

Schools Resource Pack 2017



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ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Contents

Page 2.....	Ramps on the Moon
Page 3.....	Cast and Creative Team
Page 4-6.....	Tommy Plot synopsis
Page 7-8.....	Meeting the Creatives: Kerry Michael, Director
Page 9-12.....	Meeting the Creatives: Inside the Rehearsal Room
Page 13.....	Exploring Tommy
Page 14.....	Game 1: Bomb & Shield
Page 15.....	Game 2: Exaggerate the Action
Page 16-17.....	Activity 1: Character Insight
Page 18.....	Activity 2: Yippee!
Page 19.....	Activity 3: Who Is Driving Your Car?
Page 20-21.....	Activity 4: Journeys
Page 22.....	Activity 5: Theatre Making
Page 23.....	Embedding Accessibility
Page 24-26.....	Workshop Activities with Jamie Beddard
Page 27.....	Do You Want to Work in the Arts?
Page 28-29.....	How Did You Get To Where You Are Now?
Page 30-31.....	Creative Assistant Biographies
Page 32-34.....	Social Model of Disability
Page 35.....	Media & Resources
Page 36.....	Fingerspelling Alphabet

This pack is intended to support your student's experience of *Tommy*, as well as to explore integrated and accessible theatre, employment opportunities and routes into the theatre industry. Many of the exercises in this pack are suitable for groups who have not seen the production.

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Rehearsal photos by Patrick Baldwin & Richard Davenport, Production photos by Mike Kwasniak

Ramps on the Moon

Ramps on the Moon is a ground breaking touring project that sets out to put more D/deaf and disabled people on our stages, in our audiences and in our workforce.



Integrating disabled and non-disabled performers and practitioners, the programme aims to achieve a step change in the employment and artistic opportunities for disabled performers and creative teams, and a cultural change in the participating organisations to enable accessibility to become a central part of their thinking and aesthetics.

Led by New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich, the project brings together a collaborative network of six National portfolio organisation theatres including New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich and strategic partner Graeae Theatre – Birmingham Repertory Theatre, Theatre Royal Stratford East, Nottingham Playhouse, West Yorkshire Playhouse and Sheffield Theatres.

Each of the regional venues are now embedding D/deaf and disabled people throughout their organisations and creating training opportunities and demonstrate good practice in their region.



Each production will include a mix of disabled and non-disabled performers, be an epic piece of ensemble theatre, and have accessibility embedded and included within the aesthetic of the show.

Cast and Creative Team

Cast

Tommy – William Grint
Captain Walker – Max Runham
Mrs. Walker – Donna Mullings
Voice of Mrs Walker - Shekinah McFarlane
Uncle Ernie - Garry Robson
Cousin Kevin - Lukus Alexander
First Officer & Voice of Tommy - Julian Capolei
Second Officer & Voice of Tommy - Matthew Jacobs-Morgan
Acid Queen - Peter Straker
The Lover - Alim Jayda
Hawker - Natasha Lewis
Nurse - Becky Barry
Nurse - Amelia Cavallo
Mrs Simpson - Stacey Ghent
Rev Simpson - Anthony Snowden
Sally Simpson - Amy Trigg
Local lass - Natasha Julien
Local lad - Hearn Sebudo
Specialist & Musical Director - Robert Hyman
Barrister & Drums - Adam Langstaff
Camera man & Guitar - Tony Qunta
Judge & Bass Guitar - Steve Simmonds
All other parts played by the company

Creative Team

Director – Kerry Michael
Dramaturg – Paul Sirett
Designer – Neil Irish
Musical Director – Robert Hyman
Choreographer – Mark Smith
Lighting and AV Designer – Arnim Friess
Sound Designer - Andrew Johnson (for Creative Technology)
BSL Creative Consultants – Jeni Draper and Daryl Jackson
Associate Director – Nicola Miles-Wildin
Fight Director – Bret Yount
Casting Director – Polly Jerrold
Assistant Musical Director – Oliver Vibrans
Assistant Choreographer – Kevin Jewell
Creative Assistant – David Young
Creative Design Assistant – Nikki Charlesworth

Plot Synopsis

The story begins in **2017** with Tommy, now in his seventies, still struggling to come to terms with the things that happened to him as a child and a young man.

We go back in time to **1940**. Tommy imagines his mother meeting his father for the first time on the RAF base where his mum works and where his dad, Captain Walker, is stationed. He imagines their romance and the pain of separation as Captain Walker leaves his pregnant young wife to go to war.



Captain Walker's brother, Uncle Ernie, is visiting Mrs Walker when two soldiers arrive to inform them that Captain Walker is missing in action. They are heartbroken.

Soon after, Mrs Walker gives birth to a baby boy: Tommy.

1945

The war is over. Mrs Walker is celebrating her birthday with her new lover, Frank, when Captain Walker arrives back home. Captain Walker and Frank start to fight, and 4 year-old Tommy walks in. Mrs Walker turns Tommy away so that he can't see the men fighting. But she turns him to a mirror and Tommy can see everything. Captain Walker tries to take out his gun but as they fight Frank shoots Captain Walker dead. Frank and Mrs Walker tell Tommy he must never tell anyone that he saw or heard anything. The police arrive on the scene to question Frank and Mrs Walker. Tommy is visited by the spirit of his dead father who tells him they will be going on an amazing journey together.



In court, Tommy's parents are cleared of murder, but everyone is worried about Tommy who seems to be unable to communicate with anyone.

Tommy has lots of hospital tests and examinations to find out what might be wrong with him, but the doctors can't find anything.

1951

Tommy's tenth birthday, but he still isn't communicating. The spirit of his father appears to him again, to remind him about their amazing journey.

It's Christmas and Tommy's family is celebrating with Reverend Simpson, the Reverend's wife, and their daughter, Sally. He doesn't open any presents, but can sense the presence of his father.

Tommy's mum and Frank are going out for the night, they are a little worried about leaving Tommy with Uncle Ernie, but decide to go out anyway. When they have gone, Uncle Ernie abuses Tommy. But the abuse is cut short when Tommy's mum and her lover return home early. The image of Captain Walker appears to comfort Tommy.



Cousin Kevin is looking after Tommy, but he soon gets bored and starts to use Tommy as a play thing. He takes Tommy to the local church youth club and for a laugh stands him in front of a pinball machine and puts a coin in the slot. Tommy begins to play the pinball machine. He is good. Captain Walker appears to Tommy and Tommy's score gets higher and higher. Everyone is amazed. Reverend Simpson fetches Tommy's mum and her partner. Perhaps there is hope for Tommy after all?

Tommy is taken for more tests. But again, the specialists can find nothing.

A peddler arrives at Tommy's house and convinces Tommy's step-dad, Frank, to take Tommy to a woman he knows who can cure anything.

Tommy is taken to see the Acid Queen. Frank is uncertain about what the Acid Queen intends to do. Is she going to give him drugs? Is she going to have sex with him? He pays her to go ahead, but at the last minute he changes his mind and takes Tommy back home.

1958

Tommy's pinball playing has made him a local star. He has become a Pinball Wizard.

Frank has found a Specialist he thinks can help Tommy. Tommy sees the Specialist, but the tests come to nothing.



Back home, Tommy spends most of his time staring into the mirror in which he saw the murder. His mum loses her temper with him and pushes him into the mirror. The mirror breaks and Tommy relives the murder. Tommy's father appears before him again and tells him it is time to be free from the past. To the amazement of those around him, Tommy tells them he is free. He is ready to communicate with the world.



Tommy becomes a celebrity and everyone wants to cash in on his fame. Uncle Ernie is trying to sell photographs of Tommy and even the Acid Queen tries to get a slice of the action.

As time passes, Tommy's fame grows and grows. His mum and step-dad have got big plans for him and Cousin Kevin basks in the reflected glory. Tommy is on TV; he is everywhere.

Tommy starts to attract followers who come to join his community so that they can learn to be like him. Frank and Tommy's mum are running Tommy's community and have even bigger plans for the future. Meanwhile, Uncle Ernie is making a small fortune selling Tommy products. He has even invented an award for Tommy lookalikes.

Tommy is about to play a mega-gig and Sally Simpson, the Reverend's daughter, is desperate to go. Sally's parents refuse permission for her to go, but she sneaks out to go to the gig anyway.



At the gig, Sally manages to get up on stage and touch Tommy. Before Tommy can react, she is pulled away by security guards and beaten up. Tommy is shocked to see Sally beaten and cancels the gig. Tommy's followers are unhappy that the gig has been cancelled – they were hoping that tonight they might learn how they can be more like Tommy. Their mood grows even uglier when Frank and Uncle Ernie distribute Tommy masks to turn them all into “deaf, dumb, and blind” kids.

When Sally asks Tommy what they need to do to be like him, Tommy tells her that he made a decision to stop communicating when he was a boy and all he ever really wanted was to be like them. The atmosphere in the crowd now grows even tenser and fights start to break out. Tommy's family is badly beaten and Tommy is left cradling his mother.

2017

We come back to the present day as Tommy tries to finally move on from his past.

Meeting the Creatives

An Interview with Director Kerry Michael

Tommy is one of the great cultural treasures of the late 20th century. It started life as the fourth album released by The Who in 1969. It was a concept album before the term was invented. It told a story through song. It gained such a hold on the public imagination that in 1975 renegade film-maker Ken Russell turned it into a star-studded big screen musical which led to its first live staging at the Queen's Theatre, London, in 1979.

The show, as we currently know it, was created for the 1993 Broadway production which was then revised for its West End run at the Shaftesbury Theatre in 1996. *Tommy* is a show with a history. Andrew Clarke spoke to director Kerry Michael for his take on this Ramps on the Moon production.

What brought you to *Tommy*? Was this a show you felt you could bring something new to?

KM: This is my first interaction with the show but it was attractive because it looks fantastic, it has a great musical score – even with those famous lyrics, which are rather problematic now, ‘That deaf dumb and blind kid who plays a mean pinball’ – and I thought that with the music, the story and the integration of an exciting and inclusive disability aesthetic we would have a really good show. There would be some great opportunities to do something different, something fresher.

The show has been evolving over the years. Does this make it easier to put your own stamp on it?

KM: I was aware of this and it was a slight relief but also a slight concern. On the one hand it is really great that Pete Townshend is up for allowing us to make sense of his show in the modern world and to embrace the use of signing and audio description, on the other hand, we want to remain faithful to the original. The show began life as a concept album, it was revised for the Ken Russell film, again for the West End, and again for Broadway, so we do have lots of different versions to refer back to and we have taken bits from all of the previous versions – including different song lyrics – to reflect how we want to fine tune the narrative.

All that has been very exciting but at the same time you have got to be careful how you handle this iconic musical. If you push it too far then it stops being the show that fans want to come along to.

Has the show evolved in the rehearsal room or did you have it all mapped out before you began?

KM: What we have been doing is looking at a way to incorporate a new song by Pete Townshend for the Acid Queen – which helps give the Acid Queen more of a through line. In the previous versions of the show, she doesn't come back after Act One, so we have decided to bring her back in the second half and flesh out her story.

Speaking of the Acid Queen, how important was it to have Peter Straker back? Was it an important part of the creative evolution or a happy accident?

KM: There are many ways to play the role. You can get a strong female diva to really blast it out and that's the way that many people choose to do it but, I wanted to step back and do

something different. I have worked with Peter on a number of different projects and the thought of having Peter back in the show, having been in the original production, was a lovely idea but then what could he play? Then it quickly became clear that have him play the Acid Queen was the most exciting idea. Also, he really can sing that big diva number. I think he had to have a think about it, whether he wanted to go on tour, but once he had made the decision to revisit his past, then he was really up for it.

How involved has Pete Townshend been with the development of this new production?

KM: He has come up with a new song and penned some new lyrics for another song. We've met, he's in regular contact. He likes to be kept informed on where we are in the process and we bounce emails back and forth. He's very engaged and he's been very generous with the show. He's given us a lot of his early writing detailing his original thoughts about the album and the songs. The original idea sprang from a very long poem that he wrote and we talked a lot about the symbolism the show contains.

How liberating is it to have a truly combined company with people of different skills and abilities on stage?

KM: We have a very talented and diverse team of all backgrounds and abilities working both on-stage and off-stage. Our aim is to be as inclusive as possible. We need to change the landscape of how we perceive deaf and disabled practitioners and see much more of them in the mainstream. Hopefully this is another step on that road.

Meeting the Creatives

Inside the Rehearsal Room: An Interview with Associate Director Nicola Miles-Wilden and Choreographer Mark Smith

Question: How has the process been for you both so far, now that you're in week three of rehearsals?



Nickie:

For us the process of *Tommy* has been going on in meetings before Christmas, with auditions back in August, and then script meetings as well. So to actually be in the rehearsal room and to see all those ideas that we had coming together, as well as working with the actors who bring so much to it, it's been amazing. Seeing integrated sign language working alongside audio description and how we can really make these elements a fundamental part of the process is really quite exciting.

Mark:

We also ran workshops which was really good for me to try out some choreography ideas with the cast, and a great way for them to get to know each other, and get to know my style of work and Kerry's style of direction. It's been really interesting to see actor musician

performers really embracing our ideas and up for the challenge. My choreography is quite technically challenging, and we've had to work very fast.

Question: How have the building blocks of the show been put together?

Nickie:

Every rehearsal room and creative team is different, but for us the initial workshops were really integral so that we could get to know the performers and what they could do. When we got to the rehearsal room, even though it's a musical we still treat it like a play script. So we spent the first couple of days sitting in a circle and going through



each scene looking for intentions, actions and super objectives. We then we started putting it on the floor, and within two weeks we got through act one, which is complex because of all the storytelling, the setting up of relationships and the major concepts of the show and embedding

the accessible elements. You have to keep your eye on everything, the actors, the music, BSL interpretation, lighting, captioning, projections...

Mark:

I noted in rehearsal that the most important thing is communication. It's really important for me as a choreographer because I'm working with such a diverse cast, and movement and choreography that I want to service right. We have visually impaired people who I have to describe the movement, the shape, the colour or emotion, as well as asking them for their interpretation and finding the movement in a way that works for them. I have to be very open minded about it.

Question: Mark, can you tell us a bit about the process of creating the choreography and the influences behind it?

Mark:

I'm really interested in the 1940's, 50's and 60's style of dance. I'm trying to keep the choreography within those years, and adding sign language into the movement to give a contemporary look. I like creating a language in the choreography so the audience feel like they are being communicated with through physicality. I've combined both visual vernacular and BSL, for example



in *Pinball Wizard* when the flippers start going with all the electricity. I have incorporated BSL translation, and I'm looking to create a language in the choreography so that the performers can communicate with the audience through their physicality.

Question: Have there been any challenges?

Mark:

We're having to work really fast in rehearsal because it's a rock opera, with a cast of 22, 70 characters...

Nickie:

And there's the logistics, you realise you can't have that person in that section because they have got to have more than 5 seconds to change their costume. And who's playing what in the band, who's going to sign this bit, how is the sign language integrated, who is signing it, so it's a mammoth task. We spent a good couple of weeks sorting that out but we are still needing to make changes during rehearsals.

Mark:

There is a lot of collaboration happening, with our BSL translators Daryl Jackson and Jenny Draper, and for me as a choreographer I have to find a way to make BSL translation work with movement and choreography, it's about making it very accessible but in a creative way.

Nickie:

Tommy is such a problem story in a way, because of the views on disability, and what do we mean by deaf, dumb and blind kid. Are we making the right choices to tell that story particularly for an audience that are going to be made up of The WHO fans, who might not have that knowledge of the social model of disability. So it's how do we stay loyal to the music but tell the story we want to tell from a 2017 perspective on disability, rather than a 1960's and 1970's view on disability.

Question: *Tommy* is about a boy's journey, a trauma, growing up and overcoming obstacles. What is this version of *Tommy* about for you?



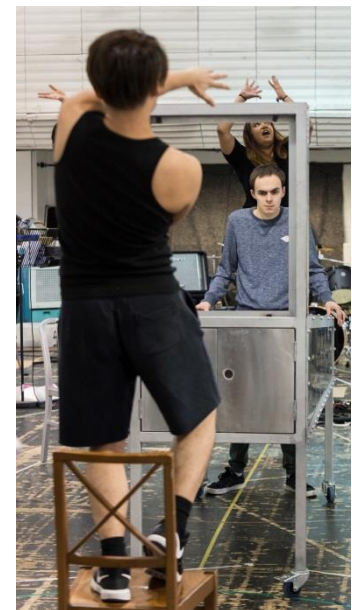
Mark:

There are so many different versions of *Tommy*, but what appeals to me in this version is that there are deaf and disabled people involved in it, so we are turning the table around on the whole perception on disability. It's set in the 1940's-1960's, which was a very different time in terms of disability. It was an unknown area.

There was different sign language then, which I am using in my choreography. It's really interesting, like comparing Shakespeare to how we speak now. It's about educating the audience as well as entertaining them.

Nickie:

It's about the connection to today's audience. It's such a ground breaking story anyway, and now working on it with an integrated cast and putting a modern spin on it that he is choosing not to communicate is important. As we go through rehearsals I find myself thinking "no wonder he is shut off", he couldn't trust adults, his cousin or friends but it is also a reminder of how deaf and disabled people are treated in the community. I am a part time wheelchair user, and there are times where you are infantilised, and that's what is being done to *Tommy*. The abuse that Cousin Kevin and Uncle Ernie do in the show is relevant today with regards to disability hate crimes. It all relates to how some disabled people are viewed by people and bullied for being different.



Question: What do you think the audience will take away from this production?

Nickie:

We want the audience to be entertained, but to also be challenged in their preconceptions of disability. The fact that it's an integrated cast is still something that isn't always there in 2017 and this is a great platform for showing what deaf and disabled actors and theatre makers can do. We need to motivate the next generation of theatre goers, theatre will die out if we don't change it and challenge it, and challenge both audience and theatre makers' perceptions.

Question: How do you think young people can relate to *Tommy* today?

Nickie:

It's an interesting show for young people. There is a lot of relatable content – communication is a big thing regardless of whether *Tommy* chooses not to communicate with parents. Who can young people turn to in times of trauma or feelings of isolation? There's the idea of celebrity and what this means to today's younger generation, can you be truly happy with fame and fortune? Relationships with family, friendships, and the choices you can make as a young person about whether to engage or not, and questioning who you can trust or talk to. There's loss, emotional trauma and to some degree even an imaginary friend with the appearances of his dead father.

Mark:

I'm aware that a lot of young deaf and disabled people are told you can't dance, you're not allowed to perform, you can't act because you haven't got the right voice. You won't be able to be in a Shakespeare play. I am hoping that through *Tommy* we can show them that "yes you can do it!"

Question: What tips would you give to teachers if they wanted to make an integrated theatre production?



Nickie:

Just give it a go, what do you have to lose? Give all performers confidence, disabled and non-disabled. If you have a wheelchair user in your class or a deaf or visually impaired person, say to them "How can we make this work for you?" Have those open conversations because again it gives that young person confidence and to also think about their own access requirements which they will need to start doing in later life anyway. If you don't know sign language, get a creative person in the group to work on captioning. Ask a student with some technical computer knowledge to work on how to embed captioning creatively. Find out if there are any deaf and disabled artists in your area, and invite them in to come and work with the young people. Look for the right material for them, discover what stories your young people want to tell and allow them to take ownership over them.

Mark:

I think talking about disability can be quite a sensitive subject, people don't want to get it wrong. But it's about patience - take your time and discover working in new ways. And enjoy it!

Exploring Tommy

Tommy is an iconic piece of work, and in this version some of the elements of the production can be investigated afresh.

Ultimately, *Tommy* is a boy's journey about growing up. A boy who witnesses a terrible event, which results in him making a choice that will affect him for the rest of his life. It is about how he chooses to identify, and about how others around him perceive this identity and desperately want to be like him. It is also about the journey of his aspiration.

The embedded accessibility within this production allows the audience to question the way in which this "deaf, dumb and blind kid" is treated, both in the early days where he is abused and later on during his celebrity, where he is idolized and mimicked by his admirers.

There are a wide range of themes running throughout *Tommy*. Here are some of the themes you might have identified, there will be many more!

- The senses
- Trauma
- Family relationships
- Talent
- Celebrity & Fame
- Aspiration
- Choices

In the following activities we are going to explore some of these themes.

All activities are suitable for D/deaf and disabled participants – we recommend that you choose one way of doing each activity for everyone, rather than making a separate rule for one or two people, depending on their access requirements, making for a more inclusive experience.

Game 1: Bomb & Shield

You'll need a large space for this activity

This is a great game to play with a class sized group, to get them energized but also to think about some of the character patterns and relationships in the play.

1. Either – as a whole group, get the students to move around the space with energy; OR, in smaller groups as them to create a signature sound for themselves.
2. Ask them to think of one person who is in the room or group, but not to tell anyone who that person is. That person is their “bomb”!
3. When you say “GO!”, everyone must stay as far away from their “bomb” as they can – ask them to keep active and try to keep as much distance as they can between themselves and their “bomb”.
4. Now, ask the group to think of a second person (again, they shouldn't say who they are). This person is going to be their “shield”.
5. When you say “GO!”, everyone must still keep as far away as they can from their “bomb”, but keep their “shield” between them and their “bomb” at all times.

Now, stop the game and ask for any feedback. What did they notice?

Ask the class to sit as an audience and ask for four volunteers. Get these volunteers to play the game in front of the audience. Ask the audience:

1. What did you notice?
2. Does the pattern of movement in the game remind you of any patterns or relationships in *Tommy*?
3. What stories could come out of this movement?

This game is a great introduction to the complexity of relationships in Tommy's life, and how he chooses to not communicate and hide away, as well as how he is sought after during his time of celebrity and fame.

Game 2: Exaggerate the Action

You'll need a large space for this activity

This game is all about attention to detail and perception. It reminds us that everything we do on stage matters, and tells a story.

It is also great for battling self-consciousness, and encouraging playfulness!



1. Either – as a whole group, ask your students to stand in a circle; Or – working in smaller groups or pairs.
2. They must all look at or listen to one other person, but that person must not be looking at/ listening to them.
3. They must just be themselves, not making any deliberate movements. They can audio describe their subtle movements if they choose to do so.
4. Now ask them to copy all the things that their chosen person is doing. Everything from their face right down to their toes, how they are holding their weight, what they are doing with their hands.
5. After a few minutes to get used to this, ask them to now exaggerate these actions. Don't be afraid, really try and go for it.
6. No one should be instigating any action – they should all be copying other people.

Ask your students for feedback. How did it feel to play this game? What does it make them think of in terms of theatre making? Did anyone notice anything in particular happening around the circle, or any particular actions?

This game demonstrates how important physicality is in theatre, as well as observation. When thinking of creating accessible theatre, visual storytelling is incredibly important.

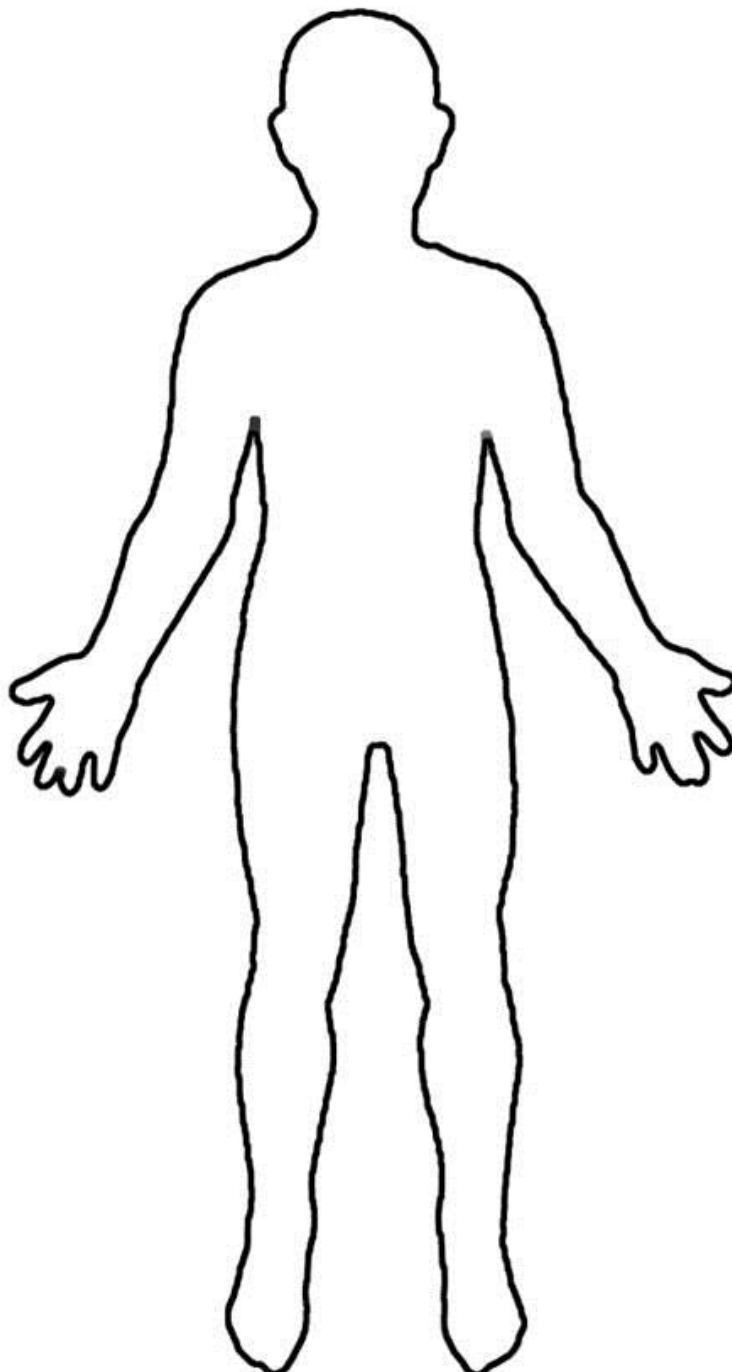
Activity 1: Character Insight

Classroom Activity

There are a wide range of characters to get to know further in *Tommy* – family, friends, bullies, doctors, healers...We can learn a lot about character from what they tell us about themselves and what other characters say about them. It's important to combine a mix of research and imaginative instinct when creating characters for the stage.

Character Body Map Exercise:

This is a great exercise to build a picture of the character from what we know about them already. Inside the body you should describe how the character feels about him/ herself, and outside you should describe how he or she is perceived by the other people.



Activity 1: Character Insight continued...

Classroom Activity

Character Development:

This exercise is all about imaginative instinct to further develop characters who we know something about.

Students should work in pairs. Ask them to note everything they know about their chosen character (name, age, living situation, family) and then answer the following questions about them:

1. What do they do during the day?
2. Would they rather be doing anything else during the day?
3. What three things do they have in their pocket?
4. What is their biggest regret?
5. What is their favourite food?
6. Do they have freedom to do what they want?
7. Are they loved?
8. What do they want to achieve in life?
9. Do they think they can achieve this?
10. What are they doing today/ where are they going?
11. How do they feel about this?

You can add lots more questions to answer – if you get stuck, just think about the things that you know about yourself!

Finally, make a statue of your character, using one person in the pair. Think about how physical appearance, body language and facial expression all tell a story.

Activity 2: Yippee!

You'll need a large space for this activity

This exercise explores aspiration through playfulness.

1. Get your students into an audience and ask for a volunteer.
2. Either - Place a small object (set of keys, book, pencil case perhaps) a couple of metres in front of the audience, Or – ask someone to create a signature sound.
3. The volunteer must move from the back of the room towards the object or sound, jump over or move around it/ when they hear the sound and shout as loudly as they can or sign on a big scale “YIPPEE!” whilst jumping over/ moving around the object/ sound and then land and look at their audience.
4. Encourage plenty of people to have a go, and really push them to make bold choices!



This activity sounds simple, but in most groups there will be some resistance to taking part in this activity, due to self consciousness and fear of judgment.

Discussion points:

1. If you come across resistance to participate, ask why this is? Is something awful going to happen to you if you do this?
2. How does it feel once you've done it?
3. If you didn't want to do this but have now done it, you have taken a small risk. By taking small risks in safe environments, you will increase your confidence. This game is about your mind and the way you think – a small change here could mean a big change further down the line.

Activity 3: Who Is Driving Your Car?

This activity can take place in a classroom



This is a discussion all about aspiration and who affects the choices we make.

1. Draw a picture of a car on the board, with a question mark in the driver's seat.
2. Ask the students, if this car represents your journey through life, who is driving it?
3. Write down all their suggestions around the car. You may hear:
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Teachers
 - Government
 - Myself
 - Fate/ destiny
 - Luck
4. Facilitate a discussion based around the idea that although you may be driving your car, are you really taking responsibility for your actions or your future? Only the choices that you make can affect your aspirations for the future. Life doesn't always work out easily, but you can play your part in being responsible, being proactive and making decisions.

This exercise leads onto...

Activity 4: Journeys

This activity can take place in a classroom

1. Cut out a selection of the cards on the following pages.
2. Working in groups, students must make a detailed plan about how they would achieve the aspiration that is written on the card.
3. After a few minutes give them the relevant “curve ball” card for their aspiration. How would they overcome this?

Discuss as a whole group the various journeys everyone had mapped out.

The emphasis is on aspiration – if you can have a positive mental attitude, be proactive in making choices and take responsibility for your actions, you will achieve – and be happier.



Achievement	Curve Ball
Get your dream job	You have two unsuccessful interviews
Climb Mount Everest	You break your ankle
Travel the world	The price of airfares doubles

Activity 5: Theatre Making

You'll need a large space for this activity



This is an opportunity for your students to explore making a piece of theatre that has integrated accessibility at its heart, while still relevant to the themes of *Tommy*.

Working in groups of about five, give your students 20 minutes to come up with a “scratch” piece of theatre in response to the provocation:

“Make a piece of theatre about growing up”

Encourage each group to make something they believe in, not something that they think they should make. They should be honest, take a risk, create something that could be challenging. Their piece of theatre should be no longer than 30 seconds. Watch each piece of theatre and as a whole group discuss what the students liked and what could be improved about each piece.

Now, in the same groups, students must adapt their piece to include audio description, captioning and visual storytelling artistically embedded within it. See the following page for more information on these elements.

Watch the pieces again and feedback. Discussion points:

- What did the integration of accessible elements do for each piece?
- Were the pieces stronger because of these elements?

Usually, the integration of captioning, audio description and sign language adds value to a piece of theatre for all audiences, not just those with access requirements.

Embedding Accessibility

Below are explanations of three of the key elements of embedding accessibility into any theatre production.



BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE
During a typical British Sign Language (BSL) Interpreted performance an interpreter stands on or at the side of the stage, clearly visible to the audience, and interprets the spoken word and sound effects for Deaf patrons who use BSL. For Tommy, BSL is integrated creatively with performers signing parts of the show on stage.

CAPTIONING
Captioning converts the spoken word into text that provides people with hearing loss access to live performance. In captioning, the words appear on a screen at the same time as they are sung or spoken. For a show like Tommy, this might be projected onto the surfaces of the set, or included in video designs that are part of the performance.



AUDIO DESCRIPTION
Audio Described performances give you a live commentary about the action happening on the stage through a pair of small headphones. It's a great way for anyone who finds it difficult to see the details of a performance to still enjoy coming to the theatre. During the production of Tommy, this will be also included within the script of the show.

Workshop Activities with Jamie Beddard

You'll need a large space for these activities

Jamie is an Agent for Change at The New Wolsey Theatre, embedding inclusion, access and disability across the organisation. He is also Co-Director of Diverse City, and Lead Artist with Extraordinary Bodies, the UK's only integrated circus company. He recently performed in The Threepenny Opera at The National Theatre, and The Messiah at Bristol Old Vic.



Jamie says...

Tommy is a musical very much about identity and perception, and how we fit in or not. Most of my work is about identity, and how we perceive ourselves and other people.



My disability is an integral part of a complex identity, but not my over-riding characteristic. When I wake up in the morning I don't think, "it's another day being disabled", rather "it's another day being Jamie" – subtly, but vitally different. I also happen to be a white, middle class, heterosexual man living in London – and yet these characteristics tend to be ignored or secondary. The point is that identities are complex, nuanced and fluid, and the labels we have or are given only tell partial stories at best.

The activities on the following pages are designed to question our perceptions of ourselves and others, as well as exploring ways to embed access into theatre making.

1. One Moment That Made You See The World Differently

Working in pairs, ask students to think of a moment where they 'saw the world differently'. This might have been an experience, observation or thought that occurred. It could be a life-changing moment, or something apparently mundane.

Partners can present these moments back to the rest of the group.

This exercise is about demonstrating, and celebrating our unique set of experiences, perceptions and understandings.

2. Invent your own sign name & audio description



BSL users have two ways of saying their name, they can fingerspell it or come up with their own sign name. This can relate to your character, appearance or interests – a unique sign/gesture which captures the essence of you. It can be given to you by others, or made up by yourself.

In small groups, ask your students to create a sign name for each other. Or go around circle, asking each student to come up with their own sign-name.

There are two extensions to this exercise:

- Call and response – this is a version of a well-known name game, using sign instead of verbal communication. Someone starts by signing their name, and then they sign someone else's. This person then "receives" this call by signing their own name, and then someone else's – and so on. This embeds the value of sign language, and demonstrates how it is possible to communicate without spoken word. We are so used to relying on verbal communication, but this exercise encourages students to engage other senses (eg. eye contact) and ways of communication. It also demonstrates the theatricality of signing and sign-language.
- Audio Description – this exercise is best done when students don't know, or are inventing their sign names. In a circle, ask students individually to turn away from the circle, and describe, rather than demonstrate their sign name. Everyone else in the circle does the sign/gesture according to the description. The individual then turns back into the circle, to see how close the rest are in replicating the sign they intended. A very simple introduction to audio description, and what is need to make it effective – visual awareness and economy of language.

3. Black & White

Get everyone into the middle of the space. They must respond to a series of questions as set out below, but importantly, *without communicating with each other through any medium at all*. The questions give them two options, yes or no, and they must respond by putting themselves into a “yes” group and a “no” group accordingly.

- Do you have a brother?
- Do you live in Ipswich (or relevant local town)?
- Have you ever done anything illegal?
- Have you been abroad in the last 6 months?
- Do you play computer games?
- Do you like reality TV shows?
- Are you a good cook?
- Have you been in love?

Adapt, and make up appropriate questions.

Discuss with your students – how did you decide which group you should go into?

The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how we all make judgements all the time, and where we place ourselves in relation to others. Debriefing after the exercise may bring up all kinds of discussion around judgements and perception. Of course, the real world is not “black and white” but this is a useful construct for exploration of the issues.

4. I have a dream...

This is a lovely exercise which relates to aspiration, a key theme in Tommy.

Standing in a circle, students take turns to go into the middle and complete the sentence:

“My dream is to...” – and whatever their dream is, the rest of the group must make this happen through action – physical and/ or verbal. They have thirty seconds to do this.



Tell your students to really exaggerate what they are doing so that the dream is really fulfilled. This exercise can be quite chaotic, but fun!

Do You Want to Work in the Arts?

Our Creative Assistants share their journeys into employment in the theatre industry



The creative sector is one of the fastest growing employment sectors in the UK, but there is still a resistance for young people to pursue a career in the arts due to worries about financial viability and sustainability.

We have employed six Creative Assistants to work on *Tommy*, as an opportunity to kick start their careers in theatre production in a variety of areas, including:

- Music composition / conducting
- Choreography
- Set Design
- Costume Design
- Stage Management
- Sound Design/Engineering
- Lighting Design/Operation
- Digital Media / AV Design

Importantly, these roles were open to people from across the UK who have experienced barriers to accessing employment or further training due to access requirements not being met, or who identify as D/deaf or disabled.



In the following pages you can read about how some of our Creative Assistants got to where they are now, the barriers they have faced, and advice they would give to young people hoping to work in the theatre industry.

How Did You Get to Where You Are Now?

Interview with Nikki Charlesworth, Creative Design Assistant and Emily Salter, Trainee Assistant Stage Manager

Every person who works in theatre, whether in a creative or production based role, on stage or off, has an individual career path. Below two of our Creative Assistants who are at the start of their careers tell us how they got their foot in the door!

Question: What has been your route so far since leaving formal education?

Nikki – I left school in 2011, and I thought I wanted to be an actor. I did Drama and Art G.C.S.E., and Drama, Art and Textiles at A Level, and I tried out for drama schools. I realised I really enjoyed art, but I also found it more accessible – which is obviously what Ramps on the Moon is trying to change, so perhaps if it was more accessible at the time I might have pursued acting further.

I was part of the Nottingham Playhouse youth theatre and I started to design their shows. I also joined another theatre company called Junk Shop and performed and designed with them. I met someone there who advocated for disability arts and that really inspired me to pursue what I wanted to do, even though in the past I had been told I couldn't (see below!). I ended up going to Nottingham Trent University to do Theatre Design. I had met some of the lecturers through my youth theatre and they really advocated for me to study there, and it was a really great place to study. I'm currently in my final year, and am doing my dissertation on accessible design. My lecturers have really encouraged me to be bold and have my say, which has really helped my confidence, and to apply for this opportunity.

Emily - I first discovered my love of theatre when I was six. I took part in the Deaf Dance Summer School at Sadlers Wells – I became passionate about dance and performed the role of a deaf character in a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. I did an A Level in Performance and Theatre Studies and was part of the youth theatre at The Mercury Theatre, Colchester. I had a great tutor there who incorporated BSL into every production. After school I went to Colchester Institute to do a Diploma in Dance, and I then went to Reading University and achieved a First Class Degree in Theatre Arts, Education and Deaf Studies. Since graduating I have worked in many different areas – I have delivered drama workshops, including storytelling in sign language, I've taken part in R&D performances and am currently working Front of House at the Mercury Theatre.

Question: How did you find out about the opportunities available in the theatre industry?

Nikki – It wasn't through school, I did a lot of youth theatre in Nottingham where our practitioners told us about the different roles that exist in theatre production and that's how I found out about creative design roles.

Question: Have you faced any barriers or challenges so far?

Nikki – I was part of a group once where the director told me that I couldn't do a show because it would be too tough for me, which I didn't agree with. Another time I was in a show and was told that I had "found my place to shine" – I found that quite patronizing! I think also when I have

auditioned for things in the past and not got them, I'm not sure whether it is due to my disability or that I just wasn't right for the role. Also, when I'm doing practical work, I've found it hard to be confident and say if I can't do something, if it is heavy duty for example. But over time I have learnt how to get across to people and to be more front footed about my needs.

Emily – I think the hardest part of the industry is when applying for new courses or workshops, I have encountered barriers for access when the company need to provide me with an interpreter so that I can reach the full experience of the course. I have also struggled with my confidence in the past, mostly due to communication barriers, but I am finding now that I am building this up through doing more, meeting more people and taking more opportunities.

Question: What are your plans for the future?

Nikki – I'd like to continue this type of work, and I definitely want to continue to advocate for disability arts, and I'd love to form my own company with friends at university.

Emily - My short term aspiration is to explore Puppetry Theatre, and for the long term I want to continue exploring new avenues within the theatre industry.

Question: What advice would you give to someone who is about to leave school and wants to work in the theatre industry?

Nikki – The best thing I ever did was to get involved in regional youth theatre. I got to see things like technical rehearsals and see how things worked. Looking back, I wished I had been a bit more “no nonsense” and a bit stronger and take ownership over who I am and what I want.

Emily – I believe that the most vital role in the arts is to always be on the ball when networking with every single artist and the creative team whilst working both inside and outside of theatres. Because of this I feel that I was successful and fortunate enough to land the role of ASM in Tommy! To anyone who is studying their GCSE's or A Levels I would advise you to attend classes, training and workshops to refresh skills/techniques and to learn something new. You will be amazed how your talent can be advanced or experienced! And keep networking networking networking!

How Did You Get to Where You Are Now?

Creative Assistant Biographies: Routes into the Industry

Oliver Vibrans – Assistant Musical Director

Oliver is a composer, musical director and drummer. He has worked as composer for Graeae on *Stepping Stones* by Mike Kenny, *Act of Memory* and Hackney Youth project. He has composed music for LipService Theatre - *Inspector Norse* and *Mr Darcy Loses the Plot*. Other work includes music for *Edward II* at Cambridge Arts Theatre and *Rumpelstiltskin*, the Cambridge Footlights panto. He was a Creative Assistant on *Threepenny Opera*, and worked as a drummer on *The Blues Brothers* and *The Rat Pack*, Theatre 21 at Edinburgh Fringe. He studies music at Cambridge University.



Kevin Jewell – Assistant Choreographer



Kevin has always enjoyed Dance, and took up Ballet at the age of 6. He studied Sport Science at the University of Brighton (after completing GCSE and A-Level Dance), before completing his PGCE in Dance (Secondary).

He has always been interested in Dance and wanted to teach or perform. He has worked in state education for over 10 years culminating in a Head of Expressive Arts Faculty position. He works as an examiner and Keynote Education course leader for dance teacher inset days.

Kevin has performed and/or assisted outreach work with SignDance Collective, FrontLine Dance, Magpie Dance, and is currently a member of Deaf Men Dancing. Kevin currently also works for Juka Dance, encouraging literacy through Dance in primary schools.

Kevin has completed mentoring schemes provided by One Dance UK and New Adventures (Overture) to help shape his practice and consider the future. He is hoping to lead change and create new work for the inclusive sector as a teacher, manager or performer.

It has been important for Kevin to develop his professional knowledge by being involved as a RAD education committee member, completing his stage 1 and 2 British Sign Language courses, undertaking circus classes and volunteering where possible with dance companies. Kevin believes to make the most of new and different opportunities and research into the sector to make contacts and gain knowledge about it.

David Young – Creative Assistant

Young Director, Poet and Performance Artist.

David has been involved in performance arts since he was 12, when he joined Remix, an inclusive arts company. The Remix performed on Weymouth beach for the opening of the Olympic Games Sailing Events. David was also given the opportunity to perform his poetry for the celebrations of the Paralympic Games with the Seen but Seldom Heard Voices project.

Merging his passion for performance and poetry, David joined Extraordinary Bodies Young Artists in 2013. Dave co-wrote and performed in *Touched*, for the Unlimited Festival on the South Bank, London 2014.

David became a Poet Activist and Associate Artist for Diverse City and worked with The Complete Freedom of Truth International Arts Project which he continues to do.

In 2015 David joined Graeae's Ensemble , a professional training opportunity for emerging disabled artists.

David performed An improvisation to Terry Riley's "C" with Extraordinary Bodies at Colston Hall alongside the British Para Orchestra in 2016 and the Doing Things Differently Festival saw David leading integrated performance workshops for theatre practitioners and performing in The State of the Nation.



Jonathan Leitch – Creative Assistant, Sound No. 3



Jonathan originally started as a rock/funk/electronic drummer but that led into being a sound engineer for live events and producing/composing music.

He went to college to do a BTEC Level 3 in Music and then moved to London to do a Bmus in Commercial Music Performance at the University of Westminster.

Before and during University, Jonathan worked as a sound engineer, working on numerous community/private festivals and live music events. He drummed on a Graeae theatre show where he also did sound design. He has drummed for numerous band /music projects and is currently starting a teaching/workshop business in teaching drums regardless of physical disability.

The Social Model of Disability

During the second half of the twentieth century, the Disabled People's Movement began. Thinkers and activists within the Movement put forward a way of thinking about disability, which focuses on the barriers which disabled people, rather than on disability as being about medical conditions. They called it the social model, and referred to the old way of thinking as the individual or medical model.

The Medical Model

Within the individual model of disability, disabled people's difficulties are seen as a direct result of having impairment (their medical condition).

The medical model describes

- what people can and can't do;
- what they will continue to be able and unable to do;
- what they need;
- the sort of life they will lead.

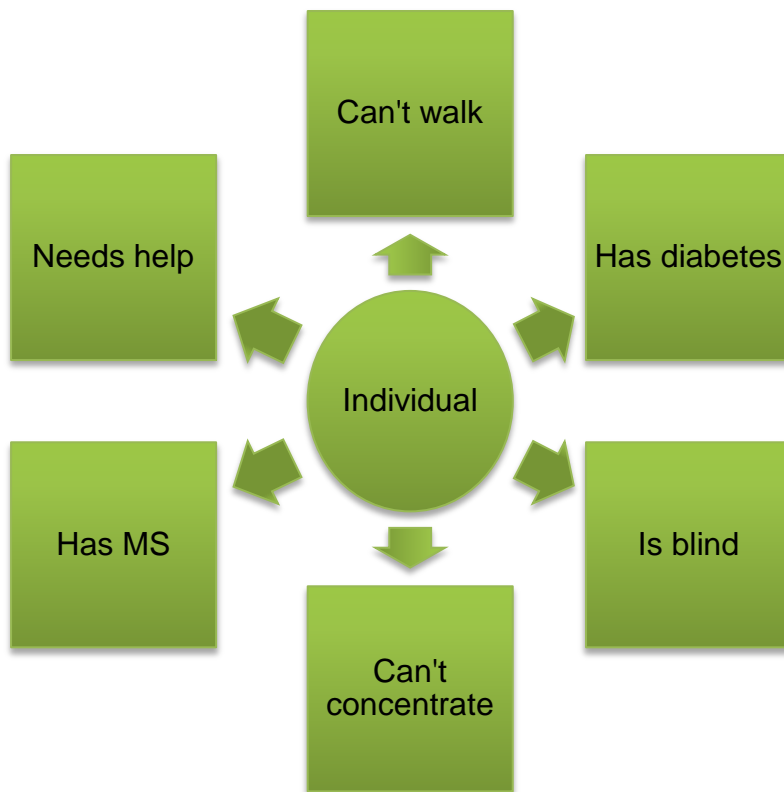
The Social Model

The social model of disability makes the important distinction between 'impairment' and 'disability'.

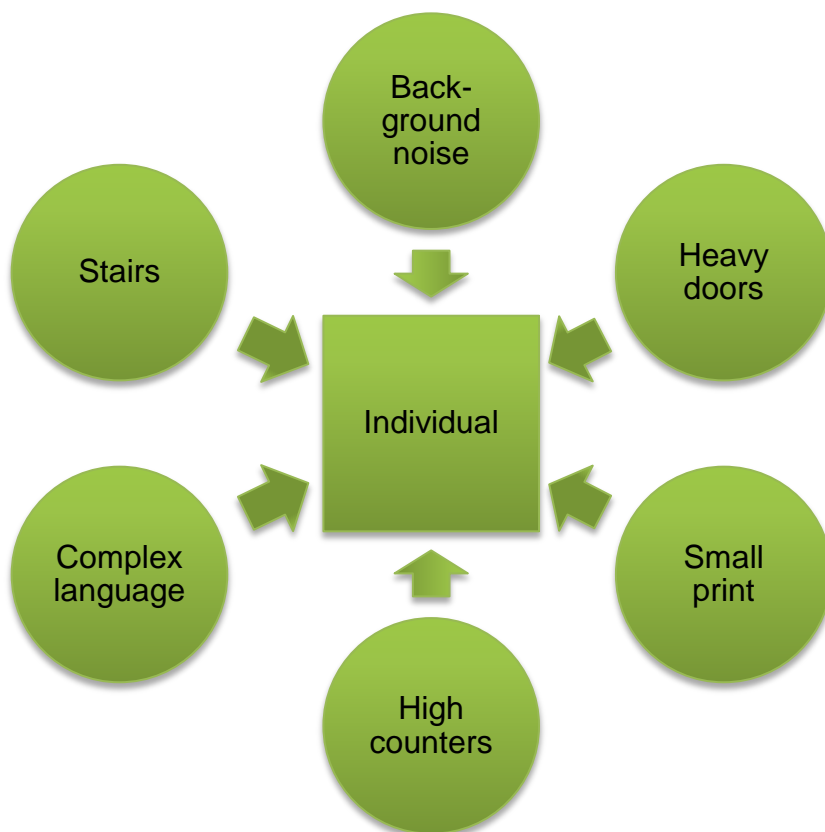
I am disabled by stairs, not by my medical condition. If you install a lift, it may mean that this flight of stairs does not disable me

The social model demonstrates that a disabled person's problems are not caused by their impairments, but by the way society is organised.

The medical model says the individual has the problem:



The social model says that the environment has the problem:



The social model is about

Stairs (the physical environment)

and

Stares (the attitudinal environment)

either or both of which can disable someone who has impairments.

Remember:

	Medical Model	Social Model
Focuses on	The Individual	The Environment
Asks	What's wrong with you?	Where are the obstacles?
Seeks	Personal Information	Practical Information

An Example:

Michèle Taylor, Director for Change for Ramps on the Moon says...

The medical model says I have spina bifida and curvature of the spine. These conditions, says the medical model, are my disabilities; I have them, they are about me and how my body doesn't "work" properly.

The medical model goes on to say that it's my medical conditions that are responsible for my life being difficult in certain circumstances.

The social model says that whilst it is true that I have spina bifida and curvature of the spine, these are my medical conditions only; I am not disabled until obstacles in the environment make my life difficult.

It is therefore more appropriate to say that I am a disabled person rather than a person with disabilities: I don't have them; it's done to me by the environment.

So: within the medical model, the things that disabled people include cerebral palsy, blindness, M.S., deafness, spina bifida, brittle bones etc.

Within the social model, the things that disabled people are heavy doors, lack of Sign Language Interpreter, tiny type in a document, poor visual contrast in signage, lack of handrails, untrained staff etc.

Media and Resources

Ramps on the Moon website:

<https://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk/>

Tommy Rehearsal Videos and Diaries:

<https://www.rampsonthemoon.co.uk/show/the-whos-tommy/>

Reviews:

The Stage:

<https://www.thestage.co.uk/reviews/2017/tommy-review-new-wolsey-theatre-ipswich/>

The Times:

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/theatre-tommy-at-the-new-wolsey-theatre-ipswich-f8l2tf0jt>

The Guardian:

<https://www.theguardian.com/stage/2017/apr/06/the-who-tommy-review-rock-opera-disability-rights-ramps-on-the-moon>

Fingerspelling alphabet



A



B



C



D



E



F



G



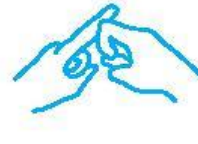
H



I



J



K



L



M



N



O



P



Q



R



S



T



U



V



W



X



Y



Z