

Access Guide for No One's Special at the Hot Dog Cart

This access guide has been adapted from one created by Theatre Passe Muraille for their Toronto run of No One's Special at the Hot Dog Cart. To view the full guide for their production visit <https://www.passemuraille.ca/hot-dog-digital-program/>

What is included in this Access Guide?

This information package aims to help anyone access and understand the play, and the agency to decide whether to attend. In particular, the guide may assist those who have different needs for communication including, but not exclusively, Autistic People, those who communicate using multiple languages, as well as others who may be challenged by some theatrical constructs.

Performance Advisories & Common Questions

Are there any performance advisories (loud noises, strobing lights, violence and triggering content)?

Content Warnings: Descriptions of bodily fluids in a medical setting, fear, stalking depictions of violence, strong language, sexual content, references to police violence.

Environmental Warnings (example: haze, lights or sound): Some loud voice overs of a man yelling. Sometimes the sound overlaps, repeats, and is layered while dialogue happens over top, meaning there is a lot of information happening at once. For one 'character' there is a distortion effect applied to the performer's voice that makes the voice sound low and almost robotic.

Age limit: Suggested age is 12, some coarse language

Sensory Sensitive Performance. Light has been designed with sensitivities in mind. There is one moment of complete black-out at the end of the play. There are five moments in the performance where the sound overlaps, is distorted, or is at a volume that some audience members may find intense or overwhelming. Please see Sound Warnings for more details. **Earplugs, sunglasses and sensory toys will be available in the lobby prior to the performance**

ASL Interpreted performance

- Deaf Interpreter: Jaideep Goray
- ASL Coach: Gaitrie Persaud
- ASL-English Interpreters: Emma Dehez & Aneesa Mustafa

Sound Warnings

The following section contains details that could be considered minor spoilers! Please continue to the section titled **Set Details** if you do not want to know what happens in the show.

1. At the very start of the show there is a sound cue of overlapping news reporters sharing headlines and a low voice asking for corn relish. You will know this section is coming when the house lights dim. **You will know this section is finished when the sound lowers and Charlie appears from behind the cart.**
2. In the first 5 minutes of the show, Charlie (the performer) goes to the microphone on the left side of the stage to create a loop of sound made with their voice and instruments live on stage. After they leave the microphone, the volume of this sound loop increases. You will know this section is coming when Charlie goes to the microphone for the first time. **You will know this section is finished when Charlie says the word “Anxiety” and the sound reduces.**
3. About 30 minutes into the show, there is another layered sound cue of instruments that is played at a loud volume. Charlie shouts over this sound cue. You will know this section is coming when Charlie finishes talking about the alternative bar where they did homework in high school and begins to interact with the garbage bag on the side of the cart. **You will know this section is finished when Charlie folds up the plastic bag.**
4. About 55 minutes into the show, Charlie will create another layered, repeating sound cue using their voice distorted through an effect to be very low pitched, almost robotic sounding. They will then speak overtop of this cue. You will know this section is coming when Charlie says “Let Them Rant”, begins to speak about his friend, Tom, and then crosses to the microphone. **You will know this section is finished when Charlie says “let them finish” and goes to sit on a stack of milk crates.**
5. About 75 minutes into the show, the sound from the beginning of the show is played again. You will know this section is coming when Charlie begins talking about wallet cards. **You will know this section is over when the sound reduces and Charlie stops speaking and just breathes on stage.**

Plot Details

The following section of text contains **Plot Details** that could be considered spoilers! Please continue to the section titled **Set Details** if you do not want to know what happens (the end of the plot section is highlighted)!

Words that are underlined can be found in the Background section if you would like a definition or would like to learn more.

Charlie (They/He), as an emergency responder, is talking about how their hot dog vendor training has helped them thrive in their current job. Their first vending corner was outside the Eaton Centre in Downtown Toronto in the 90's. There was a dimly lit slew of vendors, buskers, tourists, street preachers and flower sellers.

- 1- Respond To Anxiety With Compassion** - In 1991, Charlie met Frank and became friends later. Frank talked about a lot of his struggles in life to Charlie, such as his relationship with his daughter. These interactions with Frank made Charlie feel they had some special power to calm people. By using de-escalation techniques, Charlie could stop Frank from crying by shifting his focus. Charlie shares that- Being homeless is the hardest job because it never ends. They respect everyone because we live on stolen land, so they don't tell people when or where they can exist. Charlie then talks about Church & Gerrard- their second location to sell hot dogs, where they learned to appreciate the strength of street communities. They were selling hotdogs alone at midnight, dealing with crowds after the bars closed. They perform a poem called "Church and Gerrard". Without getting along with the street communities, Charlie may not have survived. They quote U2's song "Running to Stand Still" which they used to sing in the parking lot at 5 am after work, to describe their experience as a person working on the street.
- 2- Actively Listen Without Judgement-** Charlie describes their relationship with Frank using a metaphor. Charlie refers to themselves as "Frank's antidepressant" in a daily routine, from 5 pm- 11 pm in Yonge & Dundas. They then talk about their work with the 911 Emergency Service. In 911 Emergency Service, workers have to actively listen to the whole scene on the other side of a phone call in 45 seconds without judgment, by asking closed questions and mirroring (repeating the last line of what the person says). They need to make sure that the person on the other feels less alone and that they (the operator) are willing to listen with deep acceptance. Charlie then shares about how they danced to survive and they become a hot dog onstage for a few bizarre minutes. They go back to their story with Frank. They started to get anxious around Frank's anger so they needed to take a break from Frank. They got robbed and no other vendors helped them. The Dundas & Yonge intersection has no community, but only competition. Frank started to become a stalker. Charlie found themselves a bodyguard called Jimmy who lived on the streets. When Jimmy was there, the pimps stayed away and they felt safe with Jimmy's protection even though Frank may have found them in Church & Gerrard area. In the Gay Village, they could take washroom breaks in lesbian bars, and they had customers from gay bars like the Barn. They also got to know the Sex Workers right across from their corner. They mention the stories of Naomi and Tina. Charlie knows when to involve themselves in a situation, and when not to. Charlie performs a poem called 'Steps to making the perfect hog hog'.
- 3- Let Them Rant-** Back at the Dundas & Yonge intersection, Frank becomes aware of Charlie's declining empathy and becomes jealous of Charlie's new friend Tom. Frank starts to rant about Charlie & Tom's relationship. Charlie just lets him finish so Frank was too tired to get worse. Charlie imitates Frank's ranting, then talks about how they later learned that letting people rant is good de-escalation technique. Charlie then describes their work in the Emergency Room (ER). Charlie, as a clerk, is responsible to check people in and deal with people's complaints. A man waiting for 4 hours comes to them with a bucket of vomited blood of his own and keeps ranting. Charlie puts the man in his place.
- 4- Validate and Recognize-** After the ranting is over, it's time for Validating and Recognizing. The focus of this lesson is to help others find options and alternatives. Charlie mentions that most people need to feel seen, heard and understood. Frank fell apart when he saw Charlie's boss kiss

their cheek one night, as a cultural gesture of friendship. Frank almost called the police. Charlie told him they did not want police to come. Charlie also says they no longer need Frank or his friendship. They asked Frank to stay away from them.

- 5- **Manage Your Own Response-** While holding stress at work, Charlie almost forgot they could have human responses at work. They went from 911 Emergency Service Responder, to Emergency Room Clerk, to Hospital Bed Allocator. The job has become difficult during the pandemic. They perform a poem about bed allocators. They tell their story of the first shift being a bed allocator in a small hospital in a big city. This experience has made Charlie figure out we are all just beds and bodies in the end, and that is the reason for them leaving healthcare to pursue a career in the arts, finding ways to balance pain with joy. Charlie performs another poem about this. Back in the hot dog cart at Church & Gerrard, Charlie is all alone when their fears get realized, Frank has found them. Frank, has on a black suit, is carrying a rose and marches past Charlie, with menace. Charlie gets scared and does not return to the hot dog cart again.

Charlie concludes the play by repeating words from all the lessons they've learned, hoping that people can have less fear around people who are experiencing mental health emergencies. Charlie emphasizes the importance of street communities in their life and in everybody's lives. Charlie asks us to respect them. Charlie hands out small cards with the steps from the show so the audience can remember. **The End of spoilers.**

Character(s)



This picture features a portrait of performer Charlie Petch. During the performance, Charlie will be appearing as himself/ themselves.

The End of the Performance

At the end of the performance there will be a 15 minute Q&A. You are welcome to stay seated or leave at this point, you do not have to stay for the Q&A. You are welcome to come and go from the space while you are at the theatre if you would like to visit the lobby or washroom. Hotdogs and books will be available for sale in the lobby following the show.

Background

The following words are listed in the **Plot Details** section with an underline. The following list provides definitions and links if you would like to learn more.

Eaton Centre- A shopping center in downtown Toronto near the intersection of Yonge Street & Dundas Street. More information can be found [here](#).

U2- An Irish rock band formed in Dublin in 1976. More information can be found [here](#).

Running to Stand Still- A song by the band U2 from the album Joshua Tree (1987).

Venue Guide

[Click HERE](#) for more details, including maps, parking information, FAQs, and venue details.