

A note from the authors –

Our ambition while writing *How to Dance in Ohio* was to amplify and center Autistic artists and to tell a joyful story about community and inclusion. If you're wanting to do this show, we assume this is an interest of yours as well. We encourage you to collaborate with the Autistic and neurodivergent artists in your community, onstage and off.

That said, we recognize you may not have seven Autistic or neurodivergent actors in your community, and that's okay. If you feel passionately about telling this story, we want you to tell it. Theater is an incredible tool to understand one another. By stepping into the role of someone whose life experience is vastly different from our own, we can exercise empathy and learn about their strengths and struggles.

Furthermore, neurodivergence is multifaceted, Autism is a spectrum, and not everyone receives a formal or early diagnosis. Rebekah is not herself Autistic, but has Tourette Syndrome and greatly relates to the themes of *masking* and *burnout* in the show. Jacob's sister received evaluations for years before she received an Autism diagnosis at age nineteen. Strangers have written to us that they sought Autism diagnoses after recognizing themselves in the characters in our show. It's not true that "everyone is a little bit Autistic," but we can *all* celebrate the beautiful complexity of different human neurotypes.

Please lead with respect. This show is based on real people and their real experiences. Before we began writing, we visited the folks at Amigo Family Counseling so they could ask us questions about our adaptation. One group member asked us, "Will the actors in your show use an 'Autism accent'?" They were referring to offensive stereotypes of Autistic traits in media, including monotone pitch or unusual speech rhythms. Please bring your authentic self and experiences to the characters, and avoid using an 'Autism accent.'

However you fit into this neurodiverse world, we hope your production of *How to Dance in Ohio* brings your community the same compassionate curiosity and heart-forward fellowship that we experienced while creating it.

With gratitude and humility,

Rebekah Greer Melocik and Jacob Yandura