**ZooCo/Improbable: Perfect Show for Rachel  
Creative Responses**

During the original rehearsal process for Perfect Show for Rachel, three disabled/neurodiverse artists – Anita Wadsworth, Meg Fozzard and Tina Crawford – were invited in to observe. They went away to craft their creative responses in text, image and sound, which are shared in this document.

**Pressings by Anita Wadsworth**   
[Click here to listen to Anita Wandsworth’s Pressings.](https://soundcloud.com/barbican-access-guides/pressings-by-anita-wadsworth?si=3c9b55928c2e43c4a9ae4d00ad330d11&utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing)

**Never the Same Twice**   
**A reflection on rehearsals by Meg Fozzard**

*'It’s not perfect show for everyone, its Perfect Show for Rachel’*

On my way to the Stanley Arts rehearsal space, I get an email from Zoo Co’s Community Producer, Sarah. ‘My number is XXXXX XXXXXX. Let me know when you arrive and I’ll come meet you outside Stanley,’ she says.

I call and she picks up. It sounds like mayhem on the end of the ‘phone. When I see her outside, she confesses that they are rehearsing a fight scene and she had no idea what I was saying either and just had to assume that it was me calling.

When I get downstairs, Flo (the Artistic Director of Zoo Co and Rachel’s sister) explains the seemingly random chaos: ‘Rachel loves violence.’ Everyone is everywhere all at once and I don’t know where to look, where I’m supposed to look. But it is not random at all. It’s being choreographed. There’s Flo, discussing where everyone should be on the stage with a choreographer. They ask everyone to go at 70% speed so that they can figure out where they need to be. Something is coming together, I’m just not quite sure what it is yet and how it works in relation to Perfect Show for Rachel.

The next scene that is being devised goes through many names. First ‘Rachel Bootcamp', then ‘Rachel Academy’, before settling on the old army phrase, ‘Rachel Basic Training’. The cast and crew discuss the things that they have learnt that Rachel likes from working with her. They include:

• Lizzo/Kylie songs

• Repetition

• Whoopee cushions

• Getting to the point

• Laughing, crying and shouting

• Snacks

• Sending people out/off stage

This culminates in a scene where the cast line up on stage, saluting to their commander.

DOES RACHEL WANT FART JOKES?’

Sir, yes sir.

DOES RACHEL WANT KYLIE?

Sir, yes sir.

DOES RACHEL WANT SHOUTING?

Sir, yes sir.

DOES RACHEL WANT EXPOSITION?

Sir, no sir.

DOES RACHEL WANT CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT?

Sir, no sir.

I kind of wish that this scene could come first at every performance to explain what is going to be happening in the show, but that’s not up to me. It’s up to Rachel. The tech desk, where Rachel sits when she arrives at around 2pm, has been custom made for her. There are almost 50 buttons with pictures on them. They link to a computer and then to QLab. ‘It’s all very Wizard of Oz,’' Rachel Sampley, the Lighting and Video Designer, tells me. Flo has discussed with me before the importance of this desk. They were going to have someone else controlling the tech desk under Rachel’s direction, but then that wouldn’t be Perfect Show for Rachel. Maybe Rachel won’t want to show up that night, in which case an audience member will be invited to recreate the show as it was the night before.

There’s more to the set-up than just the tech desk, though. There’s a camera and TV screen so Rachel, and the audience, can see what Rachel is doing on the tech desk. Flo says that at first they weren’t sure how Rachel would respond to it, but now she basically demands it. ‘Rachel on the telly’ is a phrase that I will hear a lot from Rachel during the rest of the rehearsal. Another phrase heard often from the direction of the tech desk is ‘come on’. ‘Rachel basically tolerates us rehearsing,’ Flo tells me. Get to the point! I also learned, in that first hour in the rehearsal space with Rachel, that sometimes she needs questions asked of her to figure out what she wants. ‘Do you want to say hello?’ turns into ‘do you want everyone to say hello to you?’ And so, we go around the group and everyone says hi. Then there’s a warm up for the cast ahead of learning the next piece of choreography. Flo sees me moving along and invites me to join in. It’s that kind of place. Then a piece is choreographed along to Who’s Got the Bag (21st June) by The Streets. If you're wondering how this fits in with the themes of Perfect Show for Rachel, apparently Rachel finds it really funny when things go missing. One of the performers, Folarin, is at the front of the stage and pretends to be a news broadcaster. ‘We interrupt this broadcast with breaking news...’ Bags are flying through the air as the garage track blares, then everyone moves in slow-mo as the track slows down. There’s yelling. I won’t be able to get the song out of my head on the way home.

Then it is time to ‘play the game’, which is Rachel’s way of saying that she’s ready to begin rehearsing the show in earnest. Here’s what I was able to jot down about the first 10 minutes before I gave up and just watched and enjoyed it:

• ‘The game’: only Rachel knows the rules

• Flo gets sent out/off stage

• ‘Human bowling’: the cast are pins

• Flo sings Soul Sister, one of their favourite songs to sing with Rachel

• ‘Rachel goes on holiday’: on the screen and narrated by Flo we hear about how, during lockdown, the family weren’t able to see Rachel for a long time because of the restrictions and when they were lifted, they went on their first family holiday together in Devon

The beauty of the show, I think, is the fact that it’s never going to be the same twice. At a previous rehearsal, Rachel pressed the same button – ‘Human bowling’, I can see why it is a favourite – 17 times in a row. The cast hated it. I’m sure Rachel loved it.

When I was in the rehearsal space, Flo was not sure how it would end yet. It’ll probably be Rachel’s call. There’s always the added fear when creating something that is close to your heart, as I believe Flo has done, that people aren’t going to like it. I agree on a creative level, this show might not be for everyone. But I don’t think that matters so much. If there were more shows that were even close to being a perfect show for Rachel, then the need for Perfect Show for Rachel wouldn't be as pressing. If you don’t like it, fine. As Flo puts it, it’s not perfect show for everyone, it’s Perfect Show for Rachel.

**Sketches by Tina Crawford**On the following pages, find Tina Crawford’s Sketches.

**A sketch of a couple of people

Description automatically generated**

**A sketch of a person's face

Description automatically generated**

**A sketchbook with scribbles on it

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**A sketch of a person's face

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