



The choice for the title was based on the most heard sentence in dementia residences “I don’t belong here”.

“I don’t belong here - A play with music” is a minimalist-styled stage production (for small or larger stages) which features a carefully woven sequence of 15 theatrical vignettes that bring to life the contrasting stories of twelve residents in a dementia care home who struggle with shifting realities, blurred memories, and fragmented recollections and includes the perspectives of their visiting families who grapple with guilt, embarrassment and the emotional toll of the disease, and the two dedicated care aides, who, driven by compassion, strive to preserve the dignity and fading memories of complete strangers. Through these characters, the play weaves moments of vulnerability adding flashes of levity which reflect the sometimes-challenging absurdities of the aging mind, all the while reminding us of our shared humanity and the enduring beauty in life’s greatest challenges.

***Written by Joelle Rabu in collaboration with Kelly Wyatt
Nico Rhodes, Music Director/Arranger***

The Music: The bold and aching melodies of the late Harry Nilsson provide a haunting backdrop for this performance exposé which delves into the lonely existence of fading memories, puzzling uncertainty, and at times, droll perceptions of people whose lives once reflected brilliance, talent, and vitality. Harry Nilsson is still considered the most underrated singer-songwriter of the post-war era. His knowledge of the form and structure of almost every genre of popular music was encyclopaedic as were his intense observations on the absurdities, fragilities, and wonders of life. The choice to feature his beautiful, uncluttered music was clear: it transcends generations and styles and candidly resonates with everyday life.

5 Minute Trailer: scenes from the play: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiqwW9B0bvc>

3 Vignettes from “I don’t belong here” <https://youtu.be/enE0a68Fy6U>

The Performers: Joëlle’s chameleon-like portrayals of close to a dozen different characters combined with her compelling vocal interpretations are buoyed by co-author Kelly Wyatt’s colourful supporting characters and vocal harmonies as she carefully weaves the essential threads of constant, compassion, care, and connections. The scenes are supported by the brilliance of music director/pianist/supporting actor Nico Rhodes, whose insightful musical arrangements render homage to Nilsson’s timeless songs. Ultimately, the play challenges audiences to assess their perceptions of aging, and to reflect on the profound importance of empathy and sensitivity in the journey of caring for our elderly.

Data shows global dementia cases are set to triple, with 153 million living with dementia by 2050.

Why a play about Dementia?

A word from the author: Despite my personal intrigue and foundational knowledge from studies in social psychology, I found that delving into the creation of a play about dementia released a new realm of understanding, empathy and curiosity. Drawing from a tapestry of personal encounters with dementia, I embarked on the journey of shaping a play that delves deep into the complexities of this debilitating disease. I wanted to communicate, through the tempered cadence of music and the poetry of song, a testament to the human spirits who are navigating through the shadows of forgetfulness and to present it from all perspectives: the resident, the family, the care aids.

Inspired by the onset of dementia in my father, the poignant conversations with one of my oldest friends afflicted by Alzheimer's and the profound experiences recounted by my son who worked at a residence for people with dementia, during the pandemic, I sought to weave together a musical narrative that captures the essence of loss, resilience, humour, courage, confusion, outrage and strength. At times, these conditions make you laugh, at times they make you weep.

Dementia doesn't discriminate in its companions; much like deep sorrow and overwhelming joy, it envelops everyone, inviting them to join its intricate dance and prompting introspection that challenges preconceptions about oneself and others.

"We do not remember days, we remember moments." Italian poet Cesare Pavese



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