



# maladjusted

humanizing mental health  
the system. the people. the play.

Created and performed by patients and caregivers

## ***maladjusted* 2015 BC/Alberta Tour & Vancouver Tour Finale** Publicity Final Report, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015 By Dima Alansari - Publicist

& social media section by  
**Melissa Kuipers – Publicity/Outreach Assistant**

Project Funders:



Edith Lando Charitable Foundation

Hamber Foundation



Operating Support:



Media Sponsors:



## Overview of the BC/Alberta 2015 *maladjusted* tour January 27<sup>th</sup> – March 15<sup>th</sup> 2015

The publicity & media campaign for the tour was very good due to several reasons. First of all, the PROC (publicity and outreach coordination) schedule developed by [Theatre](#) for Living was instrumental in preparing the community organizers for the process that lay ahead.

Basically, the generic PROC schedule, which gets adapted for each TfL project, is a step-by-step guide [that](#) calls for one weekly meeting between the community organizers and the outreach coordinator and publicist starting 8 weeks before the production. A lot of thought was put into this schedule and process and although it is necessary, there should be some flexibility around how not [to](#) push it onto the community in a “we-know-best” kind of way, creating unnecessary stress. It’s also important to be listening to what the community’s needs are, yet also making sure that all the necessary information is relayed and discussed. I believe that David Ng and I did a really good job handling this very time consuming yet super effective process.

Publicity-wise, it’s a chance for the media team to be identified early and the strategy to be well thought out and then implemented in a timely way. It is the [Publicist’s](#) role to support the media teams in liaising between the media and the cast [and](#) director once contact has been established and interest gained.

In some cases the media team identified would have more than 1 call a week – only with the [Publicist](#) – in order to get more information [about](#) how to speak and conduct media interviews. It is important to note that this process requires [attention](#) to the schedule of the cast [and](#) director, making sure not to overload them as well as spreading the interviews between them.

In the end, almost every community had at least one media coverage and for some communities up to 6. Medicine Hat, for example, was very proactive in [publicity](#), [and](#) [secured](#) +2 TV spots, radio spots and print. *\*For a final list of media coverage please check the production book*

Another reason [we had](#) good coverage [for the tour](#) is that many of the community organizers were [quite](#) media savvy and used this opportunity to showcase themselves and their work. It was important to [encourage communities to tie](#) *maladjusted* to [relevant](#) mental health issues and concerns directly relating to their community as that [could potentially pique media interest](#).

Finally the in-house promotional videos of the cast were very useful. We shot the videos in the adjacent room [to](#) where the actors were rehearsing in Vancouver to be very time efficient and not disrupt their rehearsal process. David Ng and I were very careful to make sure the content of the video was about the actor’s connection

to *maladjusted* and about promoting it to a Vancouver audience. In the end the tour audiences were thrilled to have these videos as well. Each character/actor brought a different feeling to the videos. There were 6 in total and each was about 1.5 minutes. I believe this to be the ideal length for social media and online promoting. Again, a lot of thought was put into the creation of these videos with David Ng and I supervising the content, while I supervised the technical aspect. David Diamond also allowed us to film 4 scenes of the play during a 1.5 hour period [which](#) we identified as [a "media call,"](#) before the open rehearsals on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, and right before [the company](#) left on tour. Eric Sanderson, the [Director of Photography \(DOP\)](#) we hired, did an excellent job capturing creative, multi-angled shots. [The videos](#) ended up looking really good and the TV stations were really impressed. We essentially did the TV reporters job for them, and we did a really good job at it too! In Victoria, for the Songhees run, City TV did a fantastic review of the play using our footage and cast interviews.

I found the media in the smaller cities (and even in Victoria) to be much easier to engage. We were very successful in Victoria as the media team there was fantastic and we managed to collaborate and dovetail on Bell's Let's Talk about mental health day on January 28<sup>th</sup>. [The timing of \*maladjusted\* in Victoria \(January 31<sup>st</sup>\) nicely coincided with the Bell Let's Talk campaign.](#)

[The Victoria \*maladjusted\* publicity and outreach team also included a few student publicists, which definitely helped the publicity process.](#) The director David Diamond and Micheala Hiltergerke, the youngest cast member, were on a LIVE show on CMFX especially created for the Let's Talk campaign. City TV was part of that campaign as well.

Overall the media on the tour was constant and it was a pleasure to be part of the dynamic energy it created. The reviews were really good and are available both on the media page of *maladjusted* and the publicity folder.

### **Overview of the Vancouver run March 20<sup>th</sup> – March 28<sup>th</sup>.**

I found the media in Vancouver very hard to persuade. I was fortunate to have some very well known media contacts but somehow they were not able to write about *maladjusted*. Many referred me to other potential journalists and it was just one rejection after the other. Fortunately, when the few did write – they were good and big!

I asked Melissa, [our Publicity and Outreach Assistant](#), to make sure we were listed in as many listings as possible and even that process was tedious and we had to fill in all kinds of questionnaires and such but we were eventually listed.

Stuart Derdeyn from The Province nearly gave me a heart attack by telling me that he was no longer able to cover *maladjusted* after accepting to cover it just a few weeks back! I was relying on him. I immediately wrote him back and asked him why – and whether there was anything I could do better? He wrote back saying, “Screw it! Lets do it!”. Even though I am pleased that I managed to instigate that response, I just can’t help but wonder: what does one have to do to make sure that journalists are going to do what they promise to do?!

Despite the press release going out to over 300 journalists, very few bothered to respond and no one actually replied to me despite follow up emails until about 2 weeks to the performance. I cannot count the number of times I tried to get to the CBC and various shows with no response at all. At the end of the day, we were featured in The Province, The Georgia Straight, four Co-op Radio interviews, a blog in both the [Georgia Straight](#) and GVPTA. Rabble.ca also featured us in an hour-long podcast.

I am personally disappointed in the media because I think the subject of *maladjusted* is very important and the media needs to play a role in supporting the collective impact we are trying to create. Having said that, we are very pleased that the coverage we did get helped us to have a very good attendance rate and full houses on the last weekend.

### **Promotional Material:**

Because *maladjusted* was originally performed and created in 2013, the office had already decided to keep the image that was created by Jordan Bent, and Dafne’s artwork. By the time I arrived, my job was to help tweak the copy. We were going to create two different sets of postcards and posters to better reflect the [BC/Alberta](#) tour and its Vancouver Finale.

Interesting to mention: I also entered a debate about whether the native actors should be identified as native or not in the copy. It was decided – and this came from the actors themselves – that in the case of *maladjusted*, there was no need to identify their ethnicity. So what was originally supposed to read “created and performed by native and non-native patients and caregivers” ended up being “created and performed by patients and caregivers.” We believe this worked for the best. There were some complaints from Native communities and others that the title, log line and graphic did not really speak to Native audiences, and some community partners decided to do something about this. As an example Calgary took matters in their own hands to reach out to their First Nations community by creating various native artworks and such. Here in Vancouver, we feel that we also got in front of that issue by releasing Charlene Hellson’s (support worker on tour) as well as Sam Bob’s and Columpa Bobb’s (actors) promotional videos. All three of them are First Nations and spoke to the issues that they face as Indigenous people.

The promotional material for the tour was ready before the Vancouver run and the Vancouver poster and postcards were refined right before the company set off on tour.

As for the printing, we decided to go with RR Donelley because we knew we could rely on them as Tfl had used them successfully in the past. With the exception of some negative staff communication, they did the job well, on time, and with very little difficulties. We over-printed postcards and posters. For the tour posters, we left a space for the community organizers to over-print their logos and performance info such as venue, address, date, time and ticket info. We also printed 6000 black and white 8 page evening programs that the touring company took with them to provide the community organizers.

### **Distribution:**

When it came to distribution, we used several avenues; Tfl's veteran "Poster Mafia" did a run about 6 weeks prior to the Vancouver opening, however, he would not give us a full list of places he had posted. About 3 weeks to opening, we decided to give a new poster guy, Igor Santizo, another 100 posters and 100 postcards to distribute throughout the east side of town. I would highly recommend him. The volunteers that were led by Melissa did a great job in postering as well. Finally, when we did our outreach, we sent posters and postcards by mail to the various organizations including community centres, wellness centres, and other community organizations.

Overall, visibility was very good and we know we really got around the city, as feedback was positive about visibility of our promo material.

### **Media sponsorship:**

**The Georgia Straight** came on board again and offered us a great sponsorship, and I added an online component. The sponsorship was basically similar, yet more comprehensive to the 2013 run. 4 E2 size full color ads, a blog, a contest in which 5 free pairs of tickets were offered and 116 people entered in the hopes of winning. This year Travis Lupick co-hosted the webcast on the GS and that was great, except that we experienced serious technical issues. Travis also wrote an excellent blog about it!

We linked the GS contest to the Bus shelter ads that were subsidized by the city and created a QR code for people to enter the contest and send in their ideas on how to humanize the mental health system. We created the #maladjusted hashtag, and even though we had lots of tweets, we unfortunately did not get many tweets with any ideas on how to humanize the mental health system. Perhaps we did not promote this well enough, or it just wasn't the kind of thing people at bus shelters

wanted to tweet about! Regardless people still entered the GS contest and submitted their names for free tickets. As mentioned above, according to the GS we had 116 entries.

**Bus shelter ads** – 20 of them were subsidized by the City of Vancouver liaised by Klodyne in the Cultural Services department. Some were in areas of heavy traffic and others not so much. *\*For a list of the areas please refer to the publicity folder.*

**BCGEU** gave us \$2,500 instead of printing our material. I had a contact there, Earl Maloney, and [I was reaching out to him to see if we could use their in house printing system](#) – they [were not able to do that](#), but loved the project so much that [they gave us funding!](#) They were great in helping us to promote all over BC and in return we facilitated their clientele with two tickets throughout the island and in the interior of BC and 20 free tickets to the Vancouver run.

**Shaw Cable**, as in the past, sponsored our webcast.

I was unsuccessful again this year in bringing on the CBC, though I [tried](#) many times and was rejected. With exception of [an](#) CBC interview with CBC [North](#) for the BC interior (which was a really [great](#) interview!) we had very little CBC coverage despite the many numbers of CBC reporters in our database.

With regards to the **database**, we have decided as a team in our debrief at the end of my contract here to go ahead and delete journalists that are on the database but have never responded and are “non-active”. Its better to create personal long-lasting relationships with media & journalists then to continue sending them press releases that go nowhere. *\* **It's important to note here that seeding through the database and looking through the database, keeping it up to date and such is one major responsibility of the publicist and should be done throughout the job and as new contacts are made. It is a huge responsibility and very time consuming.***

### **Advertising**

I decided that the 2013 *maladjusted* advertising strategy for Vancouver was quite good and when I called the list of potential advertising, I asked them to give me a better deal [than in](#) 2013. [This is](#) how I ended up with some serious online advertising using programmatic displays and geo-targeting. *\* All the reports on that are available in the production book.*

I decided that Edmonton and Calgary could use some ad support too, so I allocated [a small percentage of the](#) budget towards advertising in the Metro for those cities. Calgary backed out of them at the last minute because they were nearing sell out. I paid the difference for one more ad in the Metro for Vancouver.

My advertising list included ads in *The Sun*, *The Province*, *The GS*, *Megaphone*, *The Metro*, and the *Vancouver Courier*. We also had ads in 3 programs including *Talking Stick festival*, *The Belfry Theatre* and *Theatre Northwest*.

### **Putting 'bums in seats'**

(the student discount last-minute promotion for the mid week shows).

We noticed that the mid-week shows were low in terms of sales, Wednesday March 25<sup>th</sup> and Thursday March 26<sup>th</sup> to be exact. I suggested doing a promotion for the theatre community, as they weren't showing up. There was some resistance to the idea and rightfully so, but I insisted in our need for a promotion to increase sales and quickly. After several discussions we identified that the theatre community was just not the best fit and that if this promotion were to go through we should target the students. Immediately, Melissa created the outreach email and we targeted Langara, VCC, SFU, [Douglas College](#), UBC and Capilano. We used the existing network as a base and then used personal contacts with professors and university workers, as well as social media and [advertising on Facebook](#). I posted in every single group I knew students might visit and we created an aggressive promotional buzz. *It worked!*

It was not the easiest thing to navigate the seats reserved for vouchers, which were 30 seats of the 130 available. Actually, 36 seats are available at the Firehall and 6 were reserved for TfL & Firehall, so that leaves 130. I had a very fluid system working with the Firehall [on the seats](#). If we found that all the sales were gone, we could take some of the voucher seats, and if not enough were selling, we could save more for vouchers and comps. David Diamond pointed out the 20% of the house would be enough because at the end of the day we HAD to get good sales as well. So we applied that immediately, started to take waiting lists on the phone and made sure to release comps by 7:45pm to accommodate waiting lists. That was difficult too as it wasn't marked on the vouchers that people needed to be there by 7:45pm for 8pm run. However, it all worked out in the end with few people being turned away. The really annoying thing is that once a seat is bought we can't release it. No one can take that seat [because](#) it is reserved for the person who bought it, [regardless of if they show up late or do not show up at all](#). Therefore, even when we had full houses with no tickets available and had to turn people away, there were still what seemed like 'empty' seats.

Overall working with the Firehall Arts Centre was amazing! The team there is super great and was always on top of the sales, the reporting of the sales and the voucher & comps as well as the waiting list. I was dealing with Alex and Caitlin and all I can say is it was a great experience.

### **Conclusion:**

Overall the BC/Alberta 2015 tour and the Vancouver Finale of *maladjusted* were a huge success with close to full houses, full houses and standing ovations. I believe it's a mixture of things that allow for this and strong synergy and timing is key. Despite the fears in the beginning that a remount would be harder to sell, the idea that *maladjusted* was "back by popular demand" was true and the strong outreach led by David Ng & assertive media networking and advertising that was pursued really helped us achieve our goals. With the help of our Outreach and Publicity Co-op student assistant Melissa Kuipers, we attracted new audiences, created a real buzz, and promoted the play with full synergy and attention. It does take the entire TfL office working together to dovetail on each other's work and in the case of *maladjusted* it's important to note the effectiveness of teamwork.

Theatre for Living has been around for 34 years and has a system in place and a strong team of professionals. This is fantastic but can be hard to navigate at times. I would recommend meeting several times with the entire team to make sure everyone is on the same page. Advertising deadlines can be tricky and timely, every team member has a time schedule they are working with, and in order to avoid burn out, clear deadlines with at least a week's leeway is recommended. Multi-tasking is a must as many things happen simultaneously, so allocating a couple of hours each day to work on that is key. Overall, working with TfL on *maladjusted* was an exciting, challenging and well-refined experience!

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### **Social Media Initiatives, Melissa Kuipers (publicity/outreach assistant)**

The social media goal was to gain visibility online through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and to engage with communities, organizations, and high-profile individuals to help create buzz around *maladjusted*.

We used #maladjusted across all social media platforms, and I encouraged community partners to use the hashtag when Tweeting and posting to Facebook to both increase engagement and consolidate mentions.

I had a lot of fun co-managing social media! This was a combined effort between Dima, David, and myself.

### **Twitter**

The past publicity and outreach team created a large network on Twitter. When I began my job in January, our Twitter account had **1, 216** followers, a great number to work with. In the past three months, this amount has increased to **1, 333**.

My goal was to engage with as many users as possible to create a bigger buzz around *maladjusted*. I outreached to people who had a high number of followers to take advantage of their networks and enhance visibility.

Through phone outreach, I asked people to help us promote *maladjusted* by tweeting about us. To make this easier for others, I created a “tweet sheet” with pre-set tweets that partners could simply copy and paste into twitter. It was easy to see that this was a very successful idea, as we saw many tweets coming in that were taken directly from the tweet sheet. I would suggest that this tool be used in the future as it makes twitter promo quick and easy for other organizations. Many people who were reluctant about putting time into promoting our show agreed to help once I mentioned the easy-to-use tweet sheet.

David Ng (outreach coordinator) and myself planned a number of tweet-a-thons, where the goal was to spend whole days tweeting and engaging with twitter users. This did not exactly happen, but we did focus on intensive tweeting at least once per month.

We sent out at least 2 tweets per day and tried to engage with others as much as possible. We replied to almost every tweet sent to us, retweeted all positive feedback without clogging our feed, and engaged with other users. We also cross-promoted with the *Talking Stick Festival*, tweeting out their pre-written tweets while they did the same for us.

A few organizations that tweeted about us extensively include: the Bloom Group, the Looking Glass Society, CMHA Vancouver/Burnaby, and the Georgia Straight, Amnesty Vancouver. In the future, if the subject matter is relevant, I would encourage connecting with these groups again.

We attempted a social media campaign, offering free tickets to people who would tweet us with their ideas of how to humanize the mental health system. This was a [shortcoming](#), as we received zero entries. I believe the wording of the contest may have been confusing.

### **Facebook**

Like with twitter, the past publicity and outreach teams worked hard to create a large network of followers on Facebook. When I began this position in January, the Facebook page had **1, 458** likes. This increased to **1, 631** over the short duration of my three-month term.

Similar to twitter, the goal with Facebook was visibility. When I came into the position, a number of graphics were created for Facebook: a cover photo, a profile picture, and many shareable images. We emailed this graphics package to a

number of organizations as well as to the cast, crew, and board members. Many people used these images to help promote the show.

I created a Facebook event for the Vancouver run of *maladjusted* to get people excited for the show. The event was created on January 14<sup>th</sup>. There was a lot of engagement on the event, with a 19K reach, 280 “attendings”, and 94 “maybes”. The event helped gain some visibility and got people excited about the show.

I also ran a few ads for the Vancouver run, an event response ad for the Vancouver event, a clicks ad for the student promo (mentioned in the next section), and a views ad for one of our cast videos.

The event response ad was the most expensive, coming in at \$235.48. It was somewhat successful, resulting in 78 event responses (comments, “attending”, “maybe”). This ad ran from March 13<sup>th</sup> to March 28<sup>th</sup>.

The clicks ad for the half-priced student promotion was, in terms of numbers, unsuccessful. However, the ad only ran for about half a day, and resulted in 843 views and 7 clicks. Because of this, the ad was fairly cheap, coming in at \$5.21. The student promo was a success though, and much of that success is owed to Facebook promotion. If anything, the ads increased the buzz.

Finally, I ran an ad for video views. I uploaded the promo video of Martin Filby, who plays Jack in the show. This was an incredibly successful ad, running for only 5 days and resulting in 3, 179 views. I can’t speak to whether or not this affected ticket sales, but it absolutely helped enhance visibility.

### **Instagram**

We created a new Instagram account. I would deem the Instagram account somewhat superfluous and ultimately unsuccessful. We did not post consistently and did not put enough time into creating interesting content, gaining only 27 followers in three months. Admittedly, I did not put a lot of effort into the Instagram account and wish that I had generated more content.

In the future, I would suggest a more comprehensive social media plan is made for Instagram, as it is a great tool that can create a lot of buzz and enhance visibility. There needs to be a bigger engagement with the platform. I would suggest that we ask for photo submissions from cast and crew. I know that many cast of *maladjusted* took some incredible photos along the tour and we didn’t see many of these photos until the end. It would have been nice to see some of that online.

### **Wordpress Blog**

I really wanted to spend more time with the blog but it just didn't happen. I wrote a couple of posts and using wordpress analytics, I noticed there were very few views on the posts. It was hard to promote the blog because I didn't have enough time to focus on it. The blog itself could also use a facelift as it's beginning to look a bit outdated. To increase user interest and engagement, if there is more time in the future, updating the blog and focusing on creating interesting content would be useful, though I do think putting energy into other social media is a more productive use of time.