

Arts Centre Melbourne presents

ARCO

By Adam Kelly & James Berlyn

Produced by WA Youth Theatre Company

JNR



Welcome to Arts Centre Melbourne

Arts Centre Melbourne acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we stand, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people, and pays respect to their Elders, past and present.

Cover

Photography by Sophie Minissale.
Illustration by Ben Hollingsworth.

Contents

Important Information	6
About the Venue	9
About the Show	18



Upcoming Accessible Programs

Throughout the year Arts Centre Melbourne presents a captivating program of inclusive experiences—accessible for everyone—by some of the best Australian and international companies.

Arts Centre Melbourne presents programs and performances that are accessible, including Relaxed Performances and events that are Auslan Interpreted, Audio Described, Tactile Tours, Highly Visual and Wheelchair accessible.

An Assistive Hearing system is available in most of our venues and Companion Card holders are eligible for a complimentary companion ticket.

Check our website for details on upcoming [Relaxed Performances](#) and [access services](#).

Relaxed Performance

Arts Centre Melbourne is committed to providing performances that allow everyone to experience the wonder of theatre. This Relaxed Performance is especially designed to welcome visitors with disability or sensory sensitivities, their friends and families to the theatre.

The atmosphere is 'relaxed,' with some house lights remaining on during the performance. A Quiet Area will be available if a break is needed. Enthusiasm is embraced and it's okay to move during the performance.

Visual Stories are designed to help prepare you for your visit. They include information about our venues and what will happen during the performance.

This visual story has been developed in collaboration between writer Beau Windon and the Arts Centre Melbourne Access & Inclusion team.

Contact

If you would like any additional information in the lead up to your visit, please contact our team at the Welcome desk on (03) 9281 8298 or email tickets@artscentremelbourne.com.au.

Important Information

Venue

This production of ARCO Jnr will be performed at The Channel, which is Arts Centre Melbourne's learning and participation venue. The Channel is at Hamer Hall, the large round building between the river and the spire. Go around Hamer Hall on the river side to find the front doors of The Channel.

Time

The show is approximately 50 minutes long, including 35 minutes of performance and 15 minutes of Q & A. Shows start on time at 10:30 AM and 1:00 PM, so be sure to plan so you arrive before the beginning. The doors to The Channel will open 30 minutes before the performance starts.

Age Recommendation

ARCO Jnr is suitable for children ages 7+.

Content and Sensory Warnings

- Some sudden noises including traffic sounds, crashing, and some roars.
- Some slight lighting changes, including a couple of minutes of a red light and a minute of near darkness.
- Music will play during the show and the performer, Adam, will invite you to dance with him if you want (no pressure).
- Some moments will involve audience participation. Feel free to just sit back and watch if you don't feel like joining in.
- Adam offers the audience high fives at one point, but he understands if you don't feel like high-fiving.
- This production discusses autism in a gentle and humorous way, suitable for younger audiences. Sometimes Adam talks about difficult or upsetting experiences he's had, such as times of sensory overload or feeling lonely and rejected, but he reflects on these with a positive point of view.

Theatre Guidelines

- Photography and mobile devices are not permitted during the performance, however if you need to use a device (such as an iPad) to assist with communication, please inform the ushers. It's always fine to use a device in the foyer or quiet areas.
- At a Relaxed Performance, audience members are free to move around, make noise and eat/drink.
- If you need to take a break during the show, you are welcome to come out into the Quiet Area. This will be a space with low lighting and comfortable seating. You can return to the theatre when you are ready – trained staff are available to assist as required.
- To ensure COVID safety, sensory items will only be available upon request. We encourage audiences to bring your own items that will help you feel comfortable in the theatre, such as headphones and fidget toys.
- Face masks are recommended indoors.

About the Venue

ARCO Jnr is being performed at The Channel, which is part of Arts Centre Melbourne. The entry is at Hamer Hall, the large round building between the river and the spire. If you are travelling by public transport to the city, go across Princes Bridge to get to Hamer Hall on St Kilda Road.





If you are travelling by car, you might enter the car park through Kavanagh Street, and the traffic could be busy. You'll then go through a space with red carpet and shiny surfaces, as well as other people who are there to see shows. You might wish to allow yourself extra time to arrive early or bring headphones to wear if it's noisy.

There will be people wearing black uniforms, called ushers. They can help you with directions or answer any questions you may have about the performance. The friendly ushers will help you find your way to the street level and to Hamer Hall.



Use the pathway to take you to the round building, Hamer Hall. Go around the river side of the building to find the front door of The Channel. Our ushers can help point you in the right direction.

The doors to The Channel will open about 30 minutes before the start of the show. You can go into the venue and find a seat early if you want to. You may also like to use the bathroom. Accessible toilets are available inside, so please feel free to ask for directions.





When you go into The Channel, an usher will ask for your name to check it off a list of people attending. Seating is General Admission, which means that you can choose which seat you would like to watch the show from. If you prefer, an usher can recommend seats and take you to them.

During the show, if you need to take a break you can leave your seat and come out to the Quiet Area. You can do this whenever you need to and return to the show when you feel ready.



When the show is finished, people will clap to say thank you, and some might even cheer! Some people may join in with a Deaf clap, by waving their hands in the air. If it's too loud you can cover your ears.



About the Show

Adam Kelly is, in his words, an autistic gentleman. His friend Finbar is a fish. Adam thinks that asking someone what it feels like to live with autism is pretty much like asking a fish (like Finbar) if it knows it's in water, which is pretty funny if you think about it.

ARCO Jnr is Adam Kelly's award-winning show about living with autism, or, in Finbar the fish's case, living in water. The show takes a heartfelt look at the life and struggles of a young man trying to make connections with the people and world around him. Along the way Adam asks gently of his audience to consider life from his perspective.

ARCO Jnr incorporates exciting animation from Perth-based neurodivergent artist Ben Hollingsworth. Join us as Adam and Finbar dance, draw, fly and joke their way into our hearts.

Photography

Photographs of ARCO Jnr by James Campbell, David Cox and Sophie Minissale.



Meet The Team

James Berlyn *Co-Writer And Director*

James is the artistic director of WA Youth Theatre Company, and was one of the people who created this show. He'll say hello when the show begins, introduce Adam and also be on stage to help answer any questions you have at the end.

Adam Kelly *Co-writer and Performer*

Adam is an autistic gentleman and an actor, and this show is based upon his life. He'll share his story with you and might ask you to join in some activities if you want to!



Ben Hollingsworth
Artist

Visual artist Ben Hollingsworth created the animation for ARCO Jnr, bringing characters like Finbar and Morguthal to life.



Finbar the Fish

While Adam Kelly is the host of this show, he's accompanied by his friendly fish pal, Finbar. Together, they'll guide you so you can learn what it is like to live with autism. Adam thinks you'll find that Finbar is awesome sauce.

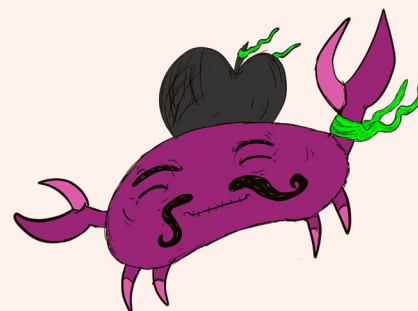
Morguthal the Dragon

Morguthal is another creature you'll meet during the show. He's a dragon that Adam made up. He lives in a wild make-believe land and can be a bit mean at times. But Morguthal always reminds Adam what you can achieve with the right attitude.

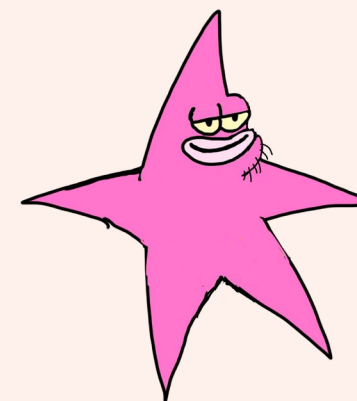


When you enter the venue, the first thing you'll notice is the big screen at the back of the stage showing a video of some cool refreshing water, a funny looking starfish and a crab with the fanciest moustache you might ever see in your whole entire life.

If you look to the floor of the stage, you'll notice there are some numbers written there. These will make sense later, but for now you can feel free to have a think about what they might mean.



The director, James Berlyn, will make his way onto the stage to start the show. He helped to write it and directed Adam to make the show the best it could possibly be for you. James will greet you and let you know a bit about how the show works.



There will be lighting changes, some sound changes, and the show's main star Adam will even ask you some questions and invite you to do some things during the show. It is up to you if you want to respond or not. Do what makes you the most comfortable.

If you don't want to know what happens during the show, feel free to stop reading now. If you want to know more and don't mind spoilers, keep reading!



Adam will come onto the stage next. You'll notice that he does some things a bit different to other performers you might have seen before. For instance, Adam isn't wearing any shoes and he has a script in his hand. This makes Adam most comfortable on stage. He also has some unique phrases that make him very happy, like "awesome sauce," which he says when he thinks something is great!

Adam will stand on the number that he feels best represents how he is feeling today. This is something you can do at home in the morning. Give your day a numbered ranking. 0 means you feel no good, horrible, terrible, dreadful. 5 being not bad, not good, just okay. And 10 being totally awesome sauce!

No matter the ranking he chooses, Adam believes that he is perfect just the way he is... he believes everyone is perfect just as they are! Do you believe that? Adam will ask you and if you want you can shout out your answer!



Adam is going to take a seat on the floor and get comfy now. Have you been wondering what ARCO means? Adam will explain that it's an acronym that he made up, which means that every letter in the word stands for an entirely different word!

A is for Autism

R is for Rejection

C is for Community

O is for Optimism



It is difficult to explain what it's like to be autistic but Adam has come up with a really fun way to do so! He will walk to the back of the stage with the screen, which is where his friend Finbar will appear for the first time.

Finbar is just a regular happy fish in water and he is perfect just the way he is... just like Adam, and just like you! Adam will check in with how Finbar is feeling, and with a big smile on his face, he will tell you how he feels using written subtitles!



Finbar will be surprised when Adam tells him that he lives in water. He always has and he always will. If Finbar was taken out of the water, he would not do well. This is just like Adam's autism. He always has been autistic, he always will be and he is perfect just the way he is.

Autism can be a very different experience to every autistic person, and it even changes for every autistic person depending on where they are or what they are doing. Adam will tell you some of the ways he feels. Sometimes he even feels like a dragon: he will throw his hands in the air and give a big roar!



Adam will tell you about how sounds and feelings are different for many autistic people. It can feel very intense! Adam's favourite sound in the world is music. Some music will even begin playing so that Adam can stand up to dance along to it. He's going to shake it out to demonstrate how the music washes all the stress and worry from his body!

Adam will invite everyone to stand up and have a little dance as well if you want to. It's just for yourself so pretend that no-one else is around you and just groove to the music. You'll notice on the screen that Finbar is having a boogie as well.



When Adam sits back down, he will tell you about times when is out in a crowd. There's going to be some startling sound effects here: a cranking, some ticking, traffic noises, some thumping and even an elephant!

Adam will rock a little bit and cover his ears during the sounds. It's okay, Adam is safe right now, he's just doing this to show you what sometimes happens to him when the noises around him get too overwhelming.



Adam is going to talk about one of the most crowded places he goes: the city. There are a lot of confusing sounds in the city. Strange noises, people talking and yelling. It can feel quite scary but Adam is getting very brave.



Adam is also very friendly so he will stand up and ask some audience members for a high five. He might ask you for one. There's no pressure to give him one if you don't want to.

Touching others can be hard for some people. But if you want to high five Adam, it will make him very happy.



Adam is going to introduce you to a character he made up now. He's a dragon named Morguthal. The dragon's home will appear on the screen behind Adam, and then the lights will turn red and Morguthal himself will fly onto the screen with a woosh and a crash. He might look a little bit scary but remember – Adam made him up so he can't hurt anyone.

Plus he reminds Adam of one very special thing... you can get through almost anything if you believe in yourself.

Adam doesn't share his creations with people unless he feels comfortable around them. That's because, as an autistic gentleman, he is extra sensitive to rejection. Adam will show you how he reacts sometimes. The lights will change to red, Adam will growl and he will lightly hit parts of his body.

Adam's okay – he's just pretending to be upset so you can see what he means about how sometimes he behaves in an unexpected way.



When you're autistic, you often see a lot of doctors. On the back screen, you'll see an image of Adam as a small boy talking with a doctor. Adam will tell you about a few of his symptoms.

One of those symptoms is echolalia, which means he repeats words and phrases that he hears.

When a person displays echolalia, we say they are echolalic. Adam will say in a funny echo: echolalic. Adam will also tell you how he would get upset when he wasn't allowed to do his favourite things – like pretending to make pizza in the shower. Adam's going to show you how he used to do this – looks like fun!



Sometimes, people say one thing with their words while meaning something different which they show on their face. Adam can struggle with understanding this. Sheets of paper will be passed around so everyone can hold up their own little mask. This might help you see how difficult it can be for autistic people to read emotions from people's faces.

Adam will invite you to do something now – its okay if you don't want to, you can just watch. If you do want to, hold up your mask and look to the people next to you. Do you understand what they're feeling? It's confusing! This is how Adam feels all the time.

Rejection is one of the hardest things in the world to deal with.

Adam would love to have a girlfriend – someone that isn't his family for him to love and to love him back in return. But even though he's asked many times, he gets rejected a lot.



Do you like paper planes? Adam does! He's got another activity for you to participate in if you want to – no pressure. Take the paper mask that you used just before and listen very closely to Adam as he guides you on how to make a paper plane. Just call out if he's going too fast for you.

As he guides you, Adam will hide his mouth behind the plane and repeat some of the things people have told him when rejecting him.

Put your planes down beside you – you'll use it soon, PROMISE!



The C in ARCO stands for Community. Finding community outside of your family can be very tough for autistic people. But seeing all of YOU here today in the room with Adam is awesome sauce! It makes up for all of the times Adam has ever been left out and not invited.

Adam still gets lonely sometimes. He will leave the stage for a moment, walking right through the audience, and the lights will darken so all you can see is Finbar on the screen all alone by his lonesome lonely self.

That brings us to the last letter of ARCO. O is for Optimism.

Listen to Adam "woohoo" in joy! The lights will come back on and Adam will bounce his way back onto stage in a happy manner. Optimism is how he views the world. Watch him skip around the stage.

There is always something to amuse yourself with and autism is Adam's superpower! Give a little cheer for him when he says that, if you want, it'll make him feel great! His optimism is why this show exists!



Oh, you didn't forget about the paper planes did you? Pick your plane up at the same time Adam does. He's got a little task for you to do if you feel like it. Whisper any sort of rejection or mean words that have been said about you into the plane. Then Adam will join you in the crowd so you can all throw your planes together and get rid of the rejection.

Even better, Adam will have the DJ play some music, so you can join him to dance the rejection away. Stamp those rejection planes into the ground. And then very clearly and very loudly, follow Adam's lead and shout, "DOWN WITH REJECTION!"

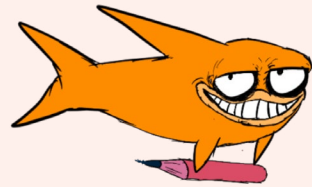
Adam will invite you to join him up on the stage (only if you feel like it). You can hold hands with the person next to you or you can just stand there proudly. Now, together with Adam say, "WE ARE PERFECT, JUST THE WAY WE ARE!"

It might get loud now, so feel free to cover your ears. Give Adam, and yourself a round of applause! This will show him that you had a good time, and it'll make you feel good too. You can clap your hands or use the Auslan sign – wave your hands in the air!



Do you have any questions about ARCO Jnr or about Adam's life? Now is your chance to ask them during the Q & A. The director, James, will be there to help provide answers. And remember, there is no such thing as a question too silly. If you don't have any questions, that's okay! Sit back and enjoy the conversation.

After everyone's talked, people might thank Adam and James again by clapping. That's the end of the show! We hope you had fun and look forward to seeing you at The Channel again.



Your Space to Draw

