

Director & Playwright's intentions

Playwright's intentions:

- o By writing the script with a lack of stage directions or lack of set, it blows it open the play and allows more interpretation of the story.
- o He tried to keep it loyal to Mark Haddon, sticking to what he had written.
- o He used direct speech so that it would affect the people they are talking to.
- o He kept it unchronological so that people could perceive what it feels like to be Christopher.
- o He thought it important that Christopher's narration was revealed somehow, he didn't want to break the rules of Mark's book (Siobhan gets to read Christopher's book).



Director's intentions:

- o She wanted the play to be immersive; she wanted the audience sitting in the round so that they were breathing the same air as Christopher does - So then you are completely inside his head.
- o She wanted the setting to be more abstract, so that it was 'inside Christopher's head, in his imagination (Wanted to create the laboratory of his brain - & at the beginning a crime/police investigation layout)
- o As Christopher changed his thoughts so much and the scenes often shifted to different places/times, Marianne felt that the jumps between the scenes needed to be agile.



He discovers his neighbour's (Mrs Shears) dog, Wellington, dead in the front garden so he decides to do some detective work to find out who killed him and to write it down in a book. This leads him to discover a web of lies through his constant detective work with his neighbours. Ed, his father, had told him that his mother died of a heart attack when instead; his mother had had an affair with Mr Shears and left with him. This made Christopher distrust Ed and so he ran away to go live with his mum (he knew where she lived as he found letters from his mum that Ed had hidden). The play ends with Christopher and Judy (his mum) leaving Mr Shears and leaving by themselves with Ed trying to build up Christopher's trust in him.

Backstory

- ❖ He notices things in minute detail and finds metaphors body language/facial expressions confusing, that's why he prefers animals (objects) because they are much more straightforward than people.
- ❖ He is very good at maths and is fascinated by space.
- ❖ He and his dad, Ed, live in Swindon.
- ❖ He dislikes strangers and he hates the colour yellow.
- ❖ His favourite colours are red and metal-coloured.

Christopher

15 YEARS
OLD



Middle Class

Relationships

Strangers or people Christopher doesn't like aren't trusted, and he only really trusts Ed and Siobhan (and Judy) as he has been around them long enough to be able to predict them- as he has asperger's he can't read emotions and body language which makes people very unpredictable which in turn makes him anxious as he doesn't know what they are going to do next. He doesn't like small talk as he sees no point in it (he is very direct) so he doesn't have many (or any) friends. He loves his pet rat Toby as he finds him straightforward and more comforting than people.

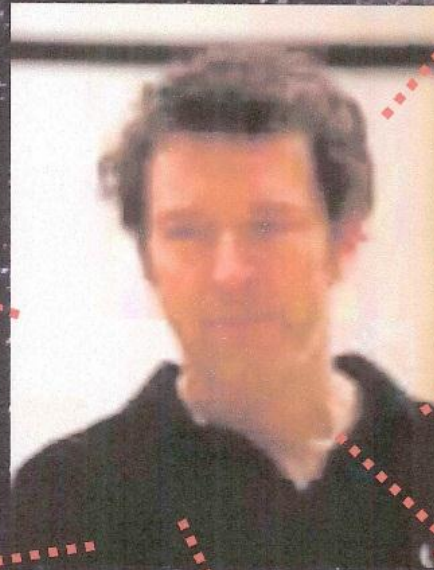
Analysis

Other characters can find him hard to deal with for instance Mrs Shears and Mr Shears who both feel that he gets in the way of their relationship with Judy/Ed. Siobhan knows he's extremely smart is affectionate for him but knows he won't reciprocate and that it's better she focuses on his studies. Mrs Alexander feels sorry for him and his family situation and chats with him even though he doesn't like it. Ed and Judy both love Christopher but get frustrated with him and the difficulties of his condition, especially Judy.

Ed and his wife Judy had a son called Christopher. He had asperger's and when he grew older Judy especially found Christopher hard to control/deal with. She started having an affair with her next door neighbour (Mr Shears) and then later on decided to leave with Mr Shears and create a new life elsewhere without Ed or Christopher. Ed was devastated and thought the easiest way to tell Christopher and to stop him from asking questions and hurting Ed's feelings was to tell Christopher that his mum had died of a heart attack. Ed did his best as a single parent and managed quite well by himself. He started seeing Mrs Shears however one night they argued and he killed Wellington, Mrs Shear's dog, and once Christopher found out, he left to live with his mum. At the end of the book. Ed has to earn back Christopher's trust.

Ed

Mid-fourties



Backstory

- Ed is a plumber.
- He is a single dad, living with Christopher in Swindon.
- He loves his son and persuades the Head teacher to allow him to sit his maths A' Level.
- Sometimes, however, Ed's behaviour reveals how wearied he is by Christopher's condition. He can get frustrated, even to the point of lashing out.

Middle Class

Analysis

Christopher doesn't really appreciate Ed and what he does for him. Judy felt that he was better cut out for looking after Christopher as she thinks he's a lot more patient. Mrs Alexander pities him as Judy left him and he had to look after Christopher by himself

Ed's relationship with Christopher

Ed finds it hard to understand Christopher and their relationship can be quite strained, which isn't unlike other teenagers and fathers, but there's added difficulties as Christopher has asperger's. They do have a relationship where they can communicate affection, the little that they can, by the touching of their fingertips. Later on in the play, Ed becomes more volatile as he has to close Christopher's investigation down and regain control for Ed to survive and keep things manageable. They start to come to a crisis point as the play develops and Ed explodes by lashing out at Christopher. So when Christopher finds out his mum's alive and he sees the letters, it changes everything. In the end, Ed realises that Christopher isn't a lad he needs to control and he finds a new love and respect for him that's open and tries to live more mutually with him.

Siobhan

Middle Class

Siobhan is the narrator of Christopher's story and also she helps Christopher to think about how to keep calm in difficult situations, including appearing in his memory to remind him of the advice she's given him.

Relationship with Christopher

She understands him like nobody else does. She's his guiding light and it's suggested that she loves him but knows she's no use to him if she allows it to takeover. Instead she focuses on being a really good teacher and being slightly removed from his life. She's very honest with him, respects him and she treats him like an adult, not like he has a condition which might hinder him.

Backstory

- ❖ Siobhan is Christopher's teacher at school.
- ❖ She has a train set which Christopher likes to play with and she helps him to write his book about his detective work.
- ❖ She is the person Christopher confides in when he finds out about the letters his father has hidden from him.



Early fifties

Analysis

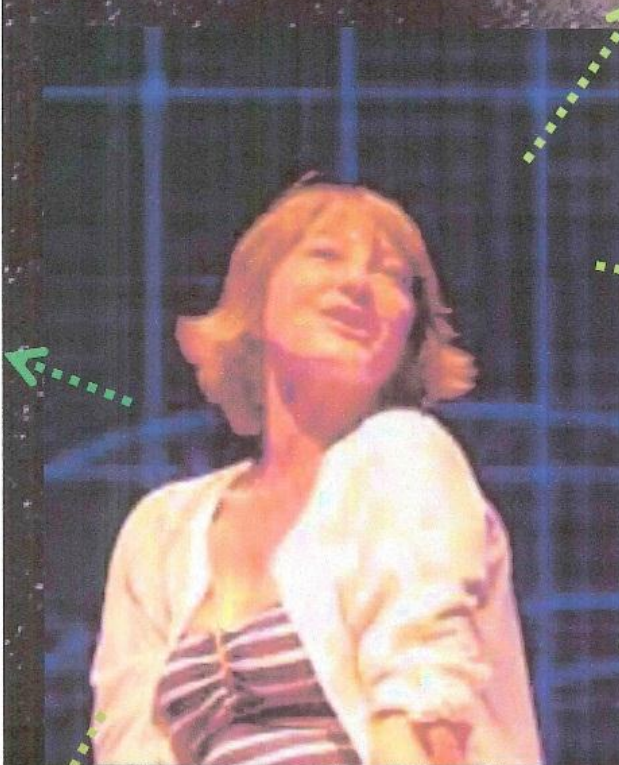
Ed is grateful for Siobhan's help and her ability to teach Christopher also for allowing Christopher to take his maths A-Level early. Christopher doesn't show much emotion to Siobhan, however it shows when he tells her things that he trusts her and his trust is very hard to get showing that he relies on her even possibly more than his parents.

Judy used to live with Ed and Christopher however she started having an affair with her next door neighbour, Mr Shears as she found it difficult to cope with Christopher's condition and felt isolated in the home and in her marriage. So she persuaded Mr Shears to leave with her and she left Ed and Christopher as she thought they'd be better without her. She sent letters to Christopher but never got a reply which she assumed was because Christopher was angry at her however, she didn't know Ed had told Christopher she was dead and that he had been hiding the letters. When Christopher found out Ed killed Wellington, he ran away to live with Judy and Mr Shears. But, Mr Shears only wanted Christopher to stay for a few days whereas Judy wanted it more indefinitely. Judy and Mr Shears argued about it and in the end she left with Christopher and now they're living by themselves in shared accommodation.

Relationship with Christopher

They had a good relationship when Christopher recalls a memory of them in Cornwall. However she went through a period of depression and was not coping well with Christopher's autism. Their relationship is a lot more complicated than other mother-son relationships as Christopher doesn't like to be touched and does not do small talk-she has to sit back on a natural maternal instinct. After she had left, she had to deal with the guilt and shame of leaving Christopher and I think she expressed that through her letters to Christopher. When they are reunited, Judy has to sit back and wait for Christopher to trust her

Judy



Analysis

Ed doesn't understand why Judy left him and is still very broken by it. Mrs Alexander doesn't know Judy is alive as Christopher thought she was dead and said so to her. Christopher doesn't really think she's done any wrong and blames Ed for everything instead. He doesn't understand relationships so he doesn't blame Judy.

Backstory

- ❖ She now lives in Willesden with partner Roger (Mr Shears)
- ❖ She works as a secretary for a factory that makes things out of steel
- ❖ She's forbidden by Ed to come back to the house to see Christopher
- ❖ She fell in love with Mr Shears but at the time told him she couldn't leave Ed because of Christopher

Mid forties

Working
Class

Themes & Issues

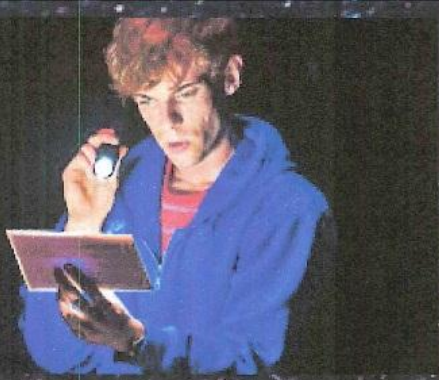
Relationships: Christopher makes us reassess how we view our relationships, he does not show love in the usual ways that we are accustomed to, but instead he shows his feelings through his honesty and his actions (for instance when he goes onto the train tracks to rescue toby – risking his life for toby which shows that he cares for the animal and doesn't want him to be killed).

Science and maths: This theme links the different factors in the story – Christopher wants to be a scientist and it's his imagination which drives his need to solve the murder of Wellington which leads to him uncovering a lot more than he bargained for.

Independence: Because Christopher has autism, he has to depend a lot on the people around him (Siobhan, Ed). He finds it hard to deal with new environments so finds it hard to travel by himself especially to busy places where he gets overloaded with too much information which causes his body to almost shut down, so when he travels by himself to find his mum, he shows he's starting to get his own independence.

The spectrum: Christopher has autism and he says 'I find people confusing. This is for two main reasons. The first main reason is that people do a lot of talking without using any words...The second main reason is that people often talk using metaphors.' Christopher makes us strip down our language so that it is a direct reflection of what we think and feel which allows us to understand Christopher and other people with autism a little better.

Coping with loss: Each major character has in some way experienced loss, and it's Ed's loss of his wife and his choices after that that triggers most of the events in the story.



Asperger's Syndrome

= A developmental disorder related to autism and characterized by awkwardness in social interaction, diction in speech, and preoccupation with very narrow interests.

They find it a lot harder to communicate and interact with others and often do not pick up on little signals (through facial expressions and body language) which indicate what others are feeling.

Social Difficulties

- ❖ Difficulty understanding gestures, facial expressions & tone of voice
- ❖ Difficulty knowing when to start/end a conversation & choosing topics to talk about
- ❖ They can use complex words & phrases but may not fully understand their meaning
- ❖ They talk very literally and find it difficult to understand jokes, metaphors and sarcasm

Main characteristic of Asperger's

- ❖ Love of routines: tries to make the world slightly less confusing for them – less unexpected
- ❖ Special interests: an intense interest in a certain subject
- ❖ Sensory difficulties: They can be intensified or underdeveloped. Certain senses may trigger certain reactions like Christopher doesn't like the colour yellow.

SPECTRUM DISORDER

It's called this is because its affects people in many different ways and to varying degrees

Interaction Difficulties

- ❖ struggle to make and maintain friendships
- ❖ They don't understand the unwritten 'social rules', e.g. they may stand too close to another person, or start an inappropriate topic of conversation
- ❖ They find other people unpredictable and confusing
- ❖ They become withdrawn and seem uninterested in other people, appearing to be in their own world
- ❖ They may behave in what may seem an inappropriate manner.

Be literal- Because they don't understand the different connotations of different words and phrases that have now developed, they speak literally as they don't really know/understand how to otherwise.

Keep your distance from other people – they find it hard to trust people and strangers that they don't know/trust would make them uncomfortable and they would most like try to avoid them

Show that you are easily overwhelmed- When there are too many senses for them to focus on, they feel overwhelmed as they can't process everything, so if in this position scream or curl into foetal position (something that will show that you're trying to block out the world)

In Christopher's case, he doesn't like being touched and it's only with his parents that he allows touch as a sign as love or affection however when others touch him you have to make sure that you scream and physically flinch to show your discomfort in being touched e.g. when the policeman touches Christopher.



Don't make eye contact- People with Asperger's don't feel a need to make eye contact because it doesn't serve a purpose to them it can also make them feel uncomfortable especially if they are with strangers or people they don't like/ trust

Have a stim e.g. tapping, flicking, fiddling- it shows when they are stressed or uncomfortable and is something that they can focus on and distract themselves from the situation at hand. (therefore relaxing them)

When you have the chance to talk about the one topic you are intensely keen on, show it: Eyes go wide or even (for Christopher) turn them up to the sky as his interest is in the stars, curl your mouth into a smile/grin or show you're excited, speak quickly cause you're trying to get as much information about the subject out as you can, your hands/arms could be animated almost drawing in the air what you're describing and depending if you're thinking or focused, you should pace or stand still. By pacing you're showing that your thoughts are continuously ongoing but if you're focused you should stand still or limit your movements to show that you're channelling all your energy into this particular thought/description.

Their unique physical style combines movement, design music and text to create a believable and immersive experience for the audience.

Frantic Assembly



As well as their productions, Frantic Assembly have created a program called Learn & Train which introduces 6,000 participants a year to the company's process of creating theatre, in many different settings.

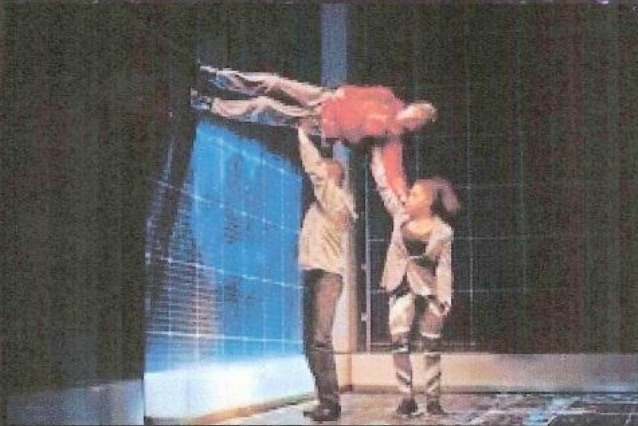
The performances are very physical, so the actors in the group have to stay fit so that they are in shape to perform the many physical stunts that they have to do.

They do a warm up in the morning which involves a lot of yoga and pilates to work on their core strength; They do sit-ups, press ups and circuit training.

After, to get their brains engaged, they do brain tasks like counting games and memory exercises.

During the rehearsals, they tend to do their physical work in the morning (as they are warmed-up) then in the afternoon they look into the text.

They work from a devised script, which is developed over a long time. They have a 6 week period to piece together the production where they try to fit the body of the show around the skeleton of the script in their rehearsals. They test different ideas, move them around and try new combinations right up until the end of the rehearsal period.



Frantic Assembly specialize in incorporating physical theatre into their performances. They include:

- Lifts
- Choral movement
- Choral speech
- Physical comedy
- Voice and movement
- Dynamic
- Interaction
- Tableaux
- Group rhythm
- Timing
- Balance
- Counter-balance
- Catches
- Rhythm
- Control
- Focus
- Response
- Travelling
- Fluency
- Motif
- Mime



Frantic Assembly's approach