**Disability And… Reasons To Be Cheerful**

Hello, and welcome to the Graeae and Disability Arts online podcast, Disability And..., bringing together thoughtful discussion and debate. In this month's podcast, John Kelly chats with Stephen Lloyd and Jude Mahon about the stage show Reasons to be Cheerful, which has been released on YouTube until August the 3rd. An audio-described version of the show is available through Graeae's website. This podcast was recorded using Zoom.

Jude Mahon:

I'm Jude, I'm a sign language interpreter, and I played Debbie, the choreographer in Reasons to be Cheerful.

John Kelly:

And that kind of evolved, didn't it, Jude? It wasn't like ... Debbie wasn't always in it, was she? It was you started taking over some of the warm-ups.

Jude Mahon:

Yeah, I was the interpreter in the performance, and then developed a bit of a character and was given a name. And then I was quite strict about the dancing, and so I got given the role of saying I was choreographer.

John Kelly:

Quite strict is just an understatement.

Stephen Lloyd:

That came from rehearsals, didn't it? It came from those dance rehearsals, those movement rehearsals, where Jude would tell us all what to do and how to do it. So Debbie Does Dance, Jude Does Dance.

Jude Mahon:

Yeah. That was it.

Stephen Lloyd:

Well, whilst John's having a tea, I'm Stephen, Stephen Lloyd, and I played Vinnie in Reasons to be Cheerful.

John Kelly:

Yeah. And I'm John, and I played John the vocalist in Reasons to be Cheerful.

Stephen Lloyd:

Johnnie Ferocious.

John Kelly:

Johnnie Ferocious.

Stephen Lloyd:

Was it a review or a newspaper called you Johnny Ferocious?

John Kelly:

Yeah, the Mail called me Ferocious.

Stephen Lloyd:

And that stuck?

John Kelly:

Yeah. And unfortunately, the Mail was stuck as well.

Stephen Lloyd:

(Laughs)

John Kelly:

So that was our characters. Had you worked with Paul Sirett, who was the writer before?

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah.

John Kelly:

Is that how you got into it?

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah, because I worked with Paul the writer and Rob Hyman, who was the musical director. We did the Ray Davies musical Come Dancing at Stratford East. And what happened was, that show was due to go on tour in January 2010. But unfortunately, the tour got pulled and we all lost our jobs, but Jenny had seen Come Dancing, and I think ... From what I understand, Jenny asked Robert if I would come in and do a workshop, and come in and workshop Reasons to be Cheerful and read the part of Vinnie. I was so disappointed by the tour being pulled, that I got this text message one evening from Rob Hyman saying, "Would you like to come and do three days at Graeae workshopping this new show?"

Stephen Lloyd:

And I just remember thinking, "Well, I've got nothing else to do right now," because I was so disappointed by the fact that I had just lost six months' work, and I was like, "Yeah, all right, I'll go in."
I had no idea what this would be, not just as a show, but what it would do to all of us, really, how much it would influence all of us for the last 10 years. But that was my introduction, and then I did the workshops, and that was it. I just became part of the furniture like everyone, really.

John Kelly:

Yeah. And I know that Jude, you're busy signing all this and it's hard for you to converse as well without knackering you, because you're doing 300 things at once. (Jude laughs) But I think it's interesting, because had you been involved with Graeae before that as well? You had, hadn't you?

Jude Mahon:

Yeah. I've been involved with Graeae since ... I was 23? And I was 30 when we did Reasons to be Cheerful, and I remember being asked to be the interpreter for the workshops. I was like, "Fine." Went in, the music ... I didn't know Ian Dury and the Blockheads. I didn't know their music, and I knew Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick. That was it. I'm just not very good with music anyway. I do not have good knowledge, but the style and everything ... And I just remember looking at Spicer, and Spicer was just rocking to the music and had this way of dancing and being in the music. I just remember turning to someone and saying, "Gosh, it's a good job that I'm not in this production." No way that I could do this. There was just no way I could do it. And then little did we know that the people in that room were going to have quite an amazing 10 years together.

John Kelly:

Yeah. I think there's a really interesting thing about how Graeae works, or one of the things I learned ... I mean, I didn't know this beforehand, but the way in which they bring people together for a production. Yeah, they can do auditions, but they don't always do the traditional I guess how you might be used to getting in a show, Steve. Because I wouldn't have gone for an audition, because I'm not ... So that would have ruled me out of going for it, and Graeae have got this great way of coaxing you in and seeing a little bit of potential in you, and saying, "Well, have a play with us here and have a little workshop." I remember going in and seeing all you lot as professional actors and me just being a bit of a rocker, and going, "Oh, so Gary was there, so Gary will be doing the vocals because he's got a brilliant voice. He's great."

John Kelly:

I remember the first night at New Wolsey thinking, "Someone's going to stop in a minute and say, 'All right John, you don't have to do any more. Gary will'" And then suddenly I was like ... Roshni (Stage Manager) said ‘’Go, go you're on stage. Go, go." And I thought, "Bloody hell, I'm actually in this." And I didn't really ... I never really saw myself in the show until pretty much the first night, and then I realised, bloody hell, I really am in this show. It was ... The way Graeae does things is different, because it just ... I mean, I did know I could do it by that stage, because Graeae builds your confidence.

Stephen Lloyd:

They really do. Yeah, yeah. Well, Jenny has that way of working, doesn't she? She has that way of encouraging you, and it makes you push yourself and go further with whatever you're doing in the rehearsal room. It makes you then go into rehearsal rooms thinking, "I'm going to try this, and I want to try that." And you just end up doing some of your best work because of that encouragement and that encouraging, supportive environment.

John Kelly:

Yeah. One of the questions I've got before we get too far into it, is I was thinking about people who might be listening to this who don't know what we're babbling on about. So what was Reasons to be Cheerful? What was it all about?

Stephen Lloyd:

Okay. Reasons to be Cheerful was a ... Would you call it a musical? It's a musical, isn't it? Part gig, part play, sort of rock and roll musical inspired by and featuring the music of Ian Dury and the Blockheads. It's a lovely story about a group of friends who are desperate to see Ian Dury in concert at the Hammersmith Odeon in 1979. It's about them ... I don't want to give it away, because I want people to watch it.

John Kelly:

No. No spoilers.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah, no spoilers. It's about their journey and what they do to get tickets to go and see this concert. And that's kind of what I want to say, really. I don't want to say anything more.

John Kelly:

Yeah. I think one of the great things about the script and the way Paul wrote it was ... and the way that Jenny directed it, was that in the script and in all of our characters, there are elements of truth. There are elements that ... I don't play much more differently apart from maybe swearing a bit more in public in my character, but there's ... The Blockheads, that story about the Blockheads playing at Hammersmith for five nights is true. There are these elements of truth in the script, which always made audiences think that Debbie was Debbie, Vinnie was Vinnie and John was John. And I wrote that letter to the Director General of the BBC. That's how Paul wrote, wasn't it?

Stephen Lloyd:

Well yeah, exactly, because some people genuinely thought we were these people. We'd be in the bar afterwards and people would call me Vinnie. Jenny still does. I think because people could see how much we loved the show and how much fun we were having, and just what a support even, and just the way we all cared for each other, really, people genuinely believed it. People genuinely believed we were this family, and we were this group of friends telling this story in real time.

Stephen Lloyd:

As you say, I think there's elements of truth within the actual story itself and the world that we built onstage. But I think in also the characters. I think, as you said before, regarding us all coming into the rehearsal room and saying, "Ah, John, you've got lines, you've got lines," but that came out of you just being you in the rehearsal room. As you say, you started off with no lines and you were singing the songs, but you messing around in rehearsals, kept shouting, "Let's do Blockheads," then became this iconic quotable line that just keeps appearing throughout the play. And that was an element that you brought to it, John, the musician and then Paul kind of turned that into John the character.

John Kelly:

Yeah. I was always in awe of ... I've always said it, actually. Everybody in that team, backstage and onstage, the whole team, it was such a strong team of people.

Stephen Lloyd:

Oh yeah. Everyone.

John Kelly:

Everyone ... There wasn't ... I don't mean this in a derogatory way at all about any other organisation. There wasn't a weak link.

Stephen Lloyd:

No. Not at all.

John Kelly:

And it was like ... I was always in awe of the acting, and I kind of ... I remember I'd sort of sit back, and the only way I could snap myself out of it was go, "Actually, the thing that will get me buzzing again, I need a song. I need ... Come on, let's do Blockheads! Come on."

John Kelly:

And that's because as an artist and a musician, it was the ... For me, it was the music that gave me that energy to deal with some of the emotional stuff that was in the show. The music and the acting ... Of course, there was plenty of cheese in it. There was plenty of jokes and there's plenty of cheesiness in it, but actually they really did mesh well, and they drove each other, because after ... When we'd do Spasticus or whatever, we were all knackered after it, and you needed to come down a bit to get your breath back. That wasn't a joke. We would all come off the mic saying, "Ahhh," like this, and the script sort of slowed it down, and then you could have these beautiful moments. What Jenny was always amazing with, and one of the things I'll always remember, is about learning to find the moments, find the moments when to say a line, find the space to leave the space, if that makes sense.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah, yeah, of course, definitely.

John Kelly:

She was amazing at all that kind of stuff, that I'd never really learned about before being involved with this.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah. Well, I think that's the genius of Jenny and Paul, and the genius of Ian Dury, that one minute, you're laughing, the next minute you're crying. And that is literally what this show is. One minute you're laughing at something, and within two seconds, you don't see it coming, you're crying about ... Whether it's a happy cry or a sad cry, you'll just go through a wave of emotions.

Stephen Lloyd:

And cheesy as it sounds, we did on stage every single night. We came on stage with this ... had this complete cathartic experience. Because we didn't leave the stage for what, two and a half hours, and it was just ... From the moment it started, that was it. It didn't stop, and the audience could see that. And then like you say, on those moments where after Spasticus, we were all absolutely exhausted, and then the next line is "Meanwhile, back on the beach."

Stephen Lloyd:

The audience loved it because they knew that we, the actors, were absolutely exhausted and we'd just given it everything. And now we were going to bring it down a bit, but then we're going to ramp it back up again. And that's what we did, right up until ... Because we'd end up doing the three encores most nights on stage. Right until the second we left the stage, that was it, it was just a hundred miles an hour.

John Kelly:

Things are going on in my head here. One is about kind of what you reckon ... Well, there's two bits: what you reckon the audiences got from it, but what do you reckon we got from it? In the back of my mind, it's always like, how could we have improved it? What could we have done differently? When I honestly sit back, there isn't ... Apart from getting a new vocalist, there isn't much that we could have done to improve it.

Stephen Lloyd:

Oh, shush.

John Kelly:

But the other thing I was thinking about was, what's the relevance of the show? It was loosely ... Bobby was political, wasn't he? He was a union man, and a lot of Ian Dury songs were political with a small "p", so there's loads of questions going on in my mind. One is about, yeah, what we could have done better or what would have improved the show. From my point of view, there's something about how we always make things better, isn't there?

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah.

John Kelly:

And I think as the years moved on, did the show get better? Things changed, didn't they?

Stephen Lloyd:

Well, I think things do change. What I've noticed on a personal level is I played Vinnie three times on three different tours, and every time I played Vinnie, I found a different Vinnie. The first time, I was 23, I was very young and green and naive, and hadn't experienced huge things in my life yet. And so Vinnie was very innocent and very naive. And then the next time, I was now paying rent and paying council tax and experiencing some of the other things in life, and Vinnie was a bit more angry.

John Kelly:

Yeah. Do you know what? Sorry, this is really freaky. I don't know if you saw that, but on my screen, there was a little popup from ... It's a collective of both freelance disabled artists and organisations in the disability arts movement, and out of this whole lockdown thing, we've said, "What's our response? How are we going to get out of this?" And there's a lot of politics around disability at the moment, about how disabled people have been isolated and experienced that in everyday life, but also how terribly disabled people were being supported through this process, like maybe a lot of other people. And it's just really funny that we're talking about the politics of the show, and this political banner comes up on my thing about we shall not be removed.

Stephen Lloyd:

They're listening.

John Kelly:

Sorry, but you were saying about it.

Stephen Lloyd:

That's all right.

Stephen Lloyd:

And on the third time I did ... Well, the third time we did Reasons and I played Vinnie, I was 31 playing a 16-year-old, and I could really feel it. I could really feel the life experience I've had over the last ... Well, at the time, it would've been seven years. And I think that for me, that just completely just highlights how the show changed every time we did it again, because I think we brought something to the show. We brought something to the characters, to the worlds that we were experiencing outside of the show. And I think that's what changed things and changed the show itself.

Stephen Lloyd:

If you're actually looking at the show only, the actual performances and the story, personally, I don't think we could've made it better. I think it was ... For me, Reasons is what it is. It's rough and it's messy and it's full of heart and full of storytelling and beautiful characters and punk rock songs. It is what it is. And I don't think you want to mess with that too much.

Stephen Lloyd:

I think the second…. when we first started the very first rehearsals, we were trying to choreograph all these routines, and it became very apparent that this isn't a show to be choreographed and to be polished. It needs to be rough and ready, and as soon as we embrace that, that's when the show became what it is, this rough and ready stage full of genuine misfits, as Paul always says, just coming together to tell this story.

Stephen Lloyd:

And then every night we went on stage, things were slightly different, and we completely embraced that. We completely embraced that. I mean, simply down to the loo rolls, where were the loo rolls going to go? Sometimes the loo rolls were where they were meant to be, centre stage, and other nights they were actually in the audience. Sometimes people heckled, and personally, I loved all of that stuff. I was like, "Bring on all of that anarchy." But I think as a foundation, I think it's great as it is, and I think if anyone was going to do it again, leave it as it is.

John Kelly:

Yeah. I knew from a vocal point of view that the worst thing that could have happened to Reasons to be Cheerful was that we rounded up the notes and we made it all jazz hands. That would have been just appalling.

Stephen Lloyd:

It would. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

John Kelly:

It had to be a live band on the stage like Paul does. I was never going to be doing Michael Crawford or Bobby Ball. What's his name?

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah. Oh, Michael Ball.

John Kelly:

I could never be as beautiful as Michael Ball with my rounded notes and stuff.

Stephen Lloyd:

But that's not right for this, is it? That's the thing.

John Kelly:

Yeah. But we had a lot of support. Don't get me wrong. We all did it well, and we did our best. I remember, I did a lot of work with Chris Holt ( Voice coach) around my vocal, just to ... It was more about getting me through each night rather than anything else. But I think that anarchy stuff that you talked about, there was a purpose to it as well. It weren't just a messy show.

Stephen Lloyd:

No, of course not. No.

John Kelly:

It was well-planned. It was a well-planned mess.

Stephen Lloyd:

It was organised chaos, wasn't it?

John Kelly:

There's something I learned, which I'd never really embraced before in any performance, was you've got this notion that it's got to be slick and it's got to be perfect. Of course it has to be the best it can be, and I don't think any of us stood for second best. The quality of work is up there. But the anarchy was kind of us, kind of saying, "This is what it is. If the microphone falls off my stand, I can't subtly still keep smiling at the audience and pick it up."

Stephen Lloyd:

No, just pick it up.

John Kelly:

I need to go, "Debbie, grab the mic. Vinnie, sort it out." And so those kinds of ... I think in the arty language, it's the levels, the layers that are created. Obviously it's fully accessible. We had the lyrics, and I know a lot of Blockheads fans were saying, "Oh, that's what he says in that line that I never worked out."

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah. Yeah. Of course.

John Kelly:

You know as a kid, when you sing the wrong words to a song? Yeah.

Stephen Lloyd:

But I think it was nice to actually see the lyrics, wasn't it? It was nice to see the actual lyrics and actually have them up there, and actually have images to go along with it.

John Kelly:

And then also the whole thing, because we were disabled, and disabled actors working on stage, we all had our own needs. And so we had to work out how to work together, so some of the jokes with Colin were also about ... So like Steve, when he used to pogo, he was the scariest thing when he got anywhere near me, because I thought, "He's going to land on me like this." And me and him learned this little thing where I'd blow on the back of his elbow so he knew that he was that close to me. We all learned these little ways that it made that anarchy actually quite ... There was thought to it. It wasn't just a mess.

Stephen Lloyd:

Oh no, it wasn't a mess by any means. It was very much organised chaos. We knew what we were doing. We knew how to bring it back. If it went completely off track, we knew how to get it back on track. And like I said, those little ad libs and those heckles from the audience, they were fantastic. You were talking about these layers. They were great layers, as well as everything else we were putting on top. But no, I completely agree. The mess wasn't for the lack of professionalism, it was just part of what the show was. And as you say, we would never have given ... We never phoned the show in once.

John Kelly:

No. And we weren't allowed ... Even though we were mucking about on stage, we weren't allowed to be self-indulgent. There wasn't in jokes. Any jokes that were there were for the audience to be part of it. It wasn't ...

Stephen Lloyd:

Shared experience, yeah. Definitely.

John Kelly:

What about the politics of it all? My thought is, say, "Here we are in lockdown, and it's going out online. And yeah, people can watch the film from a reminiscing point of view and a relating their own teenage lives and love and all those, nostalgia that are in there. But we've always said, I think, when we've ever done any media or whenever we've gone out with a show, it's relevant now. Jude, Steve, do you both think that's still the case?

Stephen Lloyd:

I think yeah. I think every time we've taken it out, it's become more and more relevant. It just has. And then the last 2017 tour, it was extremely relevant, and it's extremely relevant now. I mean, you just have to watch it. It's all there, and what you're watching on stage, which is set in 1979, it echoes everything that's going on right now. So yeah, I think so.

Jude Mahon:

Yeah, definitely. I think it has never ... The relevance has never gone away, because politically we've had a government that has no empathy, has no soul. And we've all felt the cuts, the political situation as we've done each show, and more and more people have been affected as the cuts just got worse and worse and worse. So more and more people really understood the show. I think for me, John, when you said, "What did it give to the audience?", I remember that first performance at New Wolsey in 2010. I remember thinking, "I just don't think this show will be very successful. I don't really get it."(Jude laughs) I remember that going on, because like I said, I didn't know the music. I loved being in it, I loved the signing, but I thought, "I don't think many people will get this."

Jude Mahon:

Now, then we did our New Wolsey, our first performance. When we'd finished with that final ‘’oi’’ and we stopped, and the audience just erupted. They just stood on their feet and they went crazy. It was all of us. Our faces were just ... We just couldn't believe what we were seeing. Even Jen says she was in the audience, and she was watching, and then she was seeing all these people, men in suits just sort of loosen their tie and start moving. And it was just this most amazing ... I've never seen a reaction like it. We had the absolute honour of seeing that over and over again as the tours went on. We saw people be so affected by the show, just having to get up, having to.

Jude Mahon:

And then afterwards, there was a post-show discussion and we were all too tired to do it. Jen and Paul went out there, and I remember listening to it, and I remember one woman that said, "This is the first time in a long time I've been to the theatre and I've stayed awake. I always fall asleep. With this show, I stayed awake." And she said, "I wanted to be in the show." And then other people were saying, "It reminded me of in 1979, when we had the lock-ins." We're locked in our houses now, but this lock-in as the government threatened libraries, and people would go and sit in the library and refuse to move. It's when these people who were now in their 50s watching it, they were in their 20s, and this man, I remember him saying, "You've reminded me of my passion, my fight. You reminded me of how political I was and how much I cared, and I'm also really sad because where has it gone? Looking at myself now, where has that gone? Why did I give up?"

Jude Mahon:

That's why it's still relevant now, because they've always ... Even if it's a little "p" or big "P", we had that political passion for justice in us, and that is Reasons to be Cheerful.

John Kelly:

I think there was something you said there that reminded me actually of not just the older audiences, but one that ... The thing I would say that most honestly has impacted me about doing Reasons is the so many friends that I've made that now are quite important in my life. Quite quickly, I developed a whole new set of friends that I'm still glad to have as friends. We've all pretty much stayed in touch. We're not there every day on the phone to each other, but we've still got kind of a bond. But also the audiences, and I'm still friends with people who were there on that first night, and people who've come along each time. But the thing that you reminded me of Jude, was the young people and the young audiences who had never heard of Ian Dury, who are now downloading Blockheads albums and going, "Oh, I've gone away and I've done that."

John Kelly:

I've got loads of memories of meeting young, disabled people who are now going to go out and protest or go out and be a singer or whatever it was. But I remember one night where I thought ... It was an afternoon, it was a matinee. I don't know if you remember it, but it was in Watford. And Jenny always valued matinees because matinees were traditionally for audiences that don't always go to the theatre. And they come to a matinee, and they're a different kind of audience. And this one audience was ... It was a sellout, and everyone was going, "It's a sellout on a Thursday matinee, where it's meant to be a little bit more gentle." There was three or four coach-loads of teenagers, young people, who pretty much took over the theatre. I remember it being like ... I'm not saying it was a riot, but it was riotous. They were screaming, shouting ... Every time there was a kiss, there was "Whoa!"

Stephen Lloyd:

It was panto, wasn't it?

John Kelly:

But they also really appreciated the songs, and joined in and cheered when there was something to be cheered about. And I remember ... I went off and I thought, "Blimey, we lost control of the crowd." And I went ... I was really frightened, actually. I was nervous about it because I thought, "Blimey, that was a bit scary." And I said, "Jenny, I'm really sorry, because it feels like we lost control of the show." And she goes, "What are you talking about?" She said, "It was brilliant, because you were going to a whole new audience who've never experienced theatre in that way. Theatre, you sit down and you be quiet and you get bombarded with something off the stage, and it shouldn't be like that. Theatre should be a place that everybody owns, that everybody belongs to, and do what they need to do."

John Kelly:

That day, they blinking did, and it was quite scary, but it was so brilliant. That was ... So like what you're saying Jude about the older folk, the young ... I think I'm not making up by saying there is something for everyone in that show, apart from maybe very young children. It's not a children's show.

Stephen Lloyd:

No. Some children were in the audience some nights. Speaking about young people, watching Reasons, I remember we had a group of teenagers come to see it in Ipswich at the New Wolsey. I remember looking out of the bar window. I think it was very early on during the very first tour.

John Kelly:

Yeah, I remember it.

Stephen Lloyd:

And they were singing and signing Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll outside on the street, which was just fantastic, absolutely ... Because it's a song they probably had never heard before. And they just bought into it straight away.

John Kelly:

And they'd probably never thought of signing the song.

Stephen Lloyd:

No, of course. Yeah, exactly. And they were doing it. They were in the street giving it Sex & Drugs & Rock & Roll.

John Kelly:

And if anybody is listening or watching this that was at the show, I bet you still remember the signs for sex and drugs and rock and roll, and you'll be doing it right now.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah. I have in my head.

John Kelly:

I do it in my head as well. Yeah. Things to say. What will be your lasting memory of Reasons to be Cheerful?

Jude Mahon:

Mine will always be at the very beginning. Liverpool will always be close to my heart.

Stephen Lloyd:

Oh, Liverpool was wonderful. Yeah.

Jude Mahon:

The Everyman. Unbelievable. But my main memory is in rehearsals for the very first tour, and the journalist that came in. And we all sat on the floor or wherever. We sat down and we answered questions. We were making each other laugh. We just had ... There was moments of real emotion, and we a lovely chat with him. And he just sat and said, "There's a real chemistry in this room. You have a real chemistry." That is why I think Reasons to be Cheerful was so successful, because the audience became part of that chemistry. We did have that, and we always have it whenever we get back together. Naturally, that chemistry is just there, and I think it will be forever.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah. I agree. I think that first rehearsal will always stand out, because we were making something from nothing really. I mean, we had Paul's script, which was fantastic.

John Kelly:

That was nothing.

Stephen Lloyd:

And it was nothing, but it was all of these layers, because originally it wasn't set in a pub. It was just the story. The story started with Vinnie walking in playing Reasons to be Cheerful on the record player, and then all these layers. And it was four weeks of getting to know these people who, as Jude said, we had such chemistry. It was the most organic process I've ever been involved in in every kind of way. And I just ... When I think of Reasons, that is where my heart goes to. It goes to those early days when we were making this thing, and we had no idea what it would become. I think that is where the heart of the piece lies, or the heart of not just the piece, but just what the company ... It lies in I think those early days.

John Kelly:

I don't want to get too cliched about it, but I think I'm going to get a bit cliched, because it's true.

Stephen Lloyd:

Go on.

John Kelly:

For me, my lasting memory of Reasons is about the journey that we've all been on, from being not sure if it's going to work. The journey that we've been on, I really loved going to every town we've been to and learning a little bit about that place, learning about the theatre that we've been in, learning about some of the local people that come every night. And we made friends with them, and I'm still friends with them now. That sort of journey, the journey of the show, how it's changed over the years. We've had characters ... Most of us have stayed, but some of us, because there's a lot of talent there, so people have worked on other shows. We've had to have other people in, and how that's evolved with the show, that sort of journey.

John Kelly:

But for me, my own personal journey has just been massive, from ... I've always loved music. I've lived for music all my life, and it's only the last 10 years that I've been able to say that I'm a professional musician. I earn my living out of it now. So I've had a massive journey, and part of that journey, we've done a lot of miles in a real sense. We've been to Brazil and we've been to Mexico. And although those kinds of bits to the journey ... So I think that whole ... I know it's a bit cliched, but-

Stephen Lloyd:

No, you're right.

John Kelly:

The idea of journey and that actually, it's not over. I know that Graeae always keep going, "This is the last time we're going to do it," and it probably is. It is the last time, but somewhere it will come up again. And for me, the massive sign for me in the journey was when I got to write If It Can't Be Right Then It Must Be Wrong with Chaz and Del. I worked with Del pretty much on the lyrics, and we went in the studio and recorded it. That for me was more than a hair on the back of the neck moment. For me on a personal level, that journey ... And it's only because of all of you and Graeae and all the audiences, who every night just have made it just this mad show that I love, that I'm not ...

John Kelly:

It isn't jazz hands. It is just totally down to earth. What you see is what you get. The story is lovely. It's got so many brilliant, funny bits in it. Everybody in it just ... I think every minute, there's something in it that will be a joke or will spark off a memory. Spicer with her ... There were many a night that we were crying behind Spicer when she was doing her dialogue. And then there were the joke times that I'd cry behind your back when we were doing Sweet Gene Vincent, and you'd be giving it to the audience, and I'd like (crying).

Stephen Lloyd:

I know. I know. But this is it. You're right. You're completely right about that journey. And we've all not only experienced our own journeys, but we've all seen each other's as well, and we celebrate that. Yeah.

John Kelly:

Let's keep the journey going. Let's get down the Red Lion Wednesday.

Stephen Lloyd:

Yeah, let's do it. Let's all watch it. Let's keep it alive.

John Kelly:

Long live Ian Dury and the Blockheads.

Stephen Lloyd:

Oh yes.

John Kelly:

And Graeae.

Stephen Lloyd:

And Graeae.

John Kelly:

And Jude. Hello, thank you for signing Jude.

Stephen Lloyd:

Hooray!

Jude Mahon:

Yay

John Kelly:

Lots of love, everyone. Take care sausages. Oi Oi!

Visit graeae.org and disabilityarts.online for details of productions, events, interviews, opinions, reviews, and learning opportunities.