

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / THANK YOU'S:

Thank you to our generous and supportive Pozible backers and those who helped spread the word; without you, this show would be impossible.

Thank you to Emma Child, whose production management during the initial part of this show's development was invaluable.

This production was originally developed with the support of Brunswick Mechanics Institute, as part of its Creative Development Program; we are so grateful for their support.

Thanks also to our other rehearsal venues, the Kathleen Syme Library and Siteworks, for making us feel so welcome.

Thank you to La Mama for so thoroughly believing in us.

Thank you to Asher Wolf; Peter C. Hayward; Ella Jean; Jackson Hayat; the Pozible team; SMaC Lab; Will Anderson; Birdoir Creative Team; Hazel Brown; Yvonne Virsik, Jason Lehane and Monash University Student Theatre; Hanc Finestra; Menachem Cylich; Carly Findlay; Benni Aroni and Roz Kaldor-Aroni; Adam Crabtree; Xin Di, and innumerable others. Half the things we do for one another are help, and an awful lot of help went into this show.

This production would be a shadow of its current self without the writings of brilliant autistic philosophers and activists like Damian Milton, Ari Ne'eman, Julia Bascom, Rabbi Ruti Regan, Sarah Kurchak, Mel Baggs, Lydia X. Z. Brown, Cal Montgomery, and autistic allies Steve Silberman and Shannon Des Roches Rosa.

It also owes much to the individuals cited directly within its text: Eva Kittay, philosopher of help and disability; Alfie Kohn, a luminary fighting for alternatives to reward and punishment; and Gina Perry, a science historian whose detailed investigation of the Millgram experiments provided a significant insight; and Greta Thurberg, climate activist and example of gloriously stubborn autistic excellence. We also thank Frantz Fanon, whose presence permeates the show even though his name regrettably is not spoken aloud. We kind of hope his ghost approves.



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La Mama Theatre is on traditional land of the Kulin Nation. We give our respect to the Elders of this country and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people past, present and future. We acknowledge all events take place on stolen lands and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We are grateful to all our philanthropic partners and donors, advocates, volunteers, audiences, artists and our entire community as we work towards the La Mama rebuild. Thank you!

La Mama is financially assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council – its arts funding and advisory body, the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria, and the City of Melbourne through the Arts and Culture triennial funding program.



 and *A_tistic* present

HELPING HANDS

7 - 10 AUGUST 2019



HELPING HANDS

Directed by **Hannah Aroni**, **Jess Gonsalvez** and **James Matthews**

Performed by devising cast **Tara Daniel**, **Vanessa Di Natale**, **Emily Griffith**, **Dee Matthews**, **Artemis Munoz**, **Aislinn Murray** and **Alexander Woollatt**

Script co-created by directors and devising cast

Creative consultant: **Hari Srinivasan**

Set designer: **John Collopy**

Lighting designer: **John Collopy**

Sound designer: **Jacinta Anderson**

Stage managers: **Jacinta Anderson** and **Loughlin Turpin**

Production manager: **Theodore Murray**

Cinematographer (trailers and video ticket): **Gideon Aroni**

Costumes: **Hannah Aroni**, with **Aislinn Murray**, **Tara Daniel** and **Emily Griffith**

Illustration/graphics: **Hannah Aroni** and **John Collopy**

Relaxed Performance consultant: **Tom Middleditch**

Auslan interpreters: **Mac Gordon** and **Kirri Dangerfield**

Photographer: **Alexis Desaulniers-Lea**

STREAMABLE VIDEO TICKETS

Following its debut La Mama season, this production will also be available to experience online for a limited time via a high-quality, captioned, streamable film. Head to <https://www.a-tistic.com.au/> to purchase a film ticket or learn more!

DIRECTORS' NOTES:

The first seed of Helping Hands was planted way back in 2014, when we were doing research for A_tistic's first play and stumbled onto an essay that made our hearts sink into our chests: *Quiet Hands* by Julia Bascom, a meditation on just one of the ways that autistic ways of perceiving, delighting and connecting are repressed in the name of "help". The play has been slowly growing ever since, and it could not have flourished without the extraordinary insights, ideas and creative flair of our majority-autistic-or-otherwise-neurodivergent creative team.

This is our first development season of *Helping Hands*; it has been created from scratch in collaboration with our cast. We've learned a great deal, stumbled plenty of times along the way, and found our way to something we can't wait to share with you.

ABOUT A_TISTIC

A_tistic is a team of multidisciplinary neurodiverse artists, consultants and educators located in Melbourne, Australia. Using our style of Spectrum Theatre, we aim to bring autistic lives, insights and experiences to the stage. *Helping Hands* is A_tistic's fourth play, following *Them Aspies* (MUST, 2014, 2015); *Pinocchio Restrung* (Melbourne Fringe Festival, 2016) and *Alexithymia* (Poppyseed Festival, 2017). We also run workshops and trainings, provide relaxed performance consultation and advise other creatives, and write and comment on autism and neurodiversity. We have worked with organisations including Arts Centre Melbourne, Malthouse Theatre, Melbourne Fringe and Drama Victoria.

To learn more about us, visit <https://www.a-tistic.com.au/>, or follow us on social media:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/atistictheatre/> Twitter: @ActualA_tistic

HANNAH ARONI

(she/her)

In her arts life, Hannah is a writer, director, dramaturge and illustrator. In her civilian life, she started out in law, but was seduced by the glamour and prestige of social work, academia and disability advocacy. She is one of the token non-autistic members of A_tistic's arts core, and is a Board Member of Pathways Melbourne, an organisation that supports people leaving or changing their relationship with their faith or religious community. Hannah's other credits include dramaturgy for Quippings, writing for Passer Vulpes' forthcoming fiction podcast *Supernatural Sexuality with Doctor Seabrooke*, and writing and direction for her debut play, *Aphonia: Love Stories* (MUST). Her nonfiction writing has appeared in Overland and SBS Life. She is endlessly fascinated by the complexities of interpersonal communication and the challenges of developing a utopian imagination. She is painfully sincere, and dedicated to making a world where people ask instead of guessing.

JESS GONSALVEZ

(she/her)

Jess Gonsalvez is a multidisciplinary artist with a Bachelor of Performing Arts, who has dabbled in stage acting, burlesque, a capella, poetry and direction for devised works. Jess was one of the original co-founders of A_tistic, after two sell-out seasons of their critically acclaimed show *Them Aspies*; she is proud to have offered her devising experience to a new collection of creatives to develop *Helping Hands*. Jess is passionate about social justice, storytelling, representation, cats and consensual cuddling.

JAMES MATTHEWS

(he/him)

James is an autistic self-advocate and theatre maker. James acts as A_tistic's finance manager, and is currently completing his Bachelor of Economics and Finance at RMIT with a major in Macroeconomics. He became part of A_tistic as a devising performer in *Them Aspies* and has since contributed to the company as a workshop designer/presenter and dramaturge for *Pinocchio Restrung* and *Alexithymia*. He draws on collaborative negotiation and world-building techniques used in table-top roleplaying games to inform his approach to devised storytelling. James views theatre as an effective and delightful tool for the examination of the norms of society and, as necessary, the work toward their reformation. In conclusion, ABA must be destroyed.

VANESSA DI NATALE

(she/her)

Vanessa identifies strongly with being a woman on the autism spectrum or as neurodivergent. She can't play the piano, do math, code, or memorise a city skyline from a helicopter and then draw it out. The phrase "severely autistic" shits her. Functioning labels shit her. Conflating autism with sociopathy, shits her. Parents of autistic kids with saviour complexes shit her. Hans Asperger's ties to Nazi Psychiatry, shits her. She is currently scraping through a Masters in International Relations and dabbles in creative non-fiction and investigative journalism. Take your child off that ABA therapist's waiting list. Go buy them something nice with your savings.

TARA DANIEL

(she/her)

Tara trained at WAAPA and the VCA, and is a director, performer and arts educator who has worked in dance, theatre and film in Australia and the UK. Prior roles include; Head of Performing Arts at Brunswick Secondary College and Melbourne Girls Grammar School, Education Program Manager at the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts, Teaching Artist for the Arts Centre Melbourne, Education Consultant and Writer for Theatre Works and Regional Arts Victoria, Drama Lecturer at Trinity College, the University of Melbourne, and Artistic Director of Fresh: Theatre for Social Change. Currently, Tara manages education programs at the Heide Museum of Modern Art and is a Drama Tutor for NIDA Melbourne.

EMILY GRIFFITH

(they/them or she/her)

Emily is an honours student in Philosophy of Language at Monash University. They work in disability advocacy and community inclusion outside of this through Neighbourhood Houses and in 2018 as a Disabilities and Carers Officer for the Monash Student Association. They are passionate about projects that explore neurodiverse and queer experience. They have primarily done this through writing in academia but are particularly interested in exploring these through creative mediums, which they did in their short film *Topothesia* (2017), and now through their involvement as a devising performer in *Helping Hands*. They hold a Bachelor of Arts and Science (majoring in Philosophy and Psychology) from Monash University.

DEE MATTHEWS

(they/them/she/her)

Dee is an occasional actress and frequent network engineer. She used to do musical theatre back when she was performing an octave lower, but these days is a squeakier singer. They won a Junior Lyrebird award once but their name fell off the plaque. Now that she's back in theatre she reckons they might stick around and do some more. Their current complications are ADHD and autistic but they might have more to come; if there's screaming backstage for no reason it's probably them. She has great outfits and bad timing.

AISLINN MURRAY

(she/her or they/them)

Aislinn graduated with a Bachelor of Performing Arts from Monash University in 2015. She performed in a range of productions with the Monash Shakespeare Company including *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Mark Wilson, as well as a range of productions with Monash Uni Student Theatre including *The Handmaid's Tale* directed by Yvonne Virsik and Penelope Bartlau's *Psychopomp* directed by Jason Lehane, in collaboration with Barking Spider Visual Theatre. She also performed in Attic Erratic's Adelaide Fringe and Melbourne Comedy Festival seasons of Sarah Collins' *Choir Girl* directed by Celeste Cody.

In 2019, Aislinn is completing her Masters of Primary Teaching at Victoria University and is putting her performance skills to good use, entertaining her students with lots of very dramatic picture book readings. Aislinn is absolutely thrilled to join the *Helping Hands* team for her first production with A_tistic Theatre.

ARTEMIS MUNOZ

(they/them)

Artemis Munoz is an Artist, Activist and potato lover with a BA (Acting) from the Federation University Arts Academy. As an actor, Art has appeared on stage in *Ophelia Thinks Harder* (Wit Incorporated), and new musicals *Share* (Glass Wings) and *Ace of Hearts*. As a poet Artemis has performed at Periphery No More and TGV's Transgender Day Of Visibility Party. Artie also has a budding career as a cabaret artist and has performed original musical comedy works at TAINT Cabaret, Transgender Victoria's Change Your ID Day, MUST CabFest and more! They have some very exciting cabaret news dropping soon so don't forget to follow them on all the socials. Art is part of the team behind the #justnotthatmany campaign and a proud member of Equity, sitting on Equity's Diversity Committee.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MunozArtemis

Twitter/Instagram: @artemismunoz

ALEXANDER WOOLLATT

(he/him)

Alexander is an actor based in Melbourne. He graduated from Flinders University with a Bachelor of Creative Arts (Honours) and went on to study at the Stella Adler Studio in New York. Recent theatre credits include *The Great Gatsby* (Independent Theatre) and *Deluge* (Tiny Bricks), which was part of the Adelaide Festival. Alexander has enjoyed being a part of the devising team of *Helping Hands* and is interested in writing his own projects in the future.

HARI SRINIVASAN

(he/him)

Hari Srinivasan is a minimally-speaking autistic who found his "voice" only after he learned to communicate via typing as a teen. Communication through typing was what gave him access to mainstream education and he went onto be high school valedictorian. He is currently a student at UC Berkeley majoring in Psychology and minoring in Disability Studies. He is also a staff writer for the student newspaper *The Daily Californian*, a Research Assistant at the Hinshaw Lab and an undergraduate student co-teacher for a class on autism. Hari is a writer of award-winning poetry and short stories and a passionate advocate for communication rights and access for all autistic people. His writing can be found at <http://journal4hari.blogspot.com/>.

LOUGHLIN TURPIN

Loughlin is a queer punk scientist doing a PhD in the chemistry of nanomaterials (and thus has a longstanding interest in the thoughtful negotiation of boundaries...). Loughlin is a keen advocate for equity, accessibility and workers rights in STEM.

As a keen experimentalist in laboratories, conferences and on the stage, Loughlin feels very lucky to be stage managing this show as the Most Punk Thing they've ever done.

JACINTA ANDERSON

(she/her)

Jacinta has been working in the Theatre Industry since she left Monash University in 2016. She predominantly works as a Stage Manager, though she is developing an emerging practice as a sound designer. Jacinta is also a core member of A_tistic. Her recent Stage Management credits include *Paradise Lost* (The Bloomshed), *The Market is a Wind Up Toy* (The Bloomshed 2019, 2018), The 2019 Tour of *Playhouse Creatures* (Hit Productions), *The Trial of Dorian Gray* (Bitten By Productions), The 2018 Tour of *Always... Patsy Cline* (Hit Productions), *The Nightingale and the Rose* (Little Ones Theatre), *Fierce* (Theatre Works), *Anti-Hamlet* (New Working Group), *The Moors* (Little Ones Theatre and Red Stitch), *Lifetime Guarantee* (Theatre Works), *The Happy Prince* (Little Ones Theatre), *Trevor* (Red Stitch), The River (Red Stitch).

JOHN COLLOPY

(he/him)

John is a lighting and visual designer, whose work for the stage has been seen in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, and is a member of A_tistic's arts core. John holds a Bachelor of Arts from Monash University, with a theatre major and performance minor. His recent lighting design credits include *The Nose* (The Bloomshed; winner of Sydney Fringe Festival Director's Award 2017), *The Market is a Wind Up Toy* (The Bloomshed, Critics Pick of Sydney Fringe 2018), *Kilter* (One Fell Swoop Circus), *Wrath* (Baker's Dozen Theatre), *Marie Antoinette* (Heartstring Theatre), *The Man Who Cannot Sleep* (White Night/Magic Lantern Studio/Sanctum Theatre), *Too Ready Mirror* (Darebin Arts Speakeasy), *Ironbound; Hurlyburly;* and *Shining City* (Q44 Theatre). He has worked extensively as a lighting assistant and associate with Katie Sfetkidis on shows including *Merciless Gods* (Little Ones/Darebin Arts Speakeasy), *The Happy Prince* (Little Ones/La Mama), and *The Moors* (Little Ones/Red Stitch). He also seconded Emma Valente on *JOAN* (THE RABBLE/Theatreworks) and *Little Emperors* (Malthouse). *The Happy Prince*, *The Moors*, and *JOAN* were all nominated for 2018 Green Room Awards for Lighting Design in their respective categories.

TEDDY DARLING

(he/him and they/them)

Teddy is a law graduate, producer, and advocate for queer and trans art and performance. He is passionate about creating platforms for queer artists, and space for diverse and non binary expression. He may be found on instagram and the stage as @nancyboysinatra, and will be hosting a queer cabaret and photography showcase at Hares & Hyenas on 30 August 2019.

GIDEON ARONI

(he/him)

Gideon Aroni is a passionate filmmaker and actor who started making films when he was four years old and started acting professionally when he was 11. Since then Gideon has appeared on the stage in professional musicals, opera, and most recently in children's TV series *You're Skitting Me* (ABC3). He has made a range of drama and documentary films including his most recent film, *La Fin* <https://youtu.be/yUrEWUoh710>, completed in his final year at school, which received an award for best screenplay at Booroondara Youth Film Festival. He is currently studying filmmaking at Swinburne University in Melbourne, and was recently invited to participate in Jerusalem Film Workshop, co-creating a documentary as part of a team of young filmmakers from around the world.

TOM MIDDLEDITCH

(he/him)

Tom is the Artistic Director of A_tistic, a writer/director/performer, and a neurodiversity and inclusion consultant. Tom is the Inclusion Coordinator for St Martins Youth Arts Centre. Tom has played key roles in A_tistic's consulting, workshops, relaxed performance adaptation and theatrical productions - Tom was the co-creator of *Them Aspies* (2014, 2015), writer and director of *Pinocchio Restrung* (2016), and writer and co-producer of *Alexithymia* (2017). His additional directing credits include *Twelve Angry Jurors* (2017, co-directed with Sarah Brantino, produced by Oxagen Productions). Tom holds a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in Philosophy and Theatre) from Monash University.