Anthea:

Welcome to Sideshow on 2RPH. This is Anthea Williams, and today I'm joined by Emma Myers and Nina Oyama. Emma is a screenwriter, a journalist and a public speaker. And Nina is comedian, writer and actor. Known for shows such as Utopia, Taskmasters and The Angus Project. Together, they are two thirds of the creative team behind Latecomers, a brilliant show is which is currently on SBS On Demand. Emma Myers, and Nina Oyama, thank you so much for joining us today.

Nina:

Thank you for having.

Emma:

Thank you so much.

Anthea:

Can you tell us a little bit about it, without giving us any spoilers?

Emma:

Uh, who wants to start?

Nina:

I think you should start, Emma.

Emma:

Okay. So Latecomers is about two strangers. They meet while at the pub, and decide to go on this journey, um, exploring their relationship, their relationship with sex after watching their carers hookup.

Anthea:

Um, and from there it goes into quite surprising places. It's absolutely not what I expected, which I loved. There are three creators on the work.

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Anthea:

Um, and you two both wrote it. How did you get inspiration for the series? Where did it come from?

Emma:

Um, I...

Nina:

Emma, I think you should answer this one, 'cause it's more (laughs) your story that mine.

Emma:

Actually, we all kind of wrote it. So there are three creators and we all wrote it together. Um, and Angus and I both live with cerebral palsy, uh, with Nina lives, um, as a carer, or was a carer for Angus during her, during their uni days.

Nina:

Yeah. I mean, carer is such a, like, carer is a very nice way of saying what, me (laughs) me and Angus were just friends, and then one day he-

Emma:

But, but you were his carer.

Nina:

Yeah. He was, like, "Do you wanna get paid to hang out with me?" And I was, like, "Hell yeah." Like, if that, like, if I get money, I'm poor, I'm a uni student. And so we just used to get really lit all the time in Bathurst. Um, but I think me and Angus have both seen each other as our, like, worst and best selves. We've both seen each other get rejected by girls. We've both, like, had breakdowns and cried in front of each other.

Um, and so when Angus and Emma approached me with this series about, like, love and rejection and sex and cerebral palsy, I was, like, absolutely in for helping them. Because I'd seen firsthand, like, what Angus had been through, um, growing up, like, with cerebral palsy in uni, which is, like, a very sexual time of people's lives. And I'd seen what he'd kinda been through. And we'd worked together on a show called The Angus Project, which was kind of a much happier version of Latecomers which is, uh, it was about, like, you know, a carer and, um, a guy with cerebral palsy who are best friends and got lit all the time. I wonder what that was based on.

Anthea:

(laughs).

Nina:

Um, but yeah, we basically had already worked together and we'd been friends for ages and so I was, like, very happy to help Angus and Emma kind of build this into a TV concept, um, and try and get money to make it happen.

Anthea:

Yeah.

Emma:

Yeah. And I, and I kind of, I kind of said to Angus as we were just planning out what would become Latecomers, I said, "I feel like we need someone who's had a bit more experience in the industry." Um, but instead we got Nina, so (laughs).

Nina:

Dude, uh-

Emma:

N- n- no. No. I'm, I'm, I'm kidding. Like, she's, she's been a massive help, just with the hurdles that we've had to, um, h- h- had to jump through to, um, metaphorically-

Anthea:

Ah.

Nina:

Thanks, Emma.

Emma:

Uh, had to jump through to, um-

Nina:

This is the nicest thing she's ever said about me, um (laughs). She's never said this [inaudible 00:03:52] (laughs) She's always slagging me off. Um, no I will say, do, I think the cool thing about this show though, I remember when I, we were first discussing the concept, he was like... 'Cause I know Angus so well already, and I kind of, he was like, "I wanna show my real experience, as someone that's had trouble navigating sex and love, um, with cerebral palsy." And Emma, I remember you kind of being like, "I'm just sick of seeing this narrative of, like, you know, Me Before You." And this idea that, like, an able bodied woman cares for a disabled man and then he, like, I don't know, dies or (laughs) whatever, whatever, like... There's this one narrative and I hate seeing it, and I wanna show-

Emma:

But, but it was, it was also that and my own experience and, or, like, pretty much as-

Nina:

Yeah.

Emma:

Pretty much both Angus and I, um, wanted to explore, you know, our own experiences on screen and m- my point of view as a woman with a disability, because gender comes into disability and gender stereotyping kinda comes into it as well.

Anthea:

Yeah.

Nina:

What I loved about your pitch was, like, you were like, "I wanna show a woman that falls in love with an... I wanna show a relationship with an able bodied and, um, disabled identifying person that was equal." And I was, like, that's a really... That was, I felt like a really good foundation for what Latecomers would become, is yeah.

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Anthea:

And that's actually one of the things I really appreciated about the show. I loved that, you know, a- actually when I read the brief of the show and you said they go out with their carers. I was like, "Are they out with their carers, or are they out with their mates?" They're kind of out with their mates. And I think, you know, we, we so... In the media we see everyone get pigeonholed so much. And it's so lovely that, you know, like, actually we see them out with their mates. We see them see their mates do things that their mates do and then react to it. And I loved that. I thought that was really, really great. So thank you for making those decisions.

Nina:

Ah, that's okay. I think that that was me and Angus' (laughs) like, life is that we just went out and partied together all the time, and it was just... I mean, it was so much fun. Like, yeah.

Emma:

And, like, a lot of the time, you know, if you see carers on screen, they're, they're, like, 30, 40, older than the actual person. And it is, it's not that, it's not that, they don't really have the same bond. But if it's, like, your carer is also your friend, it's a different kind of thing.

Anthea:

Yeah, absolutely. So tell us a little bit about finding your directors. You've worked with a director who we've had on the podcast before, Alistair Baldwin, who I just think is such a genius. And you also worked with Madeleine Gottlieb. Um, how did you go about finding the directors that you wanted to work with on this projecT?

Nina:

Well, we had some really good producers. So basically when we first applied for this funding, we didn't have a producer. Um, I think we were all like, "We're all producers." And then we got funding and I was like, "Well, I'm not doing that paperwork, and Angus and Emma shouldn't have to do this paperwork." So we called up the producer from Iggy & Ace, who previously got the SBS Digital Originals fundings. 'Cause it did come through a funding scheme.

Anthea:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

Um, I think it's really important to know, like, that we, you know, we weren't pitching this out to SBS as a TV show. Like, we went through this various stages of getting funding. Um, but when we got-

Emma:

I think there was about, I think there was about, um, 180 applications or something.

Nina:

I thought you were gonna say there was 180 stages of funding. And I was like, "So true, Emma." There were so many bloody funding stages. Um, but yeah, I think there were 180 and 10 of them went to, um, development, like, to, into this room. What's, what, we had, like, a workshop room. And then from there, I think four of them were chosen to, uh, be funded to the next round.

But when we got, when we find out, I think, well, I called the producer of Iggy & Ace, who had gotten the success, had successfully produced, um, the previous Digital Original. And I just thought she was the best. And so I was like, "Come do our one 'cause I don't know that many producers, and you've already done the system." So she came on. Then she brought on Liam Heyen. Um, no, it was Hannah Ngo. Hannah Ngo came on, she brought Liam Heyen. And then Liam brought us the beautiful Madeleine Gottlieb.

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

Who he's worked with on a lot of things. And she... I remember we had a choice between a few directors, and she ended up pitching to us, like, she had this document that just had, like, a really clear vision. And it was so clear how much she loved the concept of the show.

Emma:

I- it was quite personal to her as well, so it was... Like, we had meetings with about, I think we shortlisted about three directors or something.

Nina:

Mm-hmm.

Emma:

And, um, and (laughs) after, like, a split second after Madeleine's face popped on screen, I'm like, "We need this person."

Nina:

Yeah. Emma, like... (laughs) Emma was obsessed with Madeleine. I was like, "There's two that I could..." I'm a much harsher critic, I think. I was like-

Emma:

No, it's, it's-

Nina:

We need more. We need them to prove themselves. But Maddy just, like, she made this pitch deck-

Emma:

Yeah.

Nina:

... in, like, a day. She turned it around in a day and it's probably, like, the best pitch deck I've ever seen-

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

Um, for a director's vision. And then I remember we talked to her. I remember, like, once we locked her in and I was, like, "Oh, I think Transparent is a good reference for this show." And she was, like, Oh, I love, like, Joey Soloway and that's my favorite TV show.

Emma:

Yeah.

Nina:

And I've been writing about Joan Scheckel and the way that she, you know, um, directs. Like, she just had all these references that I also loved. And I was like, "Oh, I can totally see the way that you would create a show that is so full of, like, heart." Even though there's a lot of edge, I think in the script it's quite edgy. But because Maddy is so... I don't know, she just has such a, a full heart. (laughs) Is that a weird thing to say? She just, you can see her love on screen.

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

And I don't think that's a talent all directors have. I think that's a Maddy specific thing, and it's what makes the show and also Maddy so special.

Emma:

Yeah.

Anthea:

Yeah. And I have to say, the intimacy scenes in the work are really beautiful.

Nina:

Yeah. They were mine... Like, to me, I remember when we wrote the script and I was, like, "Yeah, cool, whatever." (laughs) And then we had worked it on screen and I was like, "Wow." Like, I... Uh, should I see this? Ah, this, it's all come together now so it's fine. But there was, Maddy and I went for lunch and then she was like, "Hey can I show you the sex scene? We've just finished editing, we've got the round one edit of the sex scene." And she was like, "Yeah, it goes for about 10 minutes and we have to cut it down to 30 seconds.." (laughs).

But I watched it and I was like, "This could just be an episode." Like, it was so tender and so, like... I felt like I was in the room with the actors, and, or, well I guess with the characters, you know? I was just, like, blown away. Um, but she's, she's a phenomenal and a genius. And Al as well. Like, I know Al from comedy stuff. So me and Al are both comedy writers, we both do standup, we're both gay and annoying. Um, and we're best friends (laughs). And basically I just remember getting him in the writers room 'cause I was like, Al's a phenomenal writer, and he writes a lot about the intersection of disability and sex. And so I was like, he is-

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

Like, bang on the perfect writer to bring in, to bake more story for our second round of writers rooms. And afterwards, I think we were talking about a director's fellowship. And I was like, "Al, do it." And he was like, "I've never directed, I've never even thought of it." And he was-

Emma:

Yeah.

Nina:

And then he applied and everyone was like, "Yes, Al's the right person." And now he's directed and I think he's, like, really been bitten by the bug and wants to do more. But I love that episode so much. His episode's really pacy and beautiful and-

Anthea:

Which episode is his?

Nina:

Uh, episode tow.

Anthea:

Beautiful.

Emma:

Yeah. The, the sex shop (laughs).

Nina:

Yeah.

Anthea:

Yeah. It's a really good episode, it's a really fun episode. And I have to say, um, you know, I ask what episode it is, but I should confess, I watched the entire thing through, back to back, couldn't stop. It's an hour long, um, all up and, uh, yeah, I just enjoyed it so much. So tell me a little bit about how you found the right cast. Because you have a beautiful cast in this work.

Emma:

So, like, when we began, I still can't wrap my head around the fact that, like, l- like, it got as big as it did. Because, like, I just thought at the beginning, this was my first foray into screenwriting and, and doing TV, which I've always wanted to do. And we put a, um, casting call out through, um, the magnificent Danny Long. And we got some really, really great auditions back. So [inaudible 00:12:20] the table read, which was where Angus, Nina and myself kinda were in, in the physical space together for the first time. We had Hannah Diviney come and read for the part of Sarah just to kind of hear her voice outside of our own heads. Um-

Nina:

Yeah. 'Cause it's always hard when you're writing, and you write in the way that you would say things, in the way you would read things. And to hear it interpreted... Like, I think part of us was just, like, "Yeah, we'll just get Angus and Emma to read." And then our producers were, like, "No, idiots, you're the writers, you have to hear it, you can't be saying it. Then that's, like, missing the point of your writing exercise." 'Cause it's about how your writing is interpreted. So yeah, we got, um, Hannah Diviney who's, like, an activist with cerebral palsy, to read the-

Emma:

Yes. And, um, afterwards, Madeleine's like, Madeleine went up to her and she was like, "So you're auditioning, right?" I'm so glad that Hannah got the role because, um, ah, she's just, she's incredible and, um...

Nina:

And we also, obviously, like, Angus who is our third co-creator, um, played Frank on the show. Um-

Emma:

And he was just phenomenal as well.

Nina:

Yeah. Angus just has, like, this onscreen presence that is just insane. Like, you... I don't know how he does it. So Angus and I, when we worked on The Angus Project together, um, which is the title of our, uh, comedy pilot we made for ABC comedy. Um, he, I just remember we were shooting it and, like, I was just on Utopia, which is, like, a well-known, like, um, ABC TV show. And, like, I was on my first acting job. And I was quite, I was struggling a little bit. But by the time I got to The Angus Project, I was, like, pretty comfortable on camera. And Angus just comes, and it's his first time acting and he just smashes it. Like, I just, I've never seen someone with such perfect timing.

He knows where the camera is, like, intuitively. His nickname on set, on Latecomers was Two Takes Thompson. Like, he's just a freak. And he brings so many, like, he makes that character so charming. Like, Frank, I think there's so many ways that you could play him that would be so unlikable and so unsympathetic. And Angus just, he gets away with so much because his presence is so likable that even when he's being a douchebag, you're like, "Oh my God, this poor guy." (laughs) Like, I can't believe all this pain that he's going through that's making him be mean. Like, it's... I don't know, he has, like, a very empathetic, charming presence that you cannot help but love him, even though he's a total dick (laughs).

Anthea:

Yeah. And he walked that complexity. The series walked that complexity beautifully, which I was really impressed by. Did you get any pushback from the industry or from agents? People wanting you to cast actors who didn't live with disability?

Nina:

No.

Emma:

No.

Anthea:

Great.

Emma:

No. I mean, I mean, during the first table read, uh, because it was such short notice, we couldn't find a male actor with a disability to read for Frank, that was-

Nina:

Oh, I think we could. There were just, there were a few issues with, like, travel and, like, we just couldn't get them to the location at the right... Uh, like, there was just scheduling conflicts I think. I was also, this table was, like, just after, like, it was in the middle of co, not in the middle of COVID, but it was, like, you know that really tentative time where e- everything was kind of opening, but we're all in masks? Like, it was a really hectic time.

Emma:

It was kind of a limbo time between just coming out and still, still being kinda cautious.

Nina:

Yeah. And so there was a lot of kind of roadblocks. I remember when were like, "Oh, we got this person." Then it was like, "Oh, this thing, you know, hasn't happened." Or, like...

Anthea:

yeah.

Nina:

Yeah, somebody... Yeah, it was just, it was all these, like, moving parts were not moving together.

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Anthea:

Yeah. Absolutely. I'm really pleased to hear that. Because even a couple of years ago when I was making a short film with a young boy with cerebral palsy, I had some people push back and suggest that maybe I should cast someone who, um, had done more work before. And I just love to hear that you didn't have any pushback on that. That's wonderful. So can I ask, how has the series been received?

Emma:

Oh, we've had phenomenal reviews. Like, um, we, it's been called, "Quietly revolutionary." Um-

Nina:

By The Guardian.

Emma:

Yeah.

Nina:

The freaking Guardian, man, what the hell? That's like-

Emma:

Yeah, yeah.

Nina:

That's the newspaper I read (laughs).

Emma:

Yeah. Sydney Morning Herald, Frankie, um-

Nina:

People really love it, I think is cool. And it, it's really nice. Um-

Emma:

I think it's because it... Sorry, I'm talking too much.

Nina:

No, no, no. Sorry [inaudible 00:17:00].

Emma:

I think it's, I think it's because even though it's about disability, it's not at the same time. It's a more about complexity, the complexity of the, um, society and just, like, trying to fit into modern day, modern day fuck ups. Um-

Nina:

It's like (laughs)... Yeah. I think that we, um were really lucky. We had Vanessa Alexander who wrote for The Great, and who's this incredible writer. And she was in our very first writers room. And she was like, "You need to find your eternal question." Which is, like, the human question in the show. And, um, very early on we nutted out the human question, nutted out, pun not intended. Um, we figured out the human question was, "How far would you go to be seen sexually?" And even though the show is about disability and sex, that eternal question is, you know, it's-

Emma:

Relevant to everyone. Mm-hmm.

Nina:

To every single person. And especially 'cause, like, in our society, sex is of such prescience and such value, and it effects us all, like, our, how, how we feel about ourselves sexually or as sexual creatures. Or if we're feeling sexually impotent 'cause we've been rejected. Hi, it's me. Um, but I think (laughs), like, I do think, yeah, there is, there's such a core question there, that people do relate to the characters despite not necessarily having a disability, they are able to see themselves or, you know, see that, I guess, um, sexual question throughout the show.

Anthea:

Yeah. That's-

Nina:

Um, also the show's funny. Like, I think it's funny and it's sweet but it's not too sweet. Like, I think... I, I don't know, uh, I've... Most shows that I work on, um, I'm a little bit ashamed. Uh, especially if I write and direct, I'm always like, "It's really bad, like, don't watch it." But I think the thing that I love about Latecomers is, like, it feels like such a team effort.

Like, you can see Maddy in the show. You can see Emma in the show. You can see Angus in the show. You can see our producers, like, in the show. You can feel, like... I don't know, I watch the show and I see, like, every single person's input and desire to tell this story and almost relationship to the story. And I think that's almost as well, what I think other people watching it can feel, is like, this love. It all comes back down to Maddy Gottlieb's love. But yeah, I think-

Emma:

Mm-hmm.

Nina:

To me, the show, like, I think on, on paper it was quite, you know, edgy or, like, I don't know how to describe it, maybe, like, like, rough or something. Like, there was a certain edge to it. And I think that in the production part of it and the editing and the acting, like, it just... And it, it all got kind of, um, it got made palatable (laughs). Is that a weird thing to say?

Emma:

It was unpolished on paper, but it's, but o- on screen-

Nina:

Yeah, it felt a bit more raw.

Emma:

... it's really refined.

Anthea:

Yeah.

Nina:

Yeah. It had this, like, rawness on the page. And then the rawness was, like, like, it's, they made, they beautified the rawness. And I think that, like, that was something that was really cool for us to watch, and has allowed me to take compliments from writing on this show (laughs). 'Cause yeah, it doesn't feel like just our beast anymore. It's, like, everyone's.

Emma:

And I feel like everyone can relate to, you know, ev- everyone knows one of these characters. Like, everyone knows a Brandi, (laughs) everyone knows an Elliot. Everyone knows a, a Deb. Everyone knows, you know, Frank and Sarah. Like, we come across these people throughout our life and yeah, I think that's the beauty of it, is that there's someone for everyone to relate to.

Anthea:

Yeah. Well, congratulations. It's such a beautiful show. And thank you so much for telling us a lot more about.

Emma:

Thank you.

Nina:

Ah, thank you for having us.

Anthea:

This is Anthea Williams and you're on 2RPH. So Hannah Cormack, welcome back to Sideshow. Now tell me what have you been seeing and not been seeing this month?

Hannah:

Dan Daw is back in Sydney with his new work, The Dan Daw Show, as part of the Seymour Center's pride season. After having spent a lifetime being an inspiration to others, Dan is finally seizing the moment to inspire himself. Dan is joined in an intimate evening of play by performer and collaborator, Christopher Owen, where Dan takes back the power by being dominated on his own terms. The Dan Daw Show was named as one of the top five dance shows of 2022 by The Guardian UK. And it's on in the York Theater from February 21 to 24.

Now, this show isn't online, which is understandable given the intimate and explicit content of the work and that it's a reclamation of power. And sharing that kind of work with an in-person audience in a room is a totally different power dynamic than sharing it with anonymous online viewers. So that means I won't be able to see this work, but there are a lot of other access provisions, other types of access needs. General access for the Seymour Center includes lift access to all levels of the center and fully accessible toilets located on the ground floor. Wheelchair seating is available in all the venues. Patrons have the choice to stay in their wheelchair, or transfer to a seat, and adjacent seating can also be reserved to companions. And the Seymour Center is also a Companion Card affiliate.

Hearing loops are available in the York Theater, and amplifying sound for specific areas of seating. So it's also asked that if you require wheelchair seating or hearing loop access to please advise the box office when booking. Now, additionally, a Dan Daw show has extra access provisions. All performances of The Dan Daw Show are captioned, and all are relaxed performances, meaning audiences are welcome to move around, come and go, make noise, stim and tick as they need. Every performances is preceded by a pre-show access session. From one hour before the performance for 30 minutes, one of the team can bring audience members into the performance space. They can demonstrate where the captions will be displayed, where the trigger warning symbol for light and sound intensity will be displayed. And audience members can also explore the set, props, stage in whatever way they prefer. It's also an opportunity to check where you'll be seated, the entrances and exists, and route to the quiet room and toilet facilities.

There's also a priority boarding system if it's of benefit to people. Meaning that some audience members have the opportunity to enter before everyone else does. It's recommended for audiences 16 plus, contains coarse language, sexual references, haze smoke, loud or sudden noises and flashing lights. And photography and filming is prohibited. And there is a full and detailed content warning guide available online, listed under having triggers, which goes through all the possible triggers for people and gives further explanation and detail into what those are. So you can make a decision for yourself if you feel the show is for you. Tickets are available at seymourcenter.com/event/worldpride-2023-the-dan-daw-show.

Anthea:

That's and amazing set of access, that's fantastic, isn't it?

Hannah:

Dan is part of a number of UK based dance artists who are really working at the forefront to radical access. So, um, it's just beautiful to see the care and attention given to some of the different areas of access you might not have encountered before at venues here in Australia.

Anthea:

Yeah. I really wanna do a show about what they're doing with access in the UK at the moment, because a number of Australians who I know who are working there at the moment talk about how it's, um, a v- very progressive place to be living if you're part of the disability community in the arts at the moment, which is fantastic. So what is it that you are going to get to experience this month, Hannah?

Hannah:

Well, what I did see was All of Us, written by and starring the wonderful Francesca Martinez, and directed by Ian Rickson for the National Theater in London. Inspired by real stories from disabled people, All of Us is set in modern times in the UK, and reflects on experiences of those dealing with the effects of austerity on PIP, or the Personal Independence Payment. And those of us in Australia who are currently on or are trying to access the NDIS might recognize many of the absurd tests, humiliations and barriers forced upon the characters in the play. It's a searing indictment of the systematic abuse encountered by disabled people accessing government benefits.

But it's also a play whose warm heart is rooted deeply in forgiveness and compassion, recognizing that the same system that hurts disabled people ultimately hurts everyone, no matter our able, disabled status or our political leanings. Now, there are no content warnings listed on the site pre-purchase, but I will mention there are themes of substance abuse, death and suicide. It's available to watch online at National Theater at Home, either as a standalone rental purchase, or through their subscription service. That's at ntathome.com. It will be available as a title in their selection of plays until at least the 14th of December 2023.

Anthea:

Awesome. I'm so pleased I've got a while to see it. You know, that is definitely on my list, because you're not the first person to recommend it to me. Rachel Musgrove who does a lot of the marketing for this show was also telling me how inspiring she found it.

Hannah:

And inspiring in, uh, not the way that word is usually used for disabled people.

Anthea:

Yeah.

Hannah:

I mean, this is a disability led project.

Anthea:

Yeah.

Hannah:

The writer and star is disabled and it was so refreshing to see so many disabled actors on stage at once.

Anthea:

Awesome, I can't wait to see it.

Hannah:

It's [inaudible 00:26:49]. Normally there's just one or two of us in a cast, but this one has a lot of disabled actors.

Anthea:

Cool.

Hannah:

Cool.

Anthea:

Hey, um, thanks so much Hannah, I'm really looking forward to experiencing both of those. And just a reminder for everyone, um, who's based in Sydney, uh, pride is coming up, so there's heaps of stuff to see. Links to Latecomers and all of the shows discussed today will be in our show notes. And if you're in Victoria, I went to a wonderful gig last year at the Sydney Opera House, called Into the Space Between the Notes, where the Liz Martin Band and Eliza Hull played. So that gig is gonna be repeated at the Castlemaine Festival on the 31st of March. And at the Melbourne Recital Center on the first of April. So to play us out, here's the Liz Martin Band with Let Me Down.

Outro music:

(singing).