggie felt very open could have been anything anyone and I think we would have found a way to make that work but ultimately we landed with the actor who was going to really nail for us a sense of what Maggie meant to Damian.

Class, storytelling, queerness.... as gay people were having to make do often slivers of representation I mean yeah I mean I guess the power of of words in literature and I kind touched on that at various points which all kind of comes to a head in a way in the library sequence DB's furious row with Maggie which I think is in so many ways the heart of the reason the play exists so that's sort of stunningly important it's sort of why Tim our video designer was interested in words appearing all over the set and this idea of the words that used about people you know there's a sort of journey in some of that video content of like from graffiti to print which is just a very subtle is it subtle? I don't know way of kind of going what might start off as name calling if it becomes legitimised and becomes in shrined as law like there's a journey if we're not careful of things that might seem childish to things that actively endanger people this is a story about being able to find your voice and tell your story and some of the most powerful content in in the show thematically is around that the idea of what are available to you whose words what does it mean if you don't have language about who you are available to you how do you start to understand yourself how you start to like yourself importantly I think one of the most beautiful bits for me every time I see it is loosely constructed on the page which is this sing off between the DBs and Mary the Canary and I like what's the story here what what we trying to how do we create stakes around this and the way we've structured it there's a really sentimental thing that happens which is DB taking over the song and singing Stand By Your Man to to his his childhood self and there's that thing about self-parenting that I think is part of how gay people survive and that felt really important to see DB under pressure step into a thing for his younger self I think it it felt fundamental in liking him and liking him was so important to the which is why thank God Gary said yes because he just brought all of this gorgeous charisma with him but there's a bit within that song sequence where Mary the Canary dropped her

gorgeous peignoir and gone into her big country and western number and Sam picks it up and sort of swishing about with it and that just sort of happened randomly spontaneous it wasn't a I want you to do this now but I'm pretty certain that there by this point now will have been hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of gay men who've seen the show who have you know activates those memories of yeah finding a something frilly bit of tat and pretending you're a pop star and that which is kind of drag in a way as well that kind of DIY take a thing try to make something beautiful try to assert your existence so things like that are kind of all the way through the show.

That equality is still a long way off actually I think people I think we all need to acknowledge our complicity within structures of prejudice because in so many ways we all do so we don't scapegoat a Maggie entirely around that yeah and that queer joy is super important.

MAGGIE & ME|

BETH AND JOANNE

Well it plays a little bit out of sequence chronologically so that obviously starts in the first act in 2008 like Damian's present day when he's writing the book so you first see Heather in the play when they're around 28 years old so she's come down to Brighton to visit him while he's piecing together his life essentially for this memoir but then chronologically you first meet her at school so the first time that her and Damian meet. With Maggie I guess she just gets exploded in from the from the past or future or something into his brain at the Brighton bombing so she just yeah gets blown through a wardrobe into his head.

Before I started rehearsals cuz I knew I was playing Margaret Thatcher

I just sat and had to go back and watch Margaret Thatcher and kind of look at her mannerisms, look at her speech patterns I what I did find was I just Googled videos and looked at the kind of famous speeches and famous quotes and kind of got those like little mannerisms that she always had that are very Margaret Thatcher but I knew that if you're doing her in a play it was somebody's brain and it was about his relationship with her and I hadn't seen a completed script or anything so I didn't know how it was going to be so I wanted to try and find videos of her as a person more just speaking off camera almost and I did manage to find videos where there was one really good one when she'd actually been papped out finally of her being interviewed after and she was much more herself if you know what I mean a bit more relaxed bit more herself there was a couple of interviews abroad where she was a little bit herself and there was actually an off camera one where she was getting interviewed and it was they all setting up and they had this little footage of her just chatting to the guy, you know, asking him things she was talking about do you want this little figurine here because I've seen it before and it looked like it was coming out of my ear is it okay there you know little daft things that she was saying just as very much her and that was really helpful cuz I was like okay she's got a she had a slightly naughty sense of humour she was talking about her neck and how your neck goes first and whether she'd get it done and things like this so that was fun just to see and also I watched her on Swap Shop cuz I wanted to see how she was with children and I remembered her being on Swap Shop and I remember some I remember not coping with it very well great at first because she was some kid had start of going where will you be in the event of a nuclear war you know will you be in the bunker and she was like 'uh uh well..' you know you could see her getting a bit 'you're not supposed to ask me things like that' but then she was watching they made her watch four videos music videos and give opinions on them you know like give your out of 10s so that was quite fun cuz it kind of went okay there's a there is a person in there somewhere that's what I did pre-rehearsal. For me, I would say that I'm playing other characters, just as much as Heather to be totally honest so it was kind of a very split focus and Heather really comes to the fore in act in act four without really knowing what was going to be in there I had to kind of focus more on the beginning of of the play but with the read through certainly we just had to kind of dive into to voices or whatever I remember just doing a lot of different voices and seeing what kind of fitted and really up until even in rehearsals I wasn't sure if I was doing Mary the Canary, there was chat about you you being the newsreader, it was all very like very movable parts. You were originally the therapist. I was originally the therapist and then because we cut... you'd had a quick change and quick changes it was like that's impossible yeah so all of that stuff was

it was all up in the air um so in terms of prep I actually I learned the lines which was a waste of time which I did know would be a waste of time but I just thought it's going to stick pretty much close to this I really like being off book as much as possible prior to rehearsals cuz I just can't play with with a script in my hand I really don't like it there was a lot that changed obviously but at least I had a vague idea of some of the more complicated lines have actually stayed quite similar so yeah that

was that was my main thing and then with Heather for me she's the most me of all of the characters like I'm from North Lanarkshire like I'm from near where you know Heather and Damian are from I'm queer myself like I don't know I identified a lot with it I read the book like during the audition process which just to kind of get some more flavour of the different characters and the world and things we always had a draft...I mean we were working through full drafts in the in the R&D days but they were constant they weren't actually in the room as much as writers would usually be because they were constantly writing like every day in room on that was it yeah they were constantly writing so we would we would come in one day and we would kind of think something was solidified then it would be changed which was it was definitely difficult especially if you kind of like quite a few times we're like oh we've locked into something that we enjoy and we've found a way to do it and then it changes and you're like 'ahhh' I do think we all had very good dramaturgical writing heads and we we all did have offers and we all did have

ideas it did become a lot of cooks like it was a lot of cooks trying to really make something the best it could be because we really all cared about the story like it it was like development for too many weeks and it's like this is not rehearsal... rehearsal is... we've done a lot of new writing and you do come in and new writing always evolves because it's bound to the minute you stand up and you say words out loud the the writers themselves will go it's not sounding right coming out and it's not because you're saying it wrong it's because no that doesn't work out of someone's mouth in the same way so they go away and they they just finesse it and maybe things change things can change quite a lot sometimes in terms of actually that whole scene we're not going to do as well it can happen quite late but you feel that you've got a yeah got a solid basis you've usually got like an 80% solid basis you know the arc of the story you know the characters you know where you want the journey to go or where you think you want the journey to go and then the actors come in and they basically their job is or I personally think an actor's job is to take that character develop it bring it to life and then the writer is able to go actually I want that character to do a bit more of this or I want that character do less of that and more of this and so you end up with that 20% is finessing it to get to the stage whereas this really was like a research a development thing of we don't know what the characters are going to do we don't really know what bits of the story because the story is so huge and you're trying to take a book that maybe I don't know does a book take 10 hours to read what on a life it's a 28 year old it's an entire life and you're trying to squeeze it into two hours that's a really huge challenge I don't envy them that's a massive challenge so how do you take out how do you peel away and get the important parts and things like bringing in Margaret Thatcher in the book she's not in the book she's just headers you know and so Damian I think bless him had to face a lot like he says in the play I really want to tell my story and the therapist actually has the line about sometimes re-engaging with your trauma and itself be retraumatizing I think it's really hard for him to come in and suddenly squish his life into two hours I mean it's it must have been traumatizing to write but it's him and his page and then it's in a paper and it's safe and it's sort of there put putting something on stage is suddenly you're handing your story to other human beings who are going to put their little part in it you're telling it out loud you're showing things in a very visceral way so it's a much and the rhythm, a different rhythm, as well each scene driving it forward and there being a reason for every single scene happens storytelling and I think that can be very challenging it was so technical as well so we had to start working in the technical elements from the rehearsal room we had Susan Bear that was the sound designer and Tim that was all AV stuff like they were in the rehearsal room like from week two I think which is really which is a luxury I mean that's definitely where you've got a National Theatre's got the, you know they have the money, to do that and it's it's one of the things that doesn't normally happen in theatre and it's amazing luxury to have that that they are there on the spot to go you know so for example if oh at this point there's a dripping tap or something give me a minute dripping tap appears or or Tim at one point they were playing frog tennis and he's like I want a frog on the scene and I'd worked with him before with puppets and he sort of went can you can me you go in a corner and just play with a puppet I was like yeah so you know you're suddenly and then the next day he's got Kermit the Frog flying up in the air and he's playing with images as people are talking he's hearing what an actor says and going oh there's an image of a rocking horse

then and you're playing that we're playing off the TVs we're playing off the I mean the cameras were a huge part of it

adds so much like it's such a technical show and then and even like things like the quick changes we were having to work that in because that some of that was like oh we'll cut this bit and we're like I can't get right I that can't happen or you know and it's like Noises Off backstage it's great if you've never seen Noises Off it's a play go read it because it's the it's that thing of just seeing an entirely different play happening backstage I say there at one point is great because Maggie's all the time I was like use a camera no no I'm Maggie Maggie doesn't pick up cameras so I get to sit backstage a lot and at one point I early in the run I was kind of like this is great I'm sitting there and I just saw you go 'frrrrrooom' and then Sam go and then Douglas went that way and put on a tash and that way and then and I'm just like great this is just better keep my legs out the way I'm going to trip somebody up you know and the Tron the pass at the back is so thin and I remember like literally like Doug leaping over Douglas and his pants at one point I was like 'frrrrrooom'

like you left and I was like Sam's coming in a minute Douglas and he was like okay I get that all the time with like Heather especially because my first quick change into Heather is so fast from the bullies like it's a really quick change and I'm literally on for the strawberry milkshake bit and then I run round I move my socks so that I've got the pink on but I'm going right around the back of the stage and this what I'm hoping is achieving this I've gone off and then I'm magically appeared here but I am absolutely pelting it and then it's that thing of trying to Nicola Jo

as well has got a couple into the mum that's so fast and then you've got to come in and try and be calm delve into that character delve into that part of the story even though all you've been stressing about it's just like you know so hard, I've got one, yeah you've got freaking one!

I mean yes she's not a very popular figure well certainly not in Scotland she's not a very popular figure and you've heard this ad nauseam but I grew up I was seven when she got in I was 18 when she got out so she was basically my life and this horrific presence in in our lives and it couldn't be an impression because the play was about his imagining of her and that he helped her and she you know she's in frog tennis and she's doing she's coming in V boobs and stuff you know Margaret Thatcher would never do that so it had to be this fine line of okay do take a sort of basic impression and then take the person that helped Damian even though that was a very stern, very Thatcherite attitude and sort of amalgamate the two and then and then she does talk a lot in quotes

and stuff as well so it is it is a sort of tricky balance to play in my head for example I was talking to Sam about this yesterday, in my head when she first sees Wee DB she kind of goes oh that's you as a child okay so you've brought me into your mind because apparently I helped you right then oh you're quite you're an intelligent child I like that you know so this kind of human being going he's quite fun he's quite oh he likes science you know and the sort of letting a maternal side of her come out somehow and a sense of humour come out somehow that she must have had it's such an old cliché but I kind of give them a physicality or something I give them a phrase that I can say like for Maggie it's 'no no no' cuz she always sort of said that in a certain way so I give them a phrase and I give them something physical so that once the costume's on I can always have that as a base to go back to if I'm on stage and go I don't know who I am it's like remember the it's no no no and you do that or whatever you know that's my personal thing but I think every actor's got their own way to kind of take it and shed it and move on to the next one

In terms of like Heather's like flip moment it kind of it's frustrating because it the flip moment happens in the first in the scene where she meets DB for the first time because she gets bullied too and she gets you know called names and can't fit in it's definitely that moment where he starts to quote literature and it's like she just sees everybody as someone that's going to bully her and she just you know put this milkshake over her to like impress a friend and oh it's so nice piecing these things

together even now I'm like oh yeah because we're just so often going through the motions of just trying to get the play on and trying and I'm like oh yeah like seeing him as this enemy and then he quotes the things that only she understands and then I doubt that this is exactly what happened to Damian but we have to move quickly through this play so like that scene in Act 4 in the library is this amalgamation of I'm sure lots of conversations that they probably had where he revealed little bits about himself and the abuse and things but we move really quickly so we have to get into a state where that feels like a trusting atmosphere and one thing I will say is that I really struggled with the use of the camera at that point for me as an actor which I've been told and have and I agree with now isn't what the audience is getting but there's a really weird thing with the use of the camera I think I'm the only person that does it that's why I struggled with it I'm the person that picks up a camera and puts it on the person who's they're talking to and I while they're talking about such intimate things and saying you can't tell anyone it always felt really horrible for me to pick that up and like it felt really exploitative it felt to me like I was like oh yeah tell me your story and I'll broadcast it to these people that are sitting out there whereas it what's actually doing and I had to eventually trust was that it's inviting people it's from their perspective, it's counterintuitive as an actor

for me to be like 'don't tell anyone' and I'm like focusing in and trying to engage.

I know Sam really struggled with it initially because he wants to

look in my eyes and it just seemed like such a... because he's looking down the lens.. so we're we're experiencing a really tricky moment there which apparently is not seen which is great and that's what we want oh obviously well it changes more more for we Wee DB but the moment that he comes out to officially I think anyone is Heather in Brighton in the quiz uhhuh and that moment I know we talked about this moment where she says gay then and like Sam... like Suba had this lovely direction of like just this wanting to instinctively move away because anytime someone called you gay they were physically attacking you either or verbally attacking you one of the two and he'd experienced both so like just waiting on her reaction makes you go like this is a this over like not only is this just over but you're going to actually reject me in a really horrible way and then like just this little lean back in when I'm like okay and it's just like a really simple it's the first time anyone's he's said what he is out loud and anyone's accepted him yeah huge huge moment. I think there's a moment when the majorettes come in when she's basically sort of saying no look you really have to you told me you want to relive you've got to do right so get on with it and relive there's a bath get in it tell your story very practical you know patient I think that I do love that line about the medicine is harsh but the patient needs it in order to live. In my head I've just decided well sod you I'm going to do section 28 then we're not having this nonsense you're going to we're not having you become gay because you're not going to sort your life out you know in her little narrow-minded way sort of she has those moments when she kind of digs in and goes helping we're going to sort you out enticing Wee DB into basically selling his dad down the swanny I mean it doesn't it doesn't it plays out in her head I'm not sure how it goes to the audience but that kind of thing of here's a sweetie here's a sweetie what do you want from the handbag you want the shears excellent now I can sort your dad out and shut Ravenscraig and you you'll be all the better for it

I hope people recognise that how damaging trauma in whatever from whatever aspect is and don't bloody do it you know be kind because that is that just you do people do lose that little vital spark that was them and I think that's absolutely tragic and horrible and any story that reminds me of how difficult it has been for people to be who I am is a good thing like and that you know um I'm sure there will be younger people coming to see this and things that you know really aren't aware of that or or it's just it's just a different way of showing that story and a very specific way of showing that story and the nuances within that I think that can only be a good thing.

MAGGIE & ME|

BETH AND JOANNE

Damian is alive Anton Chekhov is dead William Shakespeare is dead you can do what you like with their work and also his involvement it was slightly it was a bit offputting for me to begin with because I thought that's a lot of pressure and I knew by that point the story wasn't you know it's not a fairytale it it was a hard sell in parts so that was kind of offputting for me and then until that last meeting I just thought just get out your own head and listen and enjoy it and yeah by the end of that I was like oh I have to do this so the thing that I was most nervous about ultimately became the thing that made me want to do it strangely.

You know I do also play Damian but in a much younger version, my process always sort of revolves around movement my body and how I sort of internalise to externalise things and quite often work from the outside in actually and I think for this project in particular that all be I'm playing Damian for me I think much less so than you it's it's not been a case of and I don't think it is for you anyway of replicating which is absolutely not what it is I don't think do that he would want that did he and he's no and he's made noise he doesn't win that as which is lovely and that's great um having the Memoir was invaluable yeah totally particularly for myself from growing up from I start the play at the age of four end the play age of 18 there's various ages that come sort of throughout this journey and so I suppose coming into the project what I could begin to start to develop and work on and sort of explore is what it is physically to be these ages what it is physically to to grow up how your body changes with puberty with growth spurts with getting to high school and trying to hide and mask yourself ultimately which is what Daman had to do right um he could not tell the world didn't feel comfortable to tell the world who he was at these particular ages because of adversities and the rest of it so again sort of how that manifested within the body therefore how that would then affect the voice how that would then affect the gate the walk that's stuff which I could do with the very earliest draft of the script taking away any sort of experiences that may or may not be in the play but are in the book I could work on that.

It is an exciting process that sort of devising nature, I think everybody has had their different challenges with it is sort of figuring out what my character knows and what they don't know obviously 28-year-old version of Damian throughout this play knows ultimately how relationships end up that are in his mind knows you know what ultimately his view of Maggie is and it's you know the most kind of base example of that I think where the difficulty comes for me I think particularly within the process of the rewrites and how the plays come about is if one detail is changed yeah then the timeline which I've sort of created for myself for the consciousness of what I know and what I don't know which then affects what I hear which is also happening on stage and what I cannot hear for example if a character comes in and you know Gary in a present day version of somebody else that's in his life have a conversation which I can't hear cuz I don't know that they're still friends or I don't know that potentially something has happened to them you know there's big things that I cannot know which happen in the play which Daman takes the 2 hours and 45 minutes of the play to sort of come to terms with so once minor detail is changed in that timeline or that consciousness for me and I'm back to square one of knowing I need to retrace my steps I need to reblock I need to I need to reassess what do I know what do I not know I am on stage for most.. I we got a 30 second run around where I can dab my face and have a drink of water I'm there the whole entire time so my process with that particularly would slightly freak me out because as actors we need the text I have a lot of text to learn and say

cuz it's a very separate thing to Damian's life and the the book and this the story to our text our script as actors and that's been a real hard thing cuz I think a lot of us were like well we can't we can't sort of say anything where is an actual fact very quick that we had to go that's not our jobs that's the

producers jobs you know we actors hired to work on this text here so we did have to sort of get quite brutal in certain parts with timelines and you know meanings and making sense of it for ourselves cuz it's so densely packed and I think there in lies the beauty of it there is a lot going on you will not be sitting for a second bored cuz you're like what who Thatcher? tutus? but to get it to that point has been yeah it's been a lot of brain power for us as an ensemble when I finished reading the first draft that I got I cried and I thought that's not that doesn't happen every day you know so go on your gut go on instinct and yes it's not perfect at all jump in feet first and I think that's what we all sort of have done but even in the space even in the rehearsals there was never a can we sit and discuss it was very much of we were breathing as one um the whole entire cast I mean it's such a beautiful ensemble piece that yeah I dread to think where we'd be if it wasn't with this specific group of people we've really looked after each other you know anything bad that happens you can always learn something or there's always something to glean from it that's positive and throughout this process our camaraderie our kindness our care has been solid from the off we have been a unit and that doesn't often happen anywhere in life especially in this industry I'm assured it doesn't really happen in theatre a lot either just really we again we were all after the same one goal which was this is such a beautiful story we've got the privilege of sharing it and we can't be the ones to [___] it up so that kind of bound us fast and we all had meltdowns on various days and it was all okay and everybody was supported and you know and I suppose there could in lesser hands with you saying your things I could have been like oh shut up and get on with it or you know we could have really there could have been devises very quickly whereas anybody could have the floor at any time and it was supported and it was held and there was no question too stupid or ridiculous or you know we absolutely were like ask it and we you we'll support you in it so I'm yeah grateful it's been a tough process but I'm grateful for the people that I've been in the trenches with

There is a helpful nature that we have this book to go off we have Damian's memoir we also have Damian you know the real physical embodiment of the man in the room yeah um and have him at the other end of a phone or an email and he has been wonderful he was very open with that which was great which was you know fantastic couldn't couldn't ask for any more than that and then the flip side of that is Damian so these little quirks or something that maybe we might think oh let's try this this might be interesting for me as a performer or maybe this might lend itself to the story or to the scene there is a limitation on what we can bring I think further than Damian though something which is I don't know if it's help or hindrance but there is a definite weight of responsibility with this particular piece because of the Memoir and how much the Memoir itself means to people yeah you know I'm from Glasgow my family's from Glasgow and my mum was telling me when I got the job that there people that she worked with when the cast was announced like oh my I've got that book I've read that book and it's so beloved it's it's incredible how many people that I speak to that have have the book already know the story before seeing the play advertised it was sold out before any of us were announced crazy you know that so that that's the power of the book for sure and the book helped a lot of people from my understanding even things like you go and look in the Amazon reviews for it is and the just it's beautiful watching and sort of reading what people have said about this book and how it's helped them how Damian's story of sort of overcoming these adversities and finding out who he is and sort of questioning all of that during quite a difficult time and quite a difficult place so there's a definite responsibility there of representing something which is so kind of prominently helped people in many ways yeah to deliver that just there's a real beauty and there's a real privilege in getting to depict Damian in the story and the privilege of us both being able to portray him in this in our way but equally yeah you don't have that free 'oh but what if'... you know cuz you're always sort of referred back to his opinions and Damian's story essentially so you can try it but it might not get through

When it was first brought in and I was like I'm not touching my camera there's something so pleasing I kept saying that word a lot that's so pleasing it's so pleasing because it just it I think it there's such a vibrancy with marrying the two together it's sort of like it's so wrong but it it's so right but you're well you can speak to that cuz I get I get on the cameras I get I'm not aware of I'm focusing out but

you've got one in your face I've got one in my face and quite a um quite an intimate a very intimate moment the most one of the most intimate points for you that's been challenging that's been a conversation which has been going on in terms of whether or not that has to be the case and it does and I've been told and I sort of I do now understand it from out front yeah I you know cast as well that thing you were saying and then when you do watch it when we'd shown runs and the one sort of resounding note that come out of it from audience members who were invited in was at that moment just how heart breaking and piercing but obviously Sam doesn't get to see that cuz he's standing living it And I also did I get to see them and I have shared that with them I was like it is worth it for that but that's a difficult thing to tell a performer when you're stood sat trying to deliver it's it's a weird sharing of the two these two should not be together but in this they are yeah and I think also that that's it's a difficult part of the job but it is part of the job is that ultimately it's for yeah the audience and that's something that as an actor you have to trust so if your director tells you it's working out front and you know like Gary, Douglas another great member of our cast has relayed that they have gone out and watched because they're not needed in that scene and they've said it absolutely works is really powerful out front obviously as the actor it's it's a very hard thing to do because there is no connection I'm not connect well I'm sort of connecting with a human being whilst not looking at them telling them for the first time some real trauma that I've experienced in my life and that feels very alienating and you're also doing it down the lens which is it's not even acting for camera cuz acting for camera is this the camera is there but I'm talking to you where Sam is very much doing that that's a whole other level of skill and weirdness it's bizarre you know you for example you ask somebody what did you have dinner last night and the first thing you go is um so you go up into thought right you go what did you have for dinner last night or you search for thoughts right which I'm not able to do so and that was wrestle early on in rehearsal when we're still bumbling about with lines and stuff because of rewrite so I'm I can't even like think about my line I'm like oh gosh I'm just going to need to stare down the barrel of this lens and hope for the best so yes that is tricky but that is part of the job I suppose is that I have to park that because it's not about my experience really it'd be nice if I could have that but if I don't it is about the audience it is about them and if they get what they need from that if they get what the story needs from that then that's and they really do it's so beautiful and again because we're so used to watching TV weirdly when you're on stage doing it live you want people to be watching you but because we've got these TVs here they just naturally gravitate towards it so yeah I know it's been a tough old sell but it does work

My 10 o'clock number is that like last big final speech where everybody leaves and it's just me in a spotlight telling the harrowing tale that's sort of permeated throughout the piece yeah I start at 7 / 7:30 and I'm like oh God how am I going to get there and initially I would be panicked so I'd be in scenes in the First Act thinking about that and again my I don't say lack of experience my time not spent in theatre, I'm theatre trained, but that leave it alone because the train leaves the station at 7:00 7:30 and you do that scene and you do that scene and you do that scene and then by the time you get there you are ready to do that and that's been such a gift of learning on this because when I work in TV and film it's like drop it and go you know day one on things are like so you're getting strangled today or your husband's left you or your bloody mum's dead you know what I mean you have to come and bring it so it's been really lovely enjoying the process of theatre again because yeah that's always there looming but you arrive there through the process of doing it but yeah that big that big old speech at the end because it's his catharsis as well and it's almost like a sort of this is what it's about for him you know that releasing of being able to release that shame and upset and horror sharing it and I've said this a lot in a rehearsal room Illuminating dark spaces doesn't make them scary anymore so that sort of Illuminating and giving light and breath to these terrible traumatic experiences and that when I've done that is that's me done I know we've got a lovely little bit at the end but when that's done that's me it's great I'm sort of like ah I can be here in the space you know I had this sort of very physical sequence where ultimately what's going on is I'm getting beaten by my mum's then boyfriend with a rocking horse and sort of smacked about with it basically and to sort of simulate this there's a whole sort of physical piece where I'm sort of throwing myself around about the floor rocking backwards and forwards and one thing about it though is I find it really helpful I

found it very difficult for a while not necessarily the sort of physical demand of it but the sort of mental thing of A going there is is hard with the physical stuff and then immediately it finishing and sort of going to a blackout to then grabbing a pair of shoes from the side of the stage and coming back then sitting and the light's going up and it's like it's it's all fine it's 12 hours later and that's not all fine but you know it's 12 hours after the fact and then we go into a song and dance and and it's so there's this sort of escalation to yeah you've got a lot of key moments where it's like big gear shifts we all do to a degree but certainly yours are certainly a bit more varied should we say yeah I will say that it's helpful you know my work is very physical anyway it's how I like to work so I find that helpful to getting to the end of the play in terms of externalising to internalise this trauma but it's it's a difficult shift because it is quite a significant shift of where you where I think it's the first time you see real violence in the play well actually the scene just before I'm sort of pushed into a wardrobe and then a wardrobe toppled off of a hill but this is the first time you see I think real violence which is a big shift.

For Damian and for this story specifically yes we depict horrible trauma and horrors but the hope you know there's true hope in this there's magic and there is a happy ending he survived so I don't want people to go away constantly thinking of the trauma but yes that happened but look where he is now. I think as well as hope confidence, confidence in yourself to be open with who you are and know that is enough and be open in your wants and desires and feel the ability to share that with people share yourself with people and know that is okay yeah and should be celebrated it's not okay it should be celebrated it's amazing and again stories like this plays like this thinking of who we don't know who's coming to see it you know we we're so mired in the ah don't know my lines what what makes sense where's my costume you forget you know what if we have got impressionable young people who are scared to come out or have those conversations or something like this would just be pure magic to to see there and I've said that as well in some of the press stuff like anybody who does feel marginalized or othered or doesn't fit in and if they see themselves depicted here then it's like well we're here so your tribe is out there come get us we're here as your sort of support system and we can be your family cuz sadly there are a lot of people out there who are still in Damian's situation in this country.