Who is it for?

Who is it for? A key question posed to me by both Vici Wreford-Sinnott and Kaite O’Reilly, and when these incredible women ask you that question, it’s probably a good idea to have a bit think.

Thinking about this has taken up a lot of my time, as well as thinking about my Disability Toolkit. It’s like the foundation work. I realised early on in this, that I wasn’t going to have a completed play by the end. And then I got scared, if I wasn’t going to have a completed thing, how would I ‘prove’ I hadn’t just sat in bed and binged Netflix? Please let me make it known, that this pressure did not come from anyone but me. It’s a product of being in a society which demands proof, value, labour, half-price, discounted, a point, success, an end goal. This may sound familiar to what is expected of disabled people in general and my body and mind can’t live up to that. That’s why I work freelance. I work forty hours a week plus, but that’s my choice, my way, no pressure, can rest if I want, can work in bed if I want, it’s the only way I can function – if I’m in control. Stick me doing that anywhere else and I’ll break in a day.

So I decided to be in control here, by being out of control. What would and could happen if I just delved deep into books, read, watched, absorbed, asked questions, allowed my brain to wander?

Let’s have a bit of a natter about my brain. Today I had a ping while watching summat (drivel, probably drivel, I’ve forgotten, but my brain percolator works really well when I trick it with nonsense and then glance at it quickly, like I do when I’m brushing my teeth and I want to see if I can startle mirror me). I’ll stop there. That’s basically a roundup of, and a welcome to, my brain. It is a high speed thought explosion. In unsafe times it’s a train wreck. Right now, having had the ping earlier, I’m calling the space it currently occupies: Constructive Insanity. I like that. I am officially certified as insane, so I’m allowed to use it.

I was scared of my brain for a very long time, but I don’t think there was ever anything wrong with it. There’s nothing wrong with any of our bodies or brains. It just didn’t fit into society and 9-5 and stress and stuffs just made it implode. Now, I’ve learned to be friends with it. I’ve learned to manage it. I have rules in place, I talk about it, I ask for people to look out for Danger Warnings and that way I manage to wrangle it into some semblance of relative cohesion. At times it infuriates me, and probably infuriates those who’ve been on walks or car journeys with me that have an extra add on to make it into a circle or figure of eight, or wait while I can’t move until I’ve done my Letter Thing. (Far too complicated to explain the Letter Thing here, but can do so upon request if you have a spare week.) Basically, when I can be in a place and space and with people who say ‘Whatever you need to do, you just crack on,’ then my brain is flipping awesome. I love it. And I’m getting more brave in unleashing it.

Also, I’ve just realised I refer to it as a separate entity, and it really does feel like that. Well that’s a thought to ponder further. See this commission is a bit good, innit? Even when you’re trying to write about it being a bit good, and you’re trying to say why it’s necessary, then you have another ping and I’m just going to write that down in my blue notebook, bear with…. Also, need to write down that for some unknown reason my laptop just inserted the word ‘toast’ and maybe I need to think about that too…

So, finally, sorry for the detour, back to the question, who is it for? This commission is selfishly, completely and utterly, for me. Hurrah! I don’t get to do that very often and I am beyond grateful. It has allowed me to go, ‘Hey brain, let’s see what you’ve got today and let’s just follow you’. Turns out that was writing and then making a film about raspberries and Hula Hoops. My brain bypassed the fact that I have no editing skills whatsoever, never done anything like that before, and I followed it. And learned how to do it. And I’m proud of that. I think I’ll follow my brain more often, though only in Constructive Insanity mode, other modes have me out in all hours in my dressing gown communicating with traffic lights, so I’ll just stay indoors then.

It’s also for me because other things I see, aren’t for me. So I’m figuring if I follow my brain and make the sort of thing only it could make, then it should/could/might resonate with other people who don’t see work made for their brains either. And even if it isn’t a complete fit, well it sure as hecky thump won’t be neurotypical so there may be a bit of a ‘Wahey, I’ll make summat for my brain, too!’ sort of Mexican wave conga response. That would be nice.

I’m making it for people who don’t have neurotypical brains, or want to see inside a neurodiverse brain, to show how awesome our brains are if we don’t have to squish them to behave a certain way. Come meet me where I am, for a change, rather than me having to come to you.

I’m making it for people who are anxious about theatre, anxious in general. You can ask ALL the questions, as many as you want, and you can leave for a wee whenever you like and the lights won’t go down and you don’t have to do anything you don’t want and you can hum all the way through if you’d like and do your own version of the Letter Thing.

Please tick, twitch, whatever you need to do, you’re welcome here, this is for you.

I’m making it for people who don’t think theatre is for them, and I’ll bring it to you, because why should my ego say ‘I am the best, come to me?’

I’m making it for people who find getting out all a bit knackering, time consuming, a real ruddy effort. And therefore I would like to respect that you’ve come. Thank you! And I want this to be a piece that could only be possible because you are there. Something that is different every time. I’m thinking that I’ll tell a story based on words you’ve written, or the piece will change because of choices you make. It will be live, it could go wrong, but that’s okay because we’re in it together.

I’m making it for people who will have a cracking night if there are captions and audio description and BSL and don’t have to ask for this, or come at 11am on a Thursday.

I’m not making it for a them and us. Everyone is invited and welcome, but if you’re non-disabled, neurotypical, then this world may not be the one you regularly come to. Isn’t that a good thing? Isn’t is a glorious thing! It’ll be absolutely packed to the rafters with crips, rather than those two reserved seats front left. And then maybe you’ll go to the box office afterwards and say ‘We had no idea that existed, we’ll have more of that sort of stuff, please!’ And then more of that sort of stuff will be made and programmed, not watered down and made all sanitary for the ableds, but brash and bold, and kind and angry, and whatever our bodies and brains and minds want to make. That’s not asking for much. Is it?

I’m making it for me, but by doing that, I’m also making it for you.