

A performance of fabulative dramaturgy

CHARACTERS

THE CHORUS, *sings and dances*

SETTING

A large hall, perhaps a school.

Artefacts are spread on the floor, in a large circle.

On a sign is Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988.

A NOTE ON NOTES

Each note can be passed to any member of the chorus.

Note 1.
Leather Waistcoat.

Dear Chorus,

When I was at school two of my friends started a petition for an LGBT society. The school eventually said yes. Basically, in the society, we would watch the TV show 'The L-Word' together. I became obsessed with the character Shane and started wearing waistcoats.

To be honest, I didn't know if I wanted to be her or be on her.

My mum said to me one day, 'are you gay?'. I didn't say yes. I've never identified as gay.

In solidarity –

Note 2.
Red Sari.

Dear Chorus,

I've always had good taste. When I was five years old, my older cousin gave me this red and gold sari. I loved the feel of the fabric. My dad was a mechanic, but both he and my mum would let me wear the sari. I would wear it to religious ceremonies. Thinking about that sari makes me remember the song Marne Ka Gham Nahin Hai from the film Deedar-E-Yaar. The song is sung by a concubine in a beautiful pink sari. It's so dramatic. She's kills herself at the end.

Today, all these stories, dances and costumes make their way into my drag show.

Good Luck!

Yours in solidarity –

Note 3.0
Queer as Folk.

Dear Chorus,

Everyone was talking about Queer As Folk at my drama club. The kids who went to drama club were different from the ones at my Catholic school. I asked one of the older ones about it and someone gave me a copy that they'd recorded directly off Channel 4. The video tape wasn't labelled, so it was entirely anonymous. Noone in my house knew it was Queer As Folk. I was too scared to watch it. I didn't have a video player in my room. It was 1999 and I was fourteen.

I didn't watch Queer As Folk until I was thirty.

Regards –

Note 3.1
Queer as Folk.

Dear Chorus,

When Queer As Folk was on I would watch it in my bedroom, on a television that was on a shelf inside the wardrobe. I would sit with the remote control in my hand and I turned the volume down to '1'. The television had no subtitles, so I had no idea what anyone was saying. If I heard my mum coming up the stairs I would switch it off.

Later, when I moved to Bristol and got a job, I bought it on DVD and I watched it, with the sound on, for the first time.

Yours –

Note 4.

Absolutely Fabulous.

Dear Chorus,

My mum, my sister and I would watch Absolutely Fabulous all the time on the telly at home. We loved it. One day, at school, a boy came up to me and asked, straight up, 'do you like Absolutely Fabulous?'. I was really excited and I said yes, and only as I said it I realised he'd trapped me. I had exposed something I shouldn't have.

Sincerely –

Note 5.

Tea towel.

Dear Chorus,

I think every parent who sent their kid to a rural primary school has one of these tea towels – with all the self-portraits from the kids of the class. I remember drawing mine when I was maybe six years old. I drew a stick person, quickly. I didn't want to think about it or see myself. I just did it. And then when I'd finished, I looked around, and the rest of the class were all concentrating really hard on drawing themselves.

That story makes me think of the first time someone said to me, 'your pencil case is gay'.

Yours, in hope –

Note 6.
My 'mannies'.

Dear Chorus,

I would call my action figures my 'mannies'. They were small and plastic and you could rotate them at the hips. I would line them all up and get them to interact with one another. It wasn't sexual, but I was fascinated by their form.

I remember being in the old house, before mum and dad got divorced. I remember being on my bed and looking at a plug and a socket and thinking about how it all fit together. I remember thinking about how the plug fit perfectly into the socket. I must have been ten years old. I remember that wasn't how I felt. I felt that I didn't fit.

I remember that but I don't know what it means.

Good luck and thanks –

Note 7.

Lee Latchford-Evans.

Dear Chorus

When I was a teenager, one wall in my bedroom was a huge corkboard. On the corkboard I pinned posters and photos from music magazines, of pop bands like S Club 7, Steps, S Club Juniors. I remember one picture of Lee Latchford Evans from Steps, in Smash Hits or something. It showed his pubic hair. I wanted to pin on the wall but I never did. It makes me think of this one Christmas when my older brothers bought me FHM magazine as a secret present. I took all the posters of the popstars down and put up pictures from that FHM instead.

What my family remembers now is how I would teach everyone the dance routines to songs by Steps. It's funny how different it is for them.

Yours faithfully –

Note 8.
Take That.

Dear Chorus,

I knew something was different about me when I was six years old but I had no idea what it was. I guess I thought there was something wrong with my body. But I still did all the normal things we were supposed to do. I was obsessed with Take That. I had all the posters and cards and all of it, everywhere.

Everyone else at my school was obsessed with them as well. So I was doing what everyone else was doing.

When you look back now, it's amazing how we just carry on even when we feel like we don't fit in.

Yn lach! (Goodbye) –

Note 9.
French magazine.

Dear Chorus,

When I was fourteen my whole family when on holiday to Paris. I told everyone that I was going for a walk by myself and I went and found a porn shop and I bought my first gay magazine. I wish I still had it but I threw it away. That's what you did with things like that. You would go on intense searches for stuff and then if you managed to get you, you'd end up throwing it away so noone would find it. So that noone would find you out.

Very best wishes –

Dear Chorus,

I lived exactly half way between Basildon and Billericay and there was this inter-library loan scheme. I would borrow as many books as possible and read all the time. It was around that time that I first read 'At Your Own Risk' by Derek Jarman. I remember it was summer. I remember laying on my front on the grass in the back garden reading it. I remember getting an erection. I would read Derek Jarman all the time.

Once someone saw me reading him on the school bus and they shouted 'THAT'S GAY' at me, so I didn't take it to school after that.

I'm obsessed with Jarman now and it started back then.

Thank you very much.

Best –

Note 11.
Look At Me.

Dear Chorus,

I loved The Spice Girls. I loved how bolshy and grassroots they all were. My favourite was Geri. For my GCSE art project I did a portrait of her in the style of Andy Warhol's Marilyn Monroe portrait. Once for an English project we had to stand up and do a presentation about a book we'd read over the summer holidays. I had read Geri's autobiography and I'd prepared this presentation but as everyone was getting up and presenting I realised I shouldn't admit out loud that I'd read Geri's book. So when it was my turn I lied and said I'd not done the work. The teacher said to me 'I don't know what's happened to you'.

From then on all the teachers would call me disruptive, but I had to be popular to be safe.

When my friends from school would come round to my house, I would take down all my Spice Girls posters.

Yours faithfully –

Note 12.
Tori Amos.

Dear Chorus,

Halfway through secondary schools my family moved town so I had to change school as well. At my first school, our dance teacher brought in the album 'Under the Pink' by Tori Amos and asked us all to choreograph and perform a solo dance to the song 'Cornflake Girl'. I loved it so much. When we moved, my parents bought me the album as a treat.

When I got to my new school it was hard to make friends. I ended up falling in love with this girl who was a massive Tori Amos fan. She was the first person I'd met who was "out" at school. I told her and I loved her and she wrote me a letter that said something like 'I don't think you love me but you love what I represent to you'. I don't think I got how profound that was at the time.

With best wishes –

Note 13.
The Chippendales.

Dear Chorus,

There is a memory but it can't be real. I remember being on a municipal bus outside Oxford. There is a newspaper on the floor, under the seat in front of me. The Chippendales are on the newspaper. I use my foot to slide the newspaper to get it, so I can see it clearer. This can't be true though, someone would've seen me.

In the 1990s, when we lived in the old house, the Chippendales would come on television a lot. Whenever they did I would have to leave the room.

Yours in solidarity –

Note 14.
The petticoat.

Dear Chorus,

When I was about four years old I became obsessed with the Chronicles of Narnia, and especially the White Witch of Narnia. I would watch the BBC's adaptation on our video player all the time. My mum would make me crowns and wands out of kitchen foil, and let me wear her Laura Ashley petticoat so I could become the White Witch. I would dress as her most of the time. I remember one summer when my three brothers wanted to play tennis and I would only play with them if I could wear the petticoat.

Thanks! –

Note 15.

FHM.

Dear Chorus

When I was doing my Art GCSE we had this huge A1 artfolder that we would use to carry out work to and from school. Everyone would cover theirs with posters and pictures – my older brother's was covered in basketball players and my twin's with cars. I bought FHM magazine with Mariah Carey on. I loved her but it was also an attempt for me to play at being straight.

In that FHM I found the number for gay chat lines and I started to call them and it was there I had the first experience of talking openly to another gay man.

Yours –