

**Dyslexia-friendly Transcript for Discover Central Bonus Episode:**

**Central in Edinburgh 2022**



**HOST – SHAUN NORTHOVER**

**GUEST 1 – WILL SEBAG-MONTEFIORE**

**GUEST 2 – ADWITHA ARUMUGAM**

**GUEST 3 – SAM LAW**

**GUEST 4 – AADAR MALIK**

**Article and podcast links:**

**<https://www.cssd.ac.uk/discover-central-podcast>**

**<https://discovercentral.podbean.com/>**

**[theme tune plays. SHAUN starts speaking]**

**HOST – SHAUN NORTHOVER:**

**Welcome to Discover Central, the podcast that gives you a behind the scenes look at the life of students, staff and alumni at London's Royal Central School of Speech and Drama. I'm your host Shaun Northover, Central's Alumni and Events Manager, and I'm excited to welcome you to this special bonus episode of the podcast celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.**

**[theme tune fades out]**

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the world's largest arts festival, a hive of performance and creativity taking place in Edinburgh, Scotland for three weeks each August. Every year the fringe welcomes performers from across the globe to present thousands of shows across hundreds of venues around the city. Over 4 million people descend on Edinburgh throughout August to attend both the fringe and the Edinburgh International Festival. And there really is something happening around every corner. The Fringe provides a launching pad for new talent and emerging companies with many works commissioned as a result of their showing at the festival. Central students, staff and alumni have a long association with the Fringe, bringing an array of work to Edinburgh each year. Central in turn travels to the Fringe every August to support, promote and celebrate their work, and to host a gathering for our community at the festival. On this bonus episode, we'll be talking to some of Central students and alumni who are taking work to the fringe this year. We'll be finding out what it's like to take a show there, hear more about their previous experiences at the Fringe, and they'll also be sharing advice and tips that might help you if you're considering taking the show to the festival. I'm now pleased to introduce Will Sebag-Montefiore who graduated from Central's MA Acting course in 2014, and is now part of the acclaimed comedic troupe Just These, Please, which also includes fellow central alum Philippa Carson. After three years of sold-out, five star reviewed shows in Edinburgh, Just These Please have brought their fourth show, Honestly No Pressure Either Way to this year's Fringe. It runs from August 3 to 14th and 16th to 29 at the Gilded Balloon Teviot. Hi, Will, thank you so much for joining us. We're so excited to catch up with you and Philippa at the festival and to come along and see your show, Honestly No Pressure Either Way. Can you tell us a little bit about it, and about just these please?

**WILL SEBAG-MONTEFIORE:**

Hello, Shaun. It's very nice to be here. I'm also very excited that we're an acclaimed comedy troupe. That's a very, I wanted to steal that, that's a very nice way of putting it. Yeah, Just These Please are an acclaimed comedy troupe. We do sketches and musical comedy. There are four of us. Philippa, Georgie, Will and Tom. I have referred to myself in the third person and put myself third in the list for some reason, and I don't know why. So we make, yeah, we make musical and sketch comedy both live and online. And we've

been doing it since about 2017. Our shows look like 20 to 25 different sketches and songs separated by banging tunes and lights. And the content ranges from, like, people ordering coffee with an Irish name to the mayor of York trying to work out why a different York has just suddenly appeared. It's all very silly, very fun. And we write it and create it all ourselves.

**SHAUN:**

I'm looking forward to seeing it. This is the fourth show that you're taking to the fringe. What keeps you going back? And how has your previous years of experience influenced what you're doing this year?

**WILL:**

Why we keep going back is a very good question. Why why are you doing it? It is definitely the more you do it, the more you go to the festival, the more savvy I think you become with what audiences want or what audiences sort of expect from you as a group. And that is part of the creative process is very helpful. Also, some builders have just started hammering something, like, just next to the window. So I apologise for that. That's not, it's not an underscore to this, that is incidental. So creatively, it definitely helps having done it before and knowing what lands well, and what sort of stuff works. And having a framework for making a show is really helpful. Our shows tend to be a formula that we've used before, which is sketches and songs that narratively, a couple of them narratively weave together. That's super helpful. I think the main thing that you learn from doing it is the very dull side of the fringe, which if you're self producing like we are, you just have to do a load of admin, and knowing how to meet those deadlines and what to do. It is sort of a frustrating answer, because it's so boring. But the amount of admin work that you have to do like being a producer is an insane job. It's so impressive that people do it full time, because doing it alongside the creative process is very difficult, but it can be done. And I think the main bit of advice I'd take away from having done it myself is just ask people who've done it before, because that's super helpful. I've gone off on a tangent, and I don't remember the question, but I hope I helped.

**SHAUN:**

That's great. And after all that experience of dealing with all the admin and those frustrations that you know, it's worth it in the end for the work. So it's all for a good cause. Performing at the fringe sounds like an experience like no other, how do you feel your training at Central prepared you for taking work to the festival?

**WILL:**

So I think particularly with our show, because it's different sketches and songs, we play totally different, unrelated characters from one scene to the other, it feels like you're jumping into the middle of a play action wise, because you're not doing any of the steps. You have to do the exposition as soon as you can get straight into the meat of it and go. So jumping between characters, acting wise, that was the acting training at Central that is second to none. That's a huge part of, of the way we speak to each other in the group, that is informed whether consciously or subconsciously by that. And treating comedy like it's serious, you know, the characters have to not think it's funny, the characters have to be dead serious. And the stakes have to be incredibly high. So that's, that's a huge part of it. The other side of it is the connections you make at Central, and the people that you meet. Like our first year, our general manager, who helped us out a lot was a central alum. And it's a great way of meeting people and staying in touch and having people across, across the industry working with you. And also having supportive friends who will come and see the show beforehand in previews and give you notes and say, Get rid of that. Or, keep that in, you know, let's positively charged it. And the final thing I think, is stuff like this and staying in touch with you guys. And being supported throughout the fringe with the Central pamphlet that goes out that shows the group of shows which is really diverse and interesting group of shows, and then going to the Central party every year, there's a party that's held in Edinburgh, which is really nice, it feels like you're part of a community. And we're very lucky as a group that we have each other to hang out with. But if you're doing a solo show, or if you're working with a new group of people, having that, that as a little anchor, you get to meet a whole bunch of new people, you get an opportunity to pitch your show, it does feel like Oh, I'm not alone. There are lots of people doing this. It's going well or not well in different ways for different people. But it's, what it feels like is a bit like High School Musical. We're all in this together. It's great.

**SHAUN:**

And what advice would you give to someone who was thinking of taking a show to the fringe?

**WILL:**

It is a really good question. And I think it's probably the reason a lot of people will be listening to this. And the biggest thing for me is something that Georgie in the group always asks, which is 'why'. You've just, you've just got to be absolutely certain as to your goal. I think you have to know why you're going to the fringe. It's a very expensive endeavour, and more so than any year this year, I think it's pricing out a lot of people from different backgrounds. And that's really sad, because it began as an artistic festival to allow different acts to come up. And that's changing. And that's a real, real problem that I am not going to solve in a 10 minute podcast. But I think if you are able to, if you are going to the fringe, you have to have a clear goal of what you want in mind, whether you want to just make some work, whether you want to make money, whether you want... that one is a tenuous one to achieve... or whether you want to get an agent or get casting directors in whatever it is, you have to know that whatever you walk away from the festival with you have a tangible way of measuring whether you've achieved something. Because I think in this industry, it's so hard to walk away from something with a tangible thing. And you might not achieve that. But at least you've got a metric to go, oh, this was a success, or this was not a success. And I think that's just a really helpful way of looking at it. I think there is a pressure, especially in the comedy world of like, oh, one should be doing Edinburgh. And I don't think that's the case. I think there are other ways of making valuable and important strides in your career. So don't bow to the pressure of it. But do it if you think it's right, and you have a goal in mind, would be my rather rambling advice.

**SHAUN:**

Beyond the festival, what else are you up to?

**WILL:**

It's very hard to look beyond the festival when you're in the middle of it. Because you just think: I live in Edinburgh., now. That's, that's it. But in September, I tend to take a little bit of a break after because there's a lot of expenditure of energy that goes into the fringe. Hopefully we'll tour the show, hopefully we'll take it somewhere else. And that's another variable that's always going to be up in the air, you hope there'll be a life beyond it. And you can't control that. Well, that's not true. You can control it to an extent we could put on the show wherever we want. But it'd be nice for it to be taken away by someone else. And so we'd like to do more as a group. Solo stuff - I do a lot of comedy and acting on my own. So I'd like to do that. And generally, I might start doing exercise again and cut down on eating so many curly fries. Those are my main things beyond the festival.

SHAUN:

Well, not until afterwards at least.

WILL:

Yeah, exactly.

SHAUN:

If people want to find out more about the show and about your work with Just These, Please, where can they go to do that?

WILL:

So the show itself, if you're listening to this in August of 2022, is on at 7pm at the Gilded Balloon, and you can come see it. If you want to stay in touch with us, we're at Just These, Please on all the socials. And I'm at WSebag, which is my handle. And yeah, let's stay in touch. And also when we first started out as a group and as a solo artist, we asked people questions. Like, social media is a dark and terrible tool, but it also can be a very useful and positive one. And I think when we first started making stuff and started going to the fringe, we just messaged people on Twitter, we contacted friends of friends and asked, like, how do we do it, and asked for advice. And I think sometimes you won't get a reply. But if you have any questions that I can specifically help with, I'm very open to

people contacting me because I think that is in the spirit of the festival which I think, as I mentioned before, has slightly, slightly been corporately taken over. But I think that spirit still exists within the heart of the freelancers, that is the most pretentious thing I've ever said. But I think asking people for help and asking people for advice is really positive. And that's what social media should be used for. So contact us at Just These, Please or at WSebag and say hello. It's just nice to hear from people isn't it.

**SHAUN:**

Cheers for that. That was brilliant. That just leaves me to say thanks so much again, Will for joining us.

**WILL:**

Thanks so much for having us. And thanks so much for always coming up to see the shows and being so supportive. It's, it's really, it's really lovely. I'm excited to see you at the show.

**SHAUN:**

And now I'm excited to be joined by Adwitha Arumugam, Aadar Malik and Sam Law. Adwitha is a current student on BA Acting CDT, Aadar is studying on MA Acting, and Sam graduated from BA Honours Actig Musical Theatre in 2021. They're all involved in the production Dreamliner, which is playing from August 4 to 14th and 16th to 21st at C Arts. Thank you so much for joining us. You're leaving for Edinburgh soon for the start of your show. You must be so excited. Have any of you been to the fringe before? Either with a show, or as audience members?

**ADWITHA ARUMUGAM**

No, I've never been to the fringe before. It's my first time. It's very exciting. Have you?

**SAM LAW:**

Yeah, I haven't been either.

**AADAR MALIK**

Yeah. Yeah. For me, I've been, I have had a lot of friends and stand up comedians from India who have been there before, so I have been just to watch. I've been planning for a very long time, it just never happened. I was going to go there this year, but just to watch, and then suddenly Adwitha comes up to me. And she's like, I'm working on something for the fringe. And I'm like, hell yeah. So I'm going to be performing with these bunch of crazy people. And I'm going to be doing some standup, as well. So that's it's a very exciting first trip to Edinburgh.

**SHAUN**

So what's the process been like in preparing for the show?

**ADWITHA:**

It's just very, very, very stressful, because this is, as I said, my first time going up to the Fringe. And it's been a process of trying to find out what goes into preparing for the fringe, the things that you have to get in place, people you have to talk to, sources for funding, etc, etc. There's a million things that I didn't know how to get. But somehow things fell into place. A lot of those were knocked on a lot of opportunities for self doubt. And here we are, we leave in a week. And we're so excited to see and learn so much about the industry here in the UK, and the way people work and the kinds of things to do in order to make a show possible, especially when you're touring with the show. So it's been a great learning experience.

**AADAR:**

The only thing I'd like to add to that is that it's very tough to actually be looking at Edinburgh as a place to make a profit. That's what I've been told over and over again, because that's not what you're going to Edinburgh for, you are going there to showcase something that is truly unique. It's an opportunity to experiment. It's something to try out, like something you've been keeping in the closet, because you're like, Oh, I'm so scared to maybe do it on a mainstream stage or whether it works or won't it work. The audience is prepped to watch something experimental and something new, even though we feel that our play is something that could already be staged. And it has been staged in London,



quite successful. But we're taking more risks while going to Edinburgh and it's something that we're very excited about. So growing as artists experimenting.

**SHAUN:**

How do you feel like Central, your training at Central, has kind of helped you prepare for that?

**ADWITHA:**

I think for me, as I'm directing the show and I'm acting in it, and I'm producing the play, to wear all these different hats at the same time and be effective in all of my roles has been something that I did learn from Central to, you know, compartmentalise my different responsibilities and be able to carry them out to the fullest. And also a lot of the things that I learned to interpret, devising, have been from things I've done in classes with my tutors and things that we have experimented in classes, perhaps, and I was inspired by a lot of things that happen in our classes when we were in Central that translated themselves in one way or another into the rehearsal room and then took a different form from here because working with a different group of people is when different ideas come in, and different interpretations of the activities come in. And so, yeah, I think I owe a lot of what I know in terms of devising and directing to the work that I've done in Central and the kind of art that I have created and produced as part of my course.

**AADAR:**

As far as Central is concerned, all of us come from such different courses. And this is just a brilliant opportunity for me personally, to see all that, all that coursework coming into play, because I see how the others are using their training. And I get to experience part of that and to see that overlap happening and to see new things that they're going through versus what I'm going through. The course has been going on for six months, and the rehearsals for this play in one month has exposed me to so much more far as the training Central is concerned. So I'm very excited that I got this opportunity just to interact with Sam and Adwitha and, you know, and the other people in the cast who have come from different schools and different cohorts as far as training is concerned, because a lot of the people who are in the cast have come from different training backgrounds, they

have so much to offer, there's so much on the table up for grabs. And rehearsals has become this beautiful amalgamation of multiple training styles and multiple styles, performance in multiple styles, getting into character and understanding text and things like that. It just becomes so exciting to you know, have those different perspectives opened up because when you're doing one thing, you don't really realise that there are multiple possibilities. And so I think that's been a biggest thing for me is coming into rehearsal rooms.

**SAM:**

I think with the training at Central as well, because I did the Acting Musical Theatre, so I've never really done much devising or anything but you know, I had that training to kind of build the character and analyse texts and stuff. But I think what, what has helped me with this project is just being open and saying yes, and being generous with your energy and being generous with your ideas, which I think is a big thing that Central, I mean, they're pushing you so far out your comfort zone so that when you're in these kinds of situations, you're able just to commit to it and give as much as yourself as you can.

**SHAUN:**

It's so great to hear that you're all on different courses. And you've been able to kind of come together and collaborate with people that you haven't been working with on your course, that's, that sort of the spirit of Central, collaboration with people across the community and building your network. So that's really great to hear. Can you tell us a little bit more about the production itself, what it's about and how that came together?

**ADWITHA:**

So, the story of Dreamliner is that one fine morning a flight takes off. And after 23 minutes and three seconds in the air, it inexplicably turns around and lands back from the same terminal that it took off from, and in the time that the flight turns around and lands back, the passengers have hallucinations and impossible visuals that cannot be explained. Nobody knows why those hallucinations came about, why people hallucinated what they hallucinated, or what the cause of that was. And so the play is about this investigator trying to find the reason behind a the flight turning back and the hallucinations. And the

play is largely a comment on British crisis management. And we talk about things with social media and what it feels like to have a collective experience as human beings and how we as a community react to that. It's, it's a reaction to COVID, almost. Dominic, the writer came up with this idea of a collective emotional space that people are in, because he was having dreams, very vivid dreams during COVID and lockdown. And when he was looking it up on the internet, he found that multiple people in this country were having the same thing as well, they were having very, very vivid dreams, which sort of like triggered this idea. And he built it up and proposed it to me in January, and we were talking about how to make it a play, make it functional, bring more people into it, make it as crazy as possible. And we decided that devising would be the best way to go ahead and do that. Because devising is something that I particularly enjoy doing. I thought it would be a good idea. And so we scouted actors out we had auditions. We spoke to multiple people. And like any traditional audition process, we picked actors who then came together and happened to work very, very well together as a team, and that's the basis of how we created the rest of the show. A lot of all the monologues were devised. All of the characters were devised from whatever the actors had to offer, experiences they've had in their life, things that have happened to them, from people they know, stories that came from their childhood or the past, or stories that interested them. The monologues were also devised and so were the characters.

SHAUN:

That sounds great, I'm really looking forward to seeing the show myself. So it's your first time at the fringe. What are you all most looking forward to?

SAM:

I think because we've done a couple of shorter runs. I mean, it's the third incarnation of the play; the first time we had maybe two shows, and then we were at the white bear and I think we did three or four. So I'm just really looking forward to having a longer run of it. This is also going to be very interesting to have our director Adwitha also treading the boards. I'm very excited to see CBT's performance stylings.

AADAR:

It's just the first time I get to be at Edinburgh, and I'm very excited to perform, of course, but especially to do such a long run. It changes, the show genuinely changes. I'm someone who believes that what we take to Edinburgh is not necessarily what we will come back with. Honestly, plays that I've done before, there is sort of fermentation process that kind of takes place. And after the 20th show this something just clicks in an actors role. So like, with regard to theatre, the play is not really there until the 40th or 50th show, you know, sometimes it's like that for me personally as an actor, and you're trying to put out the best product possible, and know that it's gonna take that long to have what you feel satisfied with, and it's great. And even after that, once you get it, then you're like, Ooh, can it be better? Can it be chiselled? Can you repeat that extraordinary performance that happened happened on show number 12, over and over and over again? And it's just something that is really exciting to me. And that's what I'm looking forward to the most.

SHAUN:

And what advice would you have for anyone thinking of taking the show to the fringe? Now that you've had all those months preparing?

ADWITHA:

I would say for someone who's going to fringe for the first time, do your research, know exactly what to expect when you go up to the fringe. Because one thing that actors or teams that are going up have is this expectation of going there and making making profits, that's not going to happen. I think that's the biggest thing. Do your research know what it is that you're getting into, plan how you're going to get funding. Because it's very difficult, you're gonna speak to so many people before one person steps up and says, Okay, fine, I'm gonna hold your hand. And we're going to do this together. So plan your funding. And also think about what your show is, think about the kinds of people that your show is going to attract, and use that as leverage when you're getting funding. If your show talks about certain social or political subject, then are there any charities or NGOs probably that support that cause and would be interested in supporting you? Are there any businesses that perhaps may have a stake in whatever you're trying to tell? And so those are things as actors you don't usually think about, you go into like the traditional sources of funding, which is not always successful, because they have so many applicants

every year, and they obviously can't fulfil all the requests. So thinking about other funding options that are slightly out of the box, from your traditional funding options, I think would be a great thing. And also have a supportive team, I did the production of this thing single handedly. And I wrote all of those emails single handedly. I did whatever had to be done. And it took a toll on me, I'm not gonna lie, it was very stressful. And at some point, I didn't know if I was doing the right thing, or whether I was completely messing this up. And I needed that sort of support and camaraderie from my team. And because I've been blessed with a good team, I had that whenever I needed support. Whenever I needed a shoulder to, shoulder to rest my head on, I had that. And I think that's so important to like, surround yourself with people who are as invested in this as you are and as supportive of this as you are and all heading in the right direction or holding your hand as you go to where you want to get to.

SHAUN:

That's great, thank you. And it must seem like a while off now, but what are your plans after the fringe?

AADAR:

We are applying for local festivals that we want to take Dreamliner to, and we are open for touring opportunities. And we're going to be looking at having people come in and watch the show and potentially take it on tour from Edinburgh. We're looking at at least another year long life of for the show in terms of touring and other opportunities, there's a lot of excitement within the cast. Because of the opportunities that this play presents, especially post Edinburgh. Once you're attached to something as respected as Edinburgh, there is an opportunity for other festivals to take you seriously. And it's an opportunity for you to attach that to your play. And if you have a good run at Edinburgh, which is what we're all aiming for right now, that's the singular focus that we have.

ADWITHA:

This just opens up so many opportunities for us. The fact that this play and the company, The Situationalists, has opened these opportunities up for people is the biggest thing for me. And I want to be able to push this forward as much as possible and see where we get to.

**SHAUN:**

In terms of, you know, people finding out more about the show and booking tickets, where should people look?

**ADWITHA:**

People should look on [thesituationalists.com](https://thesituationalists.com). All of the information is on there - ticket links, information about the cast, how you can contact us, etc. is on there, and we also have an Instagram page that's called [@TheSituationalists23\\_3](https://www.instagram.com/TheSituationalists23_3) and people can give us a follow on there. And most of the information is on Instagram as well. You can book tickets on the EdFringe website or you can book tickets on the C ARTS website as well.

**AADAR:**

And if you can't make it for the shows at Edinburgh, we do have a GoFundMe right now, which really helps if you are people who love theatre and want to watch new theatre and want to encourage people to make new theatre. Please, there is there is no amount that's too small. We have literally seen the power of small donations adding up to us being able to reach Edinburgh, and we would love to encourage you to donate to the GoFundMe, it would be, it'd be fantastic. And if you can make it to the shows, there's nothing like it, we will give you a great performance.

**ADWITHA**

Also, if you can't make it to Edinburgh, that's no worries because Dreamliner is going to be on the C Arts digital programme as well, is going to be available in December. So feel free to hop on there and watch the show online if you can't make it in person.

**SAM:**

National Theatre Live vibes.

**SHAUN:**

Thank you guys. So that just leaves me to say thanks so much to all three of you for joining us.

**AADAR:**

Thank you. Thank you so much for having us.

[theme tune starts, crescendo at Shaun starts talking]

**SHAUN:**

Thanks as well to Will Sebag-Montefiore, and to all of the students and alumni who contributed to this episode. And thank you for joining us for this bonus episode of the Discover Central podcast. We'll be back soon with series four, and with more interviews with members of Central's community. In the meantime, you can catch up on all of our episodes on our website, or by subscribing to Discover Central wherever you normally get your podcasts. For now, thanks for joining us. Take care and we'll see you again very soon.

*[theme tune ends, diminuendo]*