



### **Perspective Statement**

The *How to Dance in Ohio* team acknowledges that there are varying terms used to describe disability, autism, autistic individuals, and other subject matters in this production. We strive to reflect our understanding of the terms preferred by our cast, creative team, and autistic self-advocates. It is possible that a perspective was not heard, a term is outdated, or language has evolved. Your opinions and feedback are important to us so, email [feedback@howtodanceinohiomusical.com](mailto:feedback@howtodanceinohiomusical.com) to open up the conversation if you believe there is something we missed. We'd be so grateful to hear from you!

### **Frequently Asked Questions:**

#### **Is this the first time autistic and/or disabled people are performing on stage?**

Absolutely not! There are many theatrical pieces around the world that have disabled artists on stage. This is also not the first time there has been a show with autistic performers at Syracuse Stage! From what we know, it's the first production to be done at this scale centering openly autistic characters. While there have been other shows that circle the topic on Broadway (namely, *Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, which was also performed at Syracuse Stage in 2017 starring an autistic actor), this may be the first Broadway-aimed show to be specifically about openly autistic characters and their experience, fully cast with autistic actors playing autistic characters (and making up a majority of the cast!). We are grateful for the production teams, actors, directors, and other autistic artists and advocates who have paved the way for this production.

#### **When talking about autism in the production, why do you use the following terms: autism, autism spectrum, ASD, or on the spectrum?**

We use the word autism because that is what this show is about! We say autism to recognize the reality of people's experiences and because it is an intrinsic part of people's identities (just like race, gender, or sexual orientation). We avoid euphemisms that could imply a negative stigma around the word (for example, "differently abled" or "special needs"). You might notice that we do not use the word "disorder". It sits uncomfortably with many autistic individuals. ASD does indicate "disorder" (that is what the "D" stands for). We have also received feedback that the word "spectrum" could be offensive to some; implying that autism is a range from low to high, or a lot to a little – and autism isn't like that! Our team uses this word "spectrum" because we have done the work to understand it represents the vastness of autism and autistic people. We recognize and continue to learn that there is more nuance to autism than one simple linear scale. Note: certain individuals may or may not identify with this language, and that's OK! We're not in the business of policing which specific language people relate to most.



### Why does the production include “identity first” language?

Generally, autistic people prefer identity-first (autistic person) rather than people-first (person with autism). Because of this, that is the language choice the production will be making as well.

**Please, when talking about this show, also use identity first language.** You can read more about it in the resources list below. And, always ask the person themselves when in doubt!

For more information, you can also visit these resources:

- <https://www.respectability.org/inclusion-toolkits/disability-faq/#q3>
- <https://awnnetwork.org/>
- <https://www.npr.org/2022/08/08/1115682836/how-to-talk-about-disability-sensitively-and-avoid-ableist-tropes>
- <https://www.npr.org/2022/02/18/1081713756/disability-disabled-people-offensive-better-word>
- <https://ncdj.org/style-guide/>
- <https://autisticadvocacy.org>

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### Approved Show Blurb

- **For press releases/website:** *How to Dance in Ohio* is a heart-filled new musical that explores what it means to belong, the courage it takes to put yourself out in the world, and the universal need to connect. Based on Alexandra Shiva's award-winning documentary, the musical follows the challenges and triumphs faced by a group of seven autistic young adults at a counseling center in Columbus, Ohio. With the support of clinical psychologist Dr. Emilio Amigo, the center arranges a spring formal dance, and encourages them as they encounter love, fear, stress, excitement, and hope along the path to human connection.
- **Shorter:** Based on Alexandra Shiva's award-winning documentary, *How to Dance in Ohio* follows the challenges and exhilarations faced by a group of seven autistic young adults at a counseling center in Columbus, Ohio. With the support of their psychologist, Dr. Emilio Amigo, the group encounters love, fear, stress, excitement, and hope as they prepare for a spring formal dance.
- **Even shorter:** *How to Dance in Ohio* follows the exhilarations and challenges faced by a group of seven autistic young adults at a counseling center in Columbus, Ohio as they prepare for a spring formal dance, supported by their psychologist, Dr. Emilio Amigo.
- **Another shorter:** *How to Dance in Ohio* follows seven autistic young adults in Columbus as they come of age and find their ways in the world.
- **EVEN EVEN SHORTER:** *How to Dance in Ohio* is a coming-of-age musical about human connection.