



By Paul McAuley Community reporter

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Pierce Starre, from Whiston, is hosting a talk at an upcoming festival in Liverpool (Image: Becky Bailey)

A Liverpool performance artist has opened up about the real, but often overlooked, reality of having two deaf parents. Pierce Starre, from Whiston but living in Crosby, grew up in a “predominantly silent household” which was very visual.

As a result of this, their first language was BSL and they didn’t start speaking English until they were three-years-old and enrolled in nursery school. The 40-year-old producer recalled how their first “interpreting gig” was having to speak to their grandparents at the telephone box on behalf of their mum.

The curator told the ECHO: “With my parents being deaf there came this oppression and marginalisation I experience indirectly. I experienced how society was treating them and for example, how there were never interpreters at hospital appointments.

“I was a child and having to interpret really complex information, which actually, for the most part, I didn’t understand and it was difficult for me to process at such a young age. I have

friends who are CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) and they have had to be the ones to tell their parents they have terminal cancer. It's not a nice position for anyone to be in."

Pierce said it felt like an "involuntary performance" whenever they and their mum were conversating. Their mum told them to always pretend like the others weren't there "as if there was a fourth wall and they were playing out to a crowd" and they accredit this for helping them make it in the creative industry.

They said: "I had this feeling of contention with education all the way through until I got to college. It was quite confusing going from one world to the next. I didn't fit in at school as there were cultural differences.



Artist Pierce Starre said their diagnoses were both "affirming and disempowering" as on one hand, they helped them understand why they had struggled at various points in life, but on the other, they became aware of the stigma associated with these labels (Image: Becky Bailey)

"I wasn't allowed to point at school whereas at home, pointing was part of the way my family and I communicated. I struggled with written work as I didn't have support at home with reading or writing."

Now, with hindsight and a diagnosis of autism, ADHD and dyslexia, Pierce realises it wasn't just being a CODA that "debilitated" their educational years.

They said: "As a neurodivergent person, I've come to realise the creative arts was a way in for me to be taken seriously in society. Up until that point, I felt completely written off. I left

school without GCSEs and I remember the stress of going to college every day to learn a mundane and outdated curriculum.



Artist Pierce Starre said they felt they excelled for the first time in life after going into the creative arts industry (Image: Marcin Sz)

“My neurodivergent brain is very hit-and-miss. Some days everything fires the way I want it to and it is seamless and other days everything just turns into a big and utter glitch. Trying to get everyone to fit in the same box, just doesn’t work anymore. I felt inadequate because of this, like I couldn’t add anything to society.”

Pierce will be speaking more about their experience at the upcoming pioneering Neurodiversity Arts Festival. Running at the end of September, the nine-day event will see the likes of Johnny Vegas and Ashleigh Nugent discussing their involvement in the arts, whereas Pierce will be part of a talk at Tate Liverpool.

Organiser Chris Beaumont, from The Brain Charity, said: “We know 15 to 20% of the population identify as neurodivergent, so we believe the festival will not only shed light on the diverse experiences and talents within this community but also foster a deeper understanding and acceptance of neurodiversity across society to create lasting change.”