

JAZZ HANDS PRODUCTIONS presents

LOST  
LOST  
LOST  
CONNECTION  
*connection*



*Show Programme*

# SYNOPSIS

*CW // frequent references to pandemic, mentions of mental health issues*

It is mid-January 2021. The hospitals are full of COVID-19 cases and the country is in a third lockdown with deaths rapidly escalating. Josh was a young dancer before the pandemic, but he has been shielding for the majority of the last year due to his severe asthma - he was unable to see friends and family, let alone work and perform. In an attempt to boost his motivation amid the bleakness of the situation, he decides to start vlogging in the hope it will hold him more accountable and help him be productive. This initially works as we see him tidy up his room, start rehearsing again, and trying new things to keep himself occupied.

However, as the days go by we see this progress begin to wear off as he struggles to dance in the confines of this small room. He begins to procrastinate by watching TV or spending hours on his phone, and the days begin to slip away in a mist of complete lack of productivity and motivation. All his shows and future performances are getting cancelled, which leaves him with nothing to work towards. On top of this, his long-term relationship is deteriorating, as his partner is an intensive care unit doctor whom Josh has not been able to see for months. Josh enters a downwards spiral which deeply affects his mental health.

In the final scene we get a glimpse of hope for the future, as we see him perform again on a huge stage. The ending is bittersweet, as the vast auditorium is still empty. However, as Josh's partner walks in the auditorium and joins the audience to support him, he finally feels like his life is looking up.



# ABOUT THE SHOW

## *From the Director*

This project started almost a year ago when me, Max and Emma had cancelled/postponed all our shows for the foreseeable future due to the ongoing pandemic. We sat down (over Zoom of course) and tried to work out if there was anything we could do whilst in-person theatre was banned, and naturally we turned to film. Originally, like everyone else we anticipated that restrictions would continue to gradually ease, and we created a piece that could be filmed in person under Covid restrictions, based on the life of Emma Hauck – a schizophrenic who was similarly confined to a single room (in her case an asylum cell) and descended further into her illness. Sadly, a second lockdown was imposed on us the week we were meant to start filming this, and the project was postponed indefinitely. Usually, “indefinite postponement” is a euphemism for cancellation, and after Christmas we held a production meeting to decide the fate of the project. However, I underestimated the enthusiasm and determination this amazing team and to my surprise, the meeting was not whether to revive the piece, but instead how.



*Felix Westcott*

We realised that in-person filming would be futile, so instead we started brainstorming how to film remotely, when someone suggested the crazy idea of setting up a remote film set in the actors bedroom. None of us had ever heard of this happening before and only partially thought it was possible. Personally, I was only convinced that this could happen when the live feed from the camera set up in our actor's room popped up on my computer screen over Zoom. We had set, we had costume, we had sound, we had lights, we had camera and with a complete rewrite of the entire plot, we finally had action.

From my point of view as a film directing novice, the remote film set idea did actually work impressively well and we quickly rehearsed and filmed the majority of the show, whilst in separate parts of the country. The opportunity of filming part of the piece in person on the main stage of the Oxford Playhouse also cropped up, and after considerable work from our producer, it materialised. There could not have been a better place to start in-person directing again.

Initially, it seemed like this piece had come so far from what we first envisioned, but the more I work on it, the more I realise that the on-screen struggles of our main character, a dancer unable to dance during lockdown, are incredibly similarly to those of Emma Hauck almost a century prior, and even closer to the struggles that we faced as a production team ourselves over the last year. The story we eventually told was so close to home that the character's first steps on stage again after a year of waiting were our first steps back in the theatre as well – the same frustrations and lack of motivation were felt both on- and off-screen. Ultimately, this piece is entirely a reflection on the journey we've been through trying to make it happen – all the pain, smiles, laughter and tears along the way.

Massive thanks go to: Ana, who has been pushing this production along for almost a year now; Josh, who not only acted and danced to the highest standards, but was also half of the production team itself and went above and beyond what is usually required of an actor in a way that I hope no one will have to do again; Michael, for putting up with us theatre kids and showing us how to do film, as well as giving us so much of his time, expertise, patience, equipment and more equipment; Will, for writing an incredibly gorgeous score which genuinely was the main reason we revived this piece to begin with; Max, for his outstanding choreography, which certainly pushed the boundaries of what is and isn't physically possible, and Fred for creating an amazing piece out of the terribly chaotic footage that we gave him.

## *From the Producer*

For me, the string of cancellations started with a cancelled seminar in my department. Back in March, I didn't think much of that one talk getting cancelled, but then many followed suit. One by one, every event I was going to attend in the following three months was cancelled or postponed. Part of me thought everyone was exaggerating – surely it wasn't that bad?

I was proven wrong very shortly after, when the West End went dark for what was going to become its longest closure in history. So much was going on, and still for me the greatest sinking feeling came from the realisation that I would have to cancel the shows I had planned for Trinity Term. It's a strange thing, putting that much time, effort and passion into theatre projects as a producer, and having them instantly taken away due to circumstances which could not be further from your control.



*Ana Dagu*

Lost Connection started in July 2020 when Emma, Felix and Max had the idea to create a new dance piece exploring creative expression during physical and mental isolation. Because of the lockdown at the time, the story felt very relevant. I also thought, perhaps foolishly, that I understood the nature of the beast enough to be able to put on a small-scale film-theatre hybrid in a Covid-proof way. Again, I was proven wrong when a new lockdown was imposed the week we were meant to film and the shoot couldn't happen. However, this time it was different. Maybe it was sheer anger with the universe, or perhaps it was my natural tendency to be very stubborn, but I could not let this one die too.

In the past 11 months, we moved venue about 6 times, changed filming dates more times than I could keep track of, and literally adapted the entire plot, concept, title and method of filming to suit the Covid restrictions around us. However, while the show changed multiple times, it feels like our own lives stood still. We struggled to find motivation, felt like it was all in vain and like there was no point carrying on - Lost Connection became everyone's story, and (although unknown to us when we started) an interesting metaphor for the arts industry during this past year.

I am very excited to see Lost Connection come to life at last, and I am extremely proud of everyone involved in it. Simply the fact that a final product exists is a testament of the perseverance, creativity and resilience of the cast and crew, who have overcome so many hurdles to create this beautiful piece.

## About the Music



*Will Harmer*

Lost Connection features an original soundtrack with a dual role: enhancing tension and mood through spoken dialogue and silent sections, and providing the music for dance sequences. Particular musical attention went to portraying Josh's striving to use dance to escape from the monotony of lockdown. I've been drawing inspiration from works by Max Richter and Philip Glass, whose ballet and opera scores similarly explore themes of interiority in the modern world within a minimalist musical idiom, something I believe to be well-suited to experiences of lockdown.

Music across the film prefigures the climax of the final scene by using similar motives and themes, and in some sections, actually quoting this final sequence as Josh learns and develops the dance. The atmosphere of the music, while sometimes calm, will have some tension and anxiety throughout, as well as inertia with the boredom and lethargy that Josh faces. This is all based around cycling motives and patterns in the music, to portray recurring thoughts such as how difficult it is to escape from a confined physical and mental space.



## About the Choreography

Josh's story in Lost Connection was somewhat derived from a shared frustration with creativity in the age of Covid-19 - itching to create, but having these strivings permanently hampered by the immense logistical challenges, as well as some deep feeling of the pointlessness, if plans will change soon and hard work is worthless. In this vein, the character is an exploration of these feelings that we have seen in ourselves in the past year.

Interspersing the dialogue of the film, there are shots of Josh attempting to practice a short section of choreography. His choreography is in a 'release contemporary' style, a very freeing method which fits well with the emotional honesty needed from the character. It's also a style that cannot be suited to small spaces - not just for the sake of not hitting a desk, more that it cannot be danced without a subconscious sense of free space surrounding the dancer.



*Max Penrose*

Finding his space restrictive, and unable to find any expression in what he is doing with nobody to perform to, he gets increasingly frustrated. At the climax of the film, this section of choreography is repeated, this time in a theatre with both space and passion - the release to the compression of his room, Josh dances through an extended routine, finally feeling liberated and relieved in his ability to express.

# CAST



## *Josh Willetts*



Hello! I'm Josh, a History graduate from Balliol College and a current MSc History of Science, Medicine, and Technology candidate here in Oxford. Although I'm sad that my time at this amazing university is coming to an end, I have a lot to look back fondly on. During my undergraduate days I was involved in a number of theatre productions in the city, including Chicago, Made in Dagenham and The Admirable Crichton. I was also fortunate enough to be involved in two consecutive annual charity musicals at Balliol College: Peter Pan and Caesar. Across both, I had the opportunity to direct, produce, set design, market, and take on leading roles. My multitasking ability definitely came in handy with this current, remotely filmed project! Aside from performing and producing, I've also been involved in Balliol's Drama Society, helping to maintain the Pilch Theatre.

Despite all the disruptions of the past year, this project has managed to come together. The dedication of everyone involved, both cast and crew, has ensured that the pandemic hasn't crushed Oxford's creative spirit. Through thick and thin, delays and venue uncertainty, Lost Connection is finally coming to the screen, and I cannot wait to see it. Again, I'd like to thank everyone involved for persevering and for being such an unfalteringly lovely bunch. I wish you all the best for your bright futures and can't wait to meet up with you soon for a post-COVID pint!

## *Tamsin Sandford Smith*



Tamsin is a third year music student and choral scholar at The Queen's College. Her Oxford acting credits include And The Walls Spoke (MT20), Life of Galileo (MT19), A Little Night Music (TT19), Twelfth Night (TT19), You Are Frogs (HT19), and The Only Way is Suffrage (HT19). She has also performed with both Oxford Contemporary Opera Society, ('Susanna', as part of their MT19 festival), and the Oxford Gilbert and Sullivan Society (Aline in 'The Sorcerer', MT18; musical director of HMS Pinafore, TT19). As a founding member of the student production company Nitwit Theatre, she co-directed and musical directed 'All's Well That Ends Well' (HT20), and organised a series of online play readings during lockdown.



# CREW

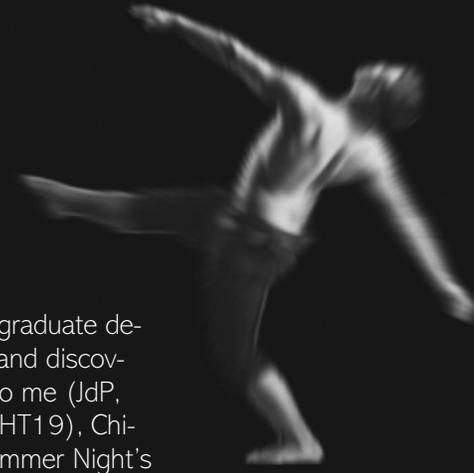
Producer - Ana Pagu  
Co-Director / Writer - Felix Westcott  
Co-Director / Director of Photography - Michael-Akolade Ayodeji  
Choreographer - Max Penrose  
Composer - Will Harmer  
Editor - Fred Seddon  
Music Editor - Emelye Moulton  
Production Manager / Sound Designer - Gemma Craig-Sharples  
Lighting Designer / Director of Photography - Samuel Morley  
Set Designer - Chuanqi Wang  
Set Assistant - Lottie Robinson  
Costume Designer - Natasha Squire  
Marketing Manager - Virag Zengo  
Graphic Designer - Peter Todd  
Welfare Officer - Alasdair Linn

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Josh's housemates  
Fred's housemates



# BIOS



## Ana Pagu - Producer

Ana is a third year Earth Sciences DPhil student at Linacre College, having done her undergraduate degree in St. Edmund Hall. Ana started her theatre career through acting since her first year and discovered her passion for backstage roles shortly after. Since then, she produced *It's all Greek to me* (JdP, HT17), *The Winter's Tale* (Maths Institute, MT17), *Confessions of a Coconut* (BT Studio, HT19), *Chicago* (O'Reilly Theatre, MT19), *Channel Hoppers* (Simpkins Lee Theatre, HT20), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Radio Play, TT20) and coordinated the marketing of *Richard II* (Virtual show, TT20). Aside from producing and marketing, Ana has some directing experience as AD (*Let's Kill Santa*, Moser Theatre, MT17), and tech experience in flying (*Merrily We Roll Along*, OP, HT20) and lighting (*Angels in America*, O'Reilly Theatre, HT20) and she was the Treasurer of the OUDS in 2020-21. She is currently producing *Persephone* (Oxford Playhouse, MT21).

## Felix Westcott - Co-Director / Writer

Felix fell in love with theatre at secondary school whilst studying Theatre Studies A level and being involved in many productions as an actor, writer and director. After leaving, he went on to direct his own play, *Walls* (2018, OSO Theatre London), in the setting of a professional theatre before coming to Oxford to study medicine. In his first year he wrote and directed his college cuppers and acted in several plays whilst co-writing and workshoping a full-length musical. He then worked as the assistant director on Jazz Hand's production of *Chicago* (MT19, O'Reilly) before directing his own play, *Old Fashioned* (HT20, BT). During the COVID-19 pandemic he co-directed *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (TT20, online radio play) and acted and directed his new piece of writing, *Wavelengths* (MT20, online radio play). He is currently co-director and writer of *A Lost Connection* (TT21, filmed); a devised piece of theatre which is part filmed remotely and part in-person on the main stage of the Oxford Playhouse. He is also associate director for the upcoming musical *Persephone* (MT21, OP).

## Michael-Akolade Ayodeji - Co-Director / Director of Photography

Michael-Akolade Ayodeji is a PPE undergraduate at University College and a member of the National Youth Theatre. He is passionate about "activism"; the power of art as a conduit of social change. Michael is involved in the media and drama scene inside and outside Oxford. Currently, he serves as the Treasurer for the Oxford BAME Drama Society. One notable achievement in this post was in collaboration with OUFF, where Michael helped create the Oxford BAME Film Fund to assist with the on-screen telling of stories from minority ethnic groups in Oxford. Professionally speaking, Michael co-founded a media company which has helped to produce music videos and album art cover designs for artists signing under major international labels. He also runs a photography social enterprise where he and his team raise money for MIND and Mental Health UK.

## Max Penrose - Choreographer

Max is a second year Maths & Computer Science student at Oriel. He has been interested in both dance and drama from a young age, with varied experience in both fields in many different styles. Max is trained primarily in Classical Ballet, but has significant experience in Jazz, Contemporary, Ballroom and Latin. His choreographic credits include *Choreographer* for *RENT* (St Catherine's Bernard Sunley, HT20) and *Chicago* (Keble O'Reilly, MT19), *Assistant Choreographer* for *Made in Dagenham* (OP, HT19) and *Choreographer* for *Swing Heil!* (OFS, 2018). His theatrical credits include *Section Two* (Frankie, BT, 2019), *Peter Pan* (Peter, OP, 2018) and *Wind in the Willows* (OP, 2016).



## Will Harmer - Composer

Will is a composer and pianist studying at Worcester College, Oxford. He studied composition for 6 years at Junior Guildhall with Jeffery Wilson and he was also a member of Aldeburgh Young Musicians. Currently he studies composition with Robert Saxton and piano with Anna Tilbrook. In 2017, Will won the BBC Proms Inspire Competition, with his composition 'The Whole Heaven on Fire' being performed by the Aurora Orchestra under Nicholas Collon. He was subsequently commissioned by the BBC Singers to compose 'Voyage of the Soul', a piece commemorating the Apollo 11 Moon Landings which was broadcast on Radio 3 last year. Will's works have been performed in venues such as Snape Maltings, St John's College Chapel, Wigmore Hall and The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and have been broadcast on BBC radio and television.

## Fred Seddon - Video Editor

Fred is a second year student of Ancient and Modern History at Wadham College. He is new to editing for film, done graphic design for several OUDS performances and Oxford student publications. This term he is also editing the new Votive Theatre production, 'The Death of Empedocles', and is looking forward seeing Lost Connection in its final form.

## Gemma Craig-Sharples - Production Manager / Sound Designer

Gemma is a second-year student. Her first experience of working in technical theatre was taking part in the National Theatre Young Technicians programme and she has since been involved with the sound department for the National Theatre's Summer Space to Create Project (2018), was lighting designer for The Pillowman at the Pilch (HT20), sound designer for Present Laughter at the Pilch (HT20), and did tech for the Oxford University Contemporary Dance Society's show at Headington School and the varsity dance competition at the O'Reilly (HT20). She has also been involved with sound and lighting ops for Me as a Penguin at the BT Studio (MT19), and worked as an A2 and stagehand for Life of Galileo at the Keble O'Reilly (MT19).

## Samuel Morley - Lighting Designer / Director of Photography

Sam is a second-year at Somerville studying engineering. He attended National Youth Theatre and National Student Drama Festival on the lighting course and as a technician respectively. He also worked as freelance lampie on Crufts Dog show, Luzia at the Royal Albert Hall and WWE at the O2. He has shadowed Emmy award winning lighting director Mike Le Fevre for part of the Amazon Tennis coverage learning the principles of lighting for a camera as well as operating cameras for WorldVentures boot camp in Dublin. In Oxford Sam has designed lights for Rent at the Bernard Sunley theatre, Angels in America at the Keble O'Reilly, Present Laughter at the Pilch and the Scottish Play at the BT Studio among others.

## Chuanqi Wang - Set Designer

Chuanqi is a fresher studying computer science and philosophy at Univ. She is just starting to find her way around the theatre scene at Oxford. Over this past year she has been part of a few zoom-based projects and workshops, and is really excited to be doing set and lighting for upcoming in-person shows.

## Natasha Squire - Costume Designer

Tash is a second year Geography student at Regent's Park College. Alongside Lost Connection she has been the costume designer for Half Baked (North Wall TT21), Smart Casual (North Wall TT21) and is currently working on Murder in Argos (O'reilly MT21) and is a hires manager for the TAFF committee 2021/22. Outside of Oxford, she has made costumes for the West End production of Frozen the Musical which will be opening in August.

## Virag Zengo - Marketing Manager

Virag Zengo is a second year Hospitality Management student at Oxford Brookes. She has been involved with musical theatre since she was 11 years old but she has always been on the performing side of the theatre. Marketing has always been something she is interested in. Previous Marketing experiences includes social media and promo video organizer of her studio in Hungary.

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*acknowledgements*



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