

Time for Repair: **A conversation about theatre & the future**

An Open Space event
Hosted by Battersea Arts Centre and Improbable
Held online 2nd June 2020
(fourth event in a series of four)

Collected Reports

Improbable

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Overview

On Tuesday 2nd June 2020, Battersea Arts Centre and Improbable hosted an online Open Space conversation. This was the fourth in a series of events held by Battersea Arts Centre & Improbable in response to performing arts and the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Around 220 people attended across the course of the 3 hour conversation.
- Around 40% of participants were artists or makers; 20% producers or programme managers; 35% designers, writers or directors; and 5% administrators or funders.
- Around 25% of participants described themselves as being in senior management or leadership roles, 50% as mid-career, and 25% as early career.
- Participants attended from across the UK and included Band 1, 2 and 3 NPOs, Arts Council England and other funders; and from North America and Europe.

The agenda was set by the participants as a group at the start of the conversation. Six main themes emerged across the sessions called:

Race, racism and society

- History and this moment: How did we get here?
- White People Working In Theatre: What Are We Doing About White Supremacy

Diversity, representation and inclusion

- Respair for Diverse Artists! A new "theatre"? e.g. British Chinese/ East Asians
- Amplifying the experience of Deaf and disabled artists - how can we acknowledge the experience and promote inclusive practices?
- Approaches to working remotely with adults with learning disabilities and drama
- How do we support children during this time?
- Gender: how has the current situation impacted women? and how do we ensure equality of voice as we design the future
- How can we make sure theatre doesn't become even more elitist as a result of Covid?
- The experience of migrant artists in current situation - how do we feel now?!

Support for artists and freelancers

- How can theatre makers gain access to venues & other unused resources during this time
- as a sector, do we need a bill of rights for independent artists and freelancers?
- What can larger arts organisations do to help amplify voices of smaller arts organisations and individual artists?
- Does the theatre industry need to speak as one voice?

- What would you need from a (Creative) Mentor during this time?

Training & Creative Practice

- Offering New Solutions for Acting and Performance Courses
- What does the future of actor training look like?
- Theatre in Real 3-D Space, even now
- Rehearsing and making work safely in the time of covid-19
- Putting the body into non embodied spaces, audience and actor
- A Dreaming space. What's speaking through our collective night time dreaming?

Looking ahead

- How can we have less geographically restrictive conversations beyond lockdown? (ie potentially online)
- Covid has arisen as an impact of the ecological crisis - what if there will be more pandemics (which are likely)? How do we *adapt* potentially long-term?
- What may have changed in 6 months' time?

Navigating government guidance

- What the fuck do we do if we are shielding in the new future
- Has anyone else fallen through HMRC's self employment income support cracks
- The New Abnormal: holding onto being there in intimacy, together, up close
- how do we keep up with endless fast moving new technologies and which ones do we choose?
- Loss and Mourning and the role of theatre
- How do we gather together and make our collective voice heard at government level?

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Respair for Diverse Artists! A new "theatre"? e.g. British Chinese/ East Asians (Jonathan Man, he/him)

Session Convener: Jonathan Man

Participant names: Jonathan Man; Claire Masterclass, Haymarket; Youness-Moroccan/Greek/belgian performer, theatre maker and dramaturg, Florence from South West rural area; Anthony Lee - from Leeds, Young Vic marketing; Kerry ; TD, actor & producer; KT applied theatre, refugee artists & migrant backgrounds

It's interesting to have the time to reflect on this question.

As a facilitating / training organisation I'm interested to know what support we can give young diverse theatre-makers into the industry

"Safety":

Ironically in time of coronavirus we are told to "stay safe". But the grapevine is saying UK theatres are also talking about needing to economically "stay safe". We are hearing UK theatres may be planning shows with guaranteed actors who draw guaranteed audiences. As most audiences for most theatres are still largely white... That may mean far fewer opportunities for "diverse" performers.

National Theatre is the big ticket with online programme, seems safe!
Commercial West End, booking from November 2020, but will it open from then?
Publicly subsidised theatre staff, furloughed

This time seems to be a leveller, people applying for UC for the first time, more empathy?

It's being portrayed as a leveller, but isn't, some demographics / communities are being more adversely affected by the crises.

internationalism seems less supported in the UK. Why is the UK not using this community more? TV and films seem more willing to cast foreign actors.

Like to see genuine Northern Voices, British Chinese, authentic, perhaps furloughed staff could support a breadth of artists in their funding applications?

Use closed theatre spaces to welcome theatre companies so they can run R&Ds there safely to keep those spaces alive. for R&D and educate the public and unheard communities on backstage

Charity partners to commercial venues to be a gateway to diverse artists

Build on long term relationships, e.g a facilitator working in a partnership for over 40 years, let's build on that dialogue and trust

Migrant etc often in events only, but how lead to longterm engagement?

At the end of the day, no money, no work.

So how can we outreach to rural communities and areas with no access to theatre or creative opportunities! Can the industry be less London or Bristol centric so large cities only

Maybe opportunity for Rural Touring to be where theatre can take off again, as social distancing easier? What could be the new business models?

Worried that many artists from working class backgrounds, that have no safety net will have to leave the industry. It feels there is pressure in this moment to be visible as an artist, but some can't afford to be, as they have to get other jobs to survive financially. There needs to be more financial support for artists (especially those from less financially privileged backgrounds) and not an expectation to work for free.

Also that going forward working class young people won't be able to afford to pursue a career in the arts, as there will be less funding and opportunities available.

Offering New Solutions for Acting And Performance Courses

Session Convener: Tony Bell

Participant names: Shanti Freed

How can we recycle sets and costumes whilst ensuring the integrity of the designer?
How best can we use the skills of designers working in diverse ways?

Do we need to make Social Distancing in theatre a positive? Make work which has this sense of alienation and foreboding?

What the fuck do we do if we are shielding in the new future (Jo Verrent, she/her)

Session Convener: Jo Verrent

Participant names: KELSIE, T, JO, HELEN, JAMES, RACHEL, MANDY, HELEN, CAROMAWER

In a nutshell:

We are worried that for work that has people who are shielding as an audience or work by shielding artists, by the time we come out we will be coming out into a sector that where all of the money has gone.

How do we demand that it is a requirement for every organisation to do that thinking and to think about that breadth of artists and audience and to have some provision? It might not be everything, that generosity and that hybridness and whatever might not work for every single thing. But somewhere in a season, somewhere in a programme, somewhere in something, there has to be some consideration of those who are shielding.

Shielding has impacted people in different ways: artists, administrators, audiences.

- It hasn't stopped me working yet and in fact it's actually done the opposite, I've been able to do more things because I'm less knackered because I'm not doing the travelling!
- I'm sad and grieving and things are terrible but I'm in so much less pain these days. I want to figure out a world where selfishly I don't leave the house quite as much and don't have to deal with the noise and complexity of the world quite as often because I think what lockdown has made me realise is that it might actually be a really important for me.
- Young carers might be a group of people that will be held back from going back to school, even though they have a real need to have a different space, because of the infection rate
- I'm particularly interested in what the next bit of time looks like in and out of rehearsal rooms and how I facilitate those rooms and work with people [who are shielding]

How does it work for actors, creatives who need to shield?

How does it work for audiences?

How will it all change when everybody else goes back...

- I think there will be a rush to get everybody back and making work as soon as possible and probably sooner than is really healthy.
- Outdoor theatre may happen first because there is/maybe some scientific evidence that it's not as risky to catch coronavirus outdoors. Different people will see that as a different level of risk. There is some kind of social distancing for the audience but it is harder to implement that for team working within it. Can you ask a whole company to rehearse in masks? For an audience - how does that affect how people feel? And in terms of distance between performers, how does that work?
- How easy is it to put in requests to rehearse in rooms with really good ventilation and with more space than you might normally have in a rehearsal room? It is an added expense for the producers and the company.
- When you say "outdoor space", I automatically think where will I sit. We have to think about the routes to the open space. One of the things I'm most worried about is travelling and the idea of getting on any form of public transport anywhere with other people.
- I'm worried that the push for outdoor theatre will push our audiences along privilege lines. Anyone who is well off enough or has the ability to drive will suddenly get to experience theatre - buying a car or renting a car is a much steeper economic hurdle
- Many ethnic minorities (including Black, South Asian, and East Asian) are disproportionately affected by coronavirus. Those minorities who don't normally go to theatre will be even less likely to. Even if held in familiar "community settings". This will make audiences even less diverse.

what theatre/art can you make?

- I've just done a big installation in my front room. I can't do anything than start where I am. I can't make anything out apart from what I've got. How is the system going to work rather than the content?

- I'm trying to get it shared. I'm trying to get other artists to see it. I'm trying to get it out there.
- Find a way to document it. Maybe lay it all out and make a video that is viewable.
- there are a number of works that are being made during lockdown and whether they are the big publicised works like the BBC and Arts Council Culture in Quarantine series or whether they are independent artists creating work. In six months' time, will they still be seen as current?

How do we not get forgotten?

- There will be the second wave and then there will be the third wave, linked to the long-term conditions that led to all of us that are shielded being shielded. It will increase because of unemployment, because of worse diet, worse exercise and worse mental health. There will be more people heading towards shielding, so it is a dynamic thing. The word "dynamic" is maybe not the right word. It will change and change and change.
- I'm on a number of committees and boards and various things and everybody's gone to digital and it's working really well. When I've said, 'so I assume we're going to keep doing this because it would be so much easier, the response I'm getting back from people is very much, "We will go and meet in a room and you can just virtually Zoom in, that will be fine."
- I don't want to be the only person Zooming in. Because actually it is not an equal situation. It is really hard when you are on the computer at the corner of the table to feel an equal part of a meeting, whereas the situations I'm experiencing now with everybody having to do that feel much more equal to me.
- There is an issue around digital access where people who don't have good internet.

What are the problems or an organisation could conceivably solve? What is massive and societal?

- the fact that the internet needs to be a public utility is massive and societal.
- if people are doing good access work, then helping people navigate online space should actually be something that is part of that. How do we push this into mainstream practice so that it is just part of working culture?
- We should be showing off about the goodness of it [access]. It is not oh, those poor people, we are letting them in from the kindness of our hearts. We should be clear about the artistic bigness of it, you know. Everyone would want it and it would happen.
- Some of the things I join at the moment, the organisation is almost saying they have captions or something with big trumpets and then they kind of feel very, very happy about that and then I just wish and I hope that every organisation, whether they're disabled organisations or deaf organisations or whatever they are will just always ask the question. Like, it could be something that just happens, you know, like breathing in and out! That would be so nice! I guess it is a little bit idealistic.
- I have spent the last two years trying to get out of the house. What makes it really hilarious is I think I'd managed it, you know! And I was on trains and zipping about all over the country and it was really a merry old time and then... he-he... this happened! I don't know about anybody else but I'm not imagining that I'll be leaving the house for work or anything for the rest of the year?

- I live with three house mates and they have work and they leave, so my capacity to shield is incredibly limited.
- You have to choose the risks you take.

Sensory theatre

- I've been working in sensory theatre - that kind of theatre is even more difficult to imagine happening, due to the closeness needed. If I imagine the tour last year and then trying to imagine it working with people who won't understand social distancing - it is such a huge barrier now.
- What about companies who are focusing on this target audience? My worry is that they're going to get forgotten because all of the money in the system will go on keeping things open or opening things, or something where they can demonstrate an economic value.

Online music sessions

- I did my first online music sessions today with people with profound and multiple learning disability. I did live music sessions with a captioner and I just thought it would be nice to tell you something positive because the captioner that I worked with, she described the sounds of music so vividly, it was like word painting, like magicalism. And we could do it. It wasn't like being in the same room, but it really did work, you know, in a live capacity.
- There was so much movement, physical movement from the people and really, nobody could stay still. I couldn't stay still, you know. We were constantly moving! I'm in a wheelchair and I was wheeling in and out of the screen and I would wheel in with a different instrument and come back out with another one! Yeah, it was just... it was... you know like one of the few feelings of spontaneous joy I think in the last ten weeks that I might be able to salvage something.

How do we be gently realistic going forwards?

- I'm not great at (a) being gentle or (b) being realistic.
- I keep wondering this. Partly in the context of the money question. If there's just money nowhere and access and disabled artists and disability arts becomes less of a priority for people with platforms and for funders. I keep asking myself and it's a question that really hurts because I spent a long time getting to the point where I could get money for doing what I'm doing but I keep asking myself if I need to go back to doing this work for free. It's a really hard future to think about.
- I think there will always be money in the system. I think if we're too gentle now, we won't get it. I want to start asking questions now of the system to ensure that doesn't happen and you don't have to make those types of choices.
- It's so hard to keep positive and to simultaneously plan for a whole load of scenarios that we don't know, some of which are really negative.
- I keep wondering is there a hybrid model that lets people have the liveness thing that we're all so into, who can have that, but that also insists that every one of these performances in a park also needs to be live streamed and on YouTube and this must be an access measure going forward. That every season must have artwork that is made by shielded artists that exists wholly digital and that regardless of what happens we incorporate this moment into how we do art going forward.
- There's a challenge in that in stopping the digital from becoming secondary to an in-person gathering. But I think that there's a need for more people to do some of the work you are talking about there, and think about risk and planning ahead. That

if movement and mobility are going to be restricted in different ways for different people at different times going forward as an area of the country has restrictions as a group of people are made to isolate, then people need to have thought through in their plans for how to share any work that they're going to be able to create. What happens if they aren't able, as performers, to visit a place that they had planned? What happens if their audience is not able to visit the place where it is supposed to have taken place? And in just thinking through some of those alternatives, I think there's opportunities.

- 2.2 million were shielded. One in three people have a long-term condition. It is going to increase with the recession and as people get older.
- I think we should be ambitious and bold because whatever we move towards - we've got to be ambitious because even if you are going to get half of what you want so you better ask twice for what you need so you end up with the right amount. We have to be bold and ambitious and grab as much as we can.

Does there need to be a group for shielding people?

- Do you mean for advocacy or for connection or both or something else I haven't thought of?
- There are quite a few people in a Facebook group called The Bunker. It's not only shielding people; it's a lot of disabled people who have fought to get on the list or get off the list, or get shopping or kind of whatever. But there are definitely online groups. I'm in a couple of online groups with other people who are shielding and I have found them useful for solidarity and also knowledge as well.
- There is a group of disabled artists, companies and inclusive companies called We Shall Not Be Removed.
- You find out about them because other people you know are in them. You find out about them because you read about them.

Has anyone else fallen through HMRC's self employment income support cracks? (portfolio career)

Session Convener: Kay Michael

Participant names: Steph Clarke, Will, Aimee

We shared our frustrations at being 'forgotten' and unfairly made ineligible. Talked about the process of appealing and wondering if there is any larger lobbying or campaign taking place for our voices to be heard and for the eligibility to be amended?

Steph spoke of how she was only recently SE (17months!) - although she has submitted an 18/19 tax return, as she started SE towards the end of the tax year, it is overridden by the PAYE work carried out that same year before choosing to go freelance and Kay spoke of how HMRC only seemed to take into account her tax return of 18-19 when she was predominantly PAYE. Waiting it out... This rule that 50% or more of work should be from a SE source leaves gaps for many in the creative industries.

Will and Aimee both expressed that they have only recently gone freelance and left PAYE jobs to follow their career path into acting and theatre making and so are unable to be furloughed nor benefit from SEISS. Amy has been able to pick up some online teaching as she has a background in teaching but the market is very saturated and the concern is that this work will dry up once the schools go back.

We discussed feeling "lucky/privileged" if we have savings to fall back upon but at the same time it's also unfair that others are being helped, frustrated to be in a difficult situation through no fault of your own and left out and ignored by government and support networks.

Will is frustrated that he feels like he has exhausted all options and there are no more options available. Steph mentioned the ESA New style jobseekers allowance which may be available to those new to self employment who have lost work and are job-seeking and have been working PAYE in the past 3 years to have built up their national insurance contributions. It is worth looking into this on the .gov website.

Frustration expressed that income loss has been further impacted due to the seasonal nature of work for festivals meaning that having had low-0 amounts of work in the winter months and relying upon working 100% capacity in the spring and summer months and 6 months of solid work booked collapsed overnight. There is a concern that once things do begin to take off again that freelancers will be the last to be helped (particularly freelance producers) as it is natural that companies will want to look after their own in-house staff first.

Nice to feel that we are in the same boat with others as before the session we didn't know of any others in our position and felt cast aside.

How can theatre makers gain access to venues & other unused resources during this time?

Session Convener: Bonnie Adair

Participant names: Gem Brockis, Eliot Guira Larocca, Josie, Daxter, Elayce Ismail, Adna, Helen Mugridge, Carolyn, Juliet, Tony Bell, Tarek, Helen Tensen, Mado Ehenborg , Cheryl Prince

There was an initial conversation about theatre makers and freelancers not getting responses from venues during this time, probably due to the majority of venue staff being furloughed and needing to respond day by day to a constantly changing situation, which could result in venues closing down.

Gem wanted to clarify whether we were just talking about utilising physical space or other resources too. She felt it was important for freelancers to be able to help venues by being part of the difficult conversations that they were currently having, and offering creative solutions to the problems that venues are currently facing.

Bonnie suggested a system (similar to property guardianship) where artists could utilise the rehearsal/performance spaces for writing/developing new work whilst venues were empty and/or unable to have audiences in.

THE ADOPT AN ARTIST SCHEME

Whereby each venue could commit to adopting a certain number of artists (whatever they can manage)

They could offer a skill swap or resource share

Freelancers could offer work in progress showings/readings of new work to be shared with the venue's audiences, who are keen to see work from the venue

Or offer social media/fund raising support in exchange for use of space to create work

Clare suggested that Proteus Theatre were already part of a system, whereby they were given space (in local unused offices) that could then be gifted to artists for rehearsal/R&D

Laura made some useful points from a venue perspective:

- Important for Theatre makers and venues to have these discussions together

- We are organisations beyond our walls

- We all need to reimagine the new

- Some venues are already doing town hall meetings

Venues may be unlikely to be able to offer space until they have put relevant measures in place to ensure environments are safe during the health crisis, and the situation is constantly changing. Conversations are vital during this time to keep levels of consistent understanding between everyone in our sector, and how we rebuild together to become stronger.

Tony wanted to know if it was practical to create a group of freelancers to get in touch with venues about collaborating during this time

Bonnie suggested an open letter to venues which could be sent individually but also shared widely on social media so that venues could choose to engage and begin a conversation with us. Also suggested approaching STAMP

Tarek said from a venue's perspective, his first question would be:

- How do we make sure this is representative?

OPEN LETTER

Dear Arts Organisations and Venues,

This letter has come about, following an Open Space event, "Time For Repair" created by Improbable to allow us to come together and "To dream about and design the kind of sector that could emerge from this pandemic." During these unprecedented times, where our theatres are struggling to survive and the arts are suffering, it is more important than ever, that we use this as an opportunity to re-

imagine our theatrical and creative landscape. We know that art organisations are juggling furloughed staff, with the financial implications of staying closed indefinitely and the lack of certainty about the future. As freelancers we would love to help; to be part of these conversations; to collaborate; to create and inspire and envision; put simply, to do what we do best.

Here are some suggestions; ways of starting to move forward together (rather than separately)

Open online conversations between venues and freelance creatives (via Zoom or a similar platform that is accessible to everyone, including BSL & another necessary support structures). We are aware that some are already happening. Could there be more? How do we ensure that these conversations are open to everyone?

Adopt An Artist/Connect With A Creative scheme

Are you able to continue schemes in this time connecting to freelancers you don't already know? Is this happening already? And how do freelancers find out about schemes currently in place?

The Connect With A Creative concept, would be a scheme set up by a community of freelancers, to increase ease of conversation between arts organisations and freelancers during this period of stretched resources.

It might be that an arts organisation or venue can only commit to connecting with one or two creatives, or maybe they could commit to connecting with more, but if every venue/arts org did this, the results would be incredible.

The purpose of this scheme is to create a meaningful and fulfilling connection between arts organisations, venues and creatives and could take many different forms. Here are some suggestions below:

A skill swap

Mentorship

1 to 1 session with a staff member

Access to an online resource share

Access to a space to create

Freelancers have a wealth of skill and knowledge, and currently, time. We want to offer this in support of the venues we so dearly love. We know that a lot of venues have huge financial concerns, but what if we set this scheme up as a share or swap? Creatives could be part of solution driven conversations about the future and support venues during this time of uncertainty. We imagine it is likely that creatives will be able to utilise empty rehearsal spaces before audiences return to theatres. Are there conversations we could be having now about that? Where is this happening already? By giving creatives time and space to create, they in return, can offer venue's filmed work in progress showings/readings of new work to be shared with the venue's audiences, who are keen to see work from the venue. Where can the huge resources offered by freelancers be used in exchange for space, while venue resources and time are limited? How can we help each other?. A scheme such as this, could be a profound way of re-building and expanding our networks and pulling together at a time when we are all so isolated from one another.

Post Covid, it would be nice to envisage a time where the venue/artists conversation is more about what we achieve together rather than frustrations. We should not be

seen as so different. We all have the same aims - to create and present brilliant work, that grows audiences. It feels vital to ensure that the future eradicates 'gate keeping' for the better, to encourage and celebrate new and diverse voices. How might we do this together?

We would welcome your input into this conversation. If you are a freelancer or venue who would like to be a part of this warmly collaborative re-imagining of the future of Theatre, please get in touch

White People Working In Theatre: What Are We Doing About White Supremacy

Session Convener: Alex Eisenberg

Participant names: Megan, Annie, Tassos, Degna, Julia, Rachael, Abigail, Lydia, Paul, Alex, Claire, Lee, Philip, Adrienne, Claire, Tarek, Catherine, Depi, Edie, Ellie, Patricia, Rachel - loads more!! 48 participants on and off

If you want to work on this issue more see the RESOURCES further down in the report.

Alex opened the conversation - feels this is the conversation we need to be having right now. Not asking friends/peers/colleagues of colour to do work on the behalf of white people. How to do the work and address white privilege and white supremacy in all the systems we work within. This work starts with looking at yourself and reflecting on how I/you have benefited from white supremacy.

Megan speaking from Buffalo in the US. It's been intense. Working in wellness - decolonising the wellness industry. Decolonising theatre feels the same challenge. Notices trepidation in white people to talk. Open Space developed to make this kind of space. Notice the interactions - micro and macro - where you have opportunities to do the work. Sometimes hard conversations. Vulnerability of "we're going to mess up". Not letting that stop white people doing the work.

Catherine - Theatre is a very white space especially backstage. Strides towards representation onstage, but from the perspective of working in costume - it's very white and middle-class. We need to address these barriers. Not enough real work being done in buildings across the eco-system. People have conversations and talk about it, but we're not seeing change. Need commitment to making change.

Request for definitions of anti racism and white supremacy. Need for shared baseline of definitions.

Shared in chat: "anti-racism /anti'reɪsɪz(ə)m/ noun. AE notes here that this request is part of the dynamic of white supremacy which defers looking at these things. It is VERY easy to google definitions. What makes someone ask for help rather than doing the work themselves?

1. the policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.

White supremacy, to me, would refer to the dominant and harmful power systems (seen and unseen) in place that benefit the dominant class."

Patricia Miller, San Francisco boosting the signal for a theatre making/culture changing group in the US called We Charge Genocide.TV. and Every 28 hours. org Some of the terms white folks might encounter might feel challenging like white supremacy, genocide, fragility need to be faced, despite any discomfort. We need to recognize the emotions that come up and still come to the space and do the work. I am grateful to see so many people in this conversation.

AE wants to recognize that emotions come up and stay in the difficult conversations. Links in the chat.

Abigail - Leeds 2023 - led by Kully Thiarai, and diverse board. Feels hard to influence on a national / governmental level. So decided to focus on region and local area. What change can we catalyse / be part of here? Positive story of female leadership of colour in Leeds's cultural sector. Working on telling these stories. Telling positive stories to drown out negative stories. Work on unconscious bias. Training available for teams / organisations.

Stephen - A lot of information drawn from years and years of experience available. White people are starting to wake up to centuries of racism and abuse. We need to make sure we're doing everything we can, and every action we can, to be better allies. We need to listen to other black voices and educate ourselves. We've just started to wake up and need to think about what interventions we can do. Now is the time to make the most of this opportunity to change perceptions. We need to hire black people. Give them work and that will change us for the better as well.

Sophia - People who are offering jobs, producing shows, events, festivals, or have any kind of company, in or out of theatre- show the blank space if you don't manage to recruit a representative and inclusive team, be it performer, technician, admin person, vendor, host.... For every role that you intend to fill with a non-white and/or differently abled body but fail due to lack of access to these positions by those people, leave those positions empty and deal with the reality of missing those people in your team. Leave the stage empty and silent where the acts you couldn't hire should be, only rig part of the sound system, leave blank spaces where food or craft stalls from different communities should be, blank spaces in the programmes, and silence when the line spoken should be said by a different voice . Don't hide the absence of this inclusion. Do not succumb to the ease of placing a white, able body there if it is meant for someone else. Make it a conscious (visible) act, do not advertise this choice ahead of time as a specific twist/angle on your show/event etc. Inform your public, clients etc, once they are there, by notices, or simple announcements. Show where there is space and how much our society has made these spaces difficult to fill, whether it was due to inefficient outreach strategies on the recruitment end or lack of opportunity given to people with protected characteristics throughout their lives. If you are not a decision maker within an organisation, advocate for this action and take a risk by speaking up about the default settings and habits, participate, even if it is not your job title, in the outreach to fill those gaps, and consider confronting management and leaving/losing your job when not enough is being done by the organisation.

Degna - What does it mean to be anti-racist beyond putting out a social media statement of solidarity? "What is it I'm not seeing? What is it I'm not doing?" - if people in positions of power/privilege aren't asking themselves this then nothing will change. Recommendation of Citizen and American Lyric - accumulation of micro aggressions. We need to look beyond our sector. We need to look to education, media - the stories our children are told - we're not using the right words. Moving slave > enslaved. Fundamental shift. IT's not something those people were, it's was something done to them.

Annie - when I say 'we' who am I meaning. when I say 'you' who do I mean? Megan was talking earlier aabout trepidation, worrying about what you should be doing .

Alex - how do we notice the white supremacy that is in the very language that we use.

Annie - there's a tendency that as soon as somethign seems awkward or difficult, there's a backing out. I've felt very strongly this week that there is no excuse for silence.

Alex - we've felt that awkwardness and when race comes out - noticing that. How do we say something that is awkward and STAY THERE?

Sophia - The language point... The stumbling point comes in part from the partial/total awareness that our language habits reflect white supremacy, as Annie just brought up. We stumble like people learning a new way of expressing ourselves... perhaps

Megan - when we're talking about concrete actions e.g. Concious Kid. 50 page research paper about the harmful effects of Dr Seuss. Where does the implicit racial bias stem from? Bring into the space the connection of bodies of work to white supremacy.

How about introducing a race charter for the theatre sector? Other sectors doing it eg Something like this:<https://www.bitc.org.uk/race/>

Lydia - Action - today home schooling children - talking about children about black history. Have always taken action. But it made me aware how woefully I was missing big chunks of black history. Realisation that first job is to educate myself. Make sure I educate my children better than I was.

Aimee - Schools are often scared to meaningfully talk about race. Need for things to be done better. How can we garner this momentum to make real impact? How to bring different home cultures into the school experience. What can we do within our families and our sector?

Mark - Lots of brilliant books and articles. Sometimes it feels overwhelming, but I don't think that's a bad thing. I learn best via discussion, looking at material with people. How can buildings get behind things? Can they pay for people to hold spaces for people to do this talking, discussion, work.

Alex - Me and White Supremacy - 28 Day Programme. Guidance on how to run it as a group. Interested in setting this up as a group. Will share info via this. We can self-organise, but yes - venues could also take the lead.

Degna - I should mention that Eclipse Theatre have been and are doing work to increase representation and meaningful change.

Angelique - Blow the idea of safe spaces out of the water. Need for spaces that are ongoing to have the time to become safe / vulnerable. When you're not in a safe space, does the conversation die? In the US right now, that's not safe.

Alex - if we can make space for this base level work, that can create a foundation to go out. Turning up to this conversation is a start. Long term commitment ahead this is life long work.

Degna - Addressing that fear / feeling of inadequacy that can exist in white people in relation to their action/inaction. As long as you're doing everything you can do. Feeling you're doing your best. Does that help address the feeling of frustration?

Alex - thank you to everyone. Our thoughts are with the protesters. And everyone who is oppressed by racism and other oppressions in the world.

Recommendations for reading links shared in the chat:

This is a great list of resources compiled in May 2020:
<http://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES>

Other suggestions:

Citizen and American Lyric by Claudia Rankine - accumulation of micro aggressions.

Me and White Supremacy (By Layla Saad)

White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo

"The Great Unlearn" by Rachel Cargyle

How to be Anti-racist by Ibra X. Kendi

There's also a 7 day selective "Muting" on IG right now, voluntarily muting your social media spaces to #amplifymelanatedvoices until June 7, sharing content/work and the voices of BIPOC

Here is a capture of the chat which accompanied the discussion:

From Pauline : Can we have the definitions of white supremacy and anti racism?

10:39:16 From megancall : anti-racism

/antɪ'reɪsɪz(ə)m/

noun

1.

the policy or practice of opposing racism and promoting racial tolerance.

10:39:18 From PatriciaMillerSF : Thank you for this Alex and Megan. I would like to invite us to use chat

10:39:18 From Alex Eisenberg : i suggest you google

10:40:14 From Pauline : I think it would be a good idea to have a baseline understanding for us all, people often have different definitions of the same words

10:42:25 From Pauline : @megancall thank you

10:42:27 From megancall : White supremacy, to me, would refer to the dominant and harmful power systems (seen and unseen) in place that benefit the dominant class.

10:43:29 From Alex Eisenberg : please share all links in the chat

10:43:44 From megancall : Me and White Supremacy (By Layla Saad) is fantastic for this beginning this work.

10:43:59 From Kat Bridge : Yes agree - doing the 28 day plan is a must for everyone

10:44:18 From Alex Eisenberg : White Fragility by Robin DiAngelo is a key book

10:45:29 From Catherine Kodicek : what's the 28 day plan?

10:45:53 From Alex Eisenberg : its a process explained in the Book Me and White Supremacy

10:46:04 From Alex Eisenberg : also available as a free pdf online

10:46:06 From Catherine Kodicek : White Fragility is a must read - I learned so much from this - especially how to have difficult conversations

10:46:06 From megancall : That's part of the "Me and White Supremacy" book. It started 2 years ago this month. Layla led a 28 day challenge on Instagram with daily prompts for unpacking our complicity and part in White supremacy

10:46:09 From megancall : it's no longer free

10:46:15 From megancall : You must buy the book/pay for her labor.

10:46:23 From Alex Eisenberg : yes good point!

10:46:32 From Catherine Kodicek : Thanks Megan - will buy it

10:46:40 From megancall : For those who don't know, it's very important to pay BIPOC for the work they have put out :)

10:47:07 From megancall : There's also "The Great Unlearn" by Rachel Cargyle

10:47:15 From Stephen Collins : how to be antiracist by Ibra X. kendi

10:48:16 From Stephen Collins : here are lot of instragram account that you can look up

10:48:33 From megancall : There's also a 7 day selective "Muting" on IG right now, voluntarily muting your social media spaces to #amplifymelanatedvoices until June 7, sharing content/work and the voices of BIPOC

10:48:44 From Liv : My WIFI is poor, but I have very recently realised how little I was aware of the presence of structural racism still in our society. I thought it was enough to just believe that I was anti-racist, and now I realise that it's far from enough. It's our moral duty to educate ourselves and use our white privilege to make other voices heard. How can we create safe spaces for discussion?

10:49:02 From beckyplot : Most books mentioned above and more are in this very useful list of resources here: <http://bit.ly/ANTIRACISMRESOURCES>

10:49:41 From megancall : In solidarity with the movement offered by @blackandembodied and @jessicawilson.msrd I won't be posting anything this week but will be sharing the content and stories of BIPOC. #amplifymelanatedvoices #blacklivesmatter

10:50:40 From megancall : Would be wonderful to help spread this work globally if folks could join. Today is also #Blackouttuesday

10:51:23 From megancall : Showing Up for Racial Justice is another great organization to get involved in, not sure if it has international chapters but I'm friends with the executive director of the National Branch in the US

10:52:30 From megancall : LOVE that Annie.

10:52:53 From PatriciaMillerSF : Dr Robin DiAngelo author of White Fragility is holding a workshop Education for Racial Equity fundraiser https://www.eventbrite.com/e/healing-the-racial-water-a-virtual-half-day-with-dr-robin-diangelo-tickets-107234481220?fbclid=IwAR0zvQ69nACml6o406Qj_YQC14KucZG5libu05_QGJw1M2EUCy8afd94QRc

10:54:33 From Angelique2 : Totally agree, Stephen!

10:55:17 From AbigailSP : As well as unconscious bias training, we also used our organisational values at JRF as a framework for staff behaviours so there was a formal process/framework in place for tackling racist/sexist/homophobic etc behaviour in the work place

10:55:29 From Alex Eisenberg : Can every one please MUTE if you are not talking...

10:58:21 From AbigailSP : Targeting mentoring schemes like Arts Emergency for jobs in the sector could help <https://arts-emergency.org/about-us/>

10:59:17 From Stephen Collins : there is lot of uncertainty because of lack of understanding of oneself towards specific people

11:00:55 From megancall : claudia rankin, an American lyric

11:01:17 From PatriciaMillerSF : <https://www.amazon.com/Citizen-American-Lyric-Claudia-Rankine/dp/1555976905>

11:01:52 From megancall : <https://medium.com/equality-includes-you/what-white-people-can-do-for-racial-justice-f2d18b0e0234>

11:02:08 From Catherine Kodicek : thank you Degna

11:02:16 From Tassos Stevens : thank you for everything here

11:02:58 From megancall : No white saviors is another great IG, conscious kid too

11:03:05 From megancall : Sassy Latte too

11:03:18 From Adrienne : Thanks i look forward to reading

11:03:24 From PatriciaMillerSF : Thank you for your work Annie

11:03:29 From Sophia Knox-Miller : Thank you for note taking annie <3

11:04:48 From megancall : Yes thank you :) are the notes from the chat making their way in too?

11:06:22 From Alex Eisenberg : conscious kid is great!

11:06:41 From PatriciaMillerSF : Does anyone know if the chat will travel to the notes. Can they be copied and pasted into the notes. Any ideas/

11:06:45 From Kat Bridge : Yes to conscious kid

11:07:01 From AbigailSP : How about introducing a race charter for the theatre sector? Other sectors doing it eg Something like this: <https://www.bitc.org.uk/race/>

11:07:14 From Sophia Knox-Miller : The language point... The stumbling point comes in part from the partial/total awareness that our language habits reflect white supremacy, as Annie just brought up. We stumble like people learning a new way of expressing ourselves... perhaps

11:07:22 From Annie Rigby : Have been trying to cut and paste recommendations and key points from chat into the notes. But if there's anything you notice is missing, do add it in!

11:08:02 From AbigailSP : I've been working with Runnymede Trust on how to communicate effectively about race equality in this country - so hopefully there will be some insight there that can help our communications

11:08:06 From PatriciaMillerSF : Thanks Annie you are amazing

11:09:06 From megancall : Yes thank you Annie! I missed the intro of where the notes are if someone could point me there?

11:09:10 From PatriciaMillerSF : I am not your negro James Baldwin documentary

11:09:34 From AbigailSP : <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/projects-and-publications/parliament/reframing-race.html>

11:09:39 From megancall : And thank you Lydia. Sassy Latte is hosting a FREE conference about talking about these topics with your children next Wednesday at 7pm EDT, which I know is on the later side for UK friends

11:09:43 From PatriciaMillerSF : <https://www.americantheatre.org/.../the-ground-on-which.../>

11:09:55 From Sophie Flack : I don't know how to phrase this so sorry if it is not coherent, I guess it is a half-formed thought. I feel that a large part of activism or call to action that I am exposed to is online or predicated from social media. I think going back to the feeling of trepidation around action (as a white person) is that you can mean well and you can put yourselves out there and try and unfortunately others are quick to say it isn't enough or what you are doing is counter productive. I don't know, just sharing a frustration!

11:10:08 From Alex Eisenberg : not learning about racism and its history is a major part of white supremacy

11:10:26 From Stephen Collins : we could challenge the school system to make sure important black history/novels are taught in schools. The British history in UK is shocking - so much is missing

11:11:14 From AbigailSP : It would be great to see performing arts sector collaborate in this work <https://popcollab.org/about-us/>

11:11:28 From Lydia Wharf : If it's not in the learning curriculum, perhaps there's a really meaningful role for the arts and theatre

11:11:36 From Alice Mary Cooper : @privilegecafe_ on twitter is a safe space to also discuss white privilege. Run by a great young woman Mymuna Soleman. Weekly events are announced on her twitter feed.

11:12:15 From Alex Eisenberg : about 5 mins left everyone...

11:12:25 From megancall : perhaps we can share IG handles in the contact sheet? For those who want to stay connected to do this work? I'd be VERY interested in that

11:14:01 From megancall : I'd be interested in that group Alex.

11:14:09 From PatriciaMillerSF : <https://www.every28hoursplays.org/>

11:14:10 From Degna : I should mention that Eclipse Theatre have been and are doing work to increase representation and meaningful change.

11:14:14 From Stephen Collins : we have to keep this going after 28 days

11:14:26 From megancall : Absolutely. Thank you ALL so much for being here.

11:14:46 From PatriciaMillerSF : Please check out this theatre response

11:14:49 From PatriciaMillerSF : <https://www.every28hoursplays.org/>

11:15:02 From Stephen Collins : there is nothing to thank. we don't deserve the thank - we have to do the work

11:15:20 From megancall : If anyone wants to discuss this as it pertains to children, I was going to bring that up in my second session, which I'm going to go to, to host very soon.

11:15:39 From Col Grenfell : Thank you for this everyone -

11:15:45 From megancall : Agreed Stephen

11:16:24 From PatriciaMillerSF : It is about people : hiring, micro aggressions, taking responsibility and its about re centering the narratives that are acceptable

11:17:13 From megancall : Also encouraging theaters and schools to add to their language an actual commitment to doing this work

11:17:39 From PatriciaMillerSF : Considered acceptable. Thats in the dramaturgical choices and reflecting systems impacted communities in theaters of all sizes and the academy

11:18:01 From Sophie Flack : Thanks Degna :)

11:18:21 From megancall : Yes thank you Degna.

11:18:29 From AbigailSP : Thanks everyone - I'm a newbie in this sector so thanks for being welcoming

11:19:08 From Steph Clarke : Re: Children - I had a totally enlightening experience at the International Slavery Museum in Liverpool last year (and was wholly embarrassed how little I knew) It looks like they have some online resources, which could be useful.

11:19:18 From Alex_James : x

11:19:29 From Alice Mary Cooper : thanks

11:19:37 From megancall : I'll save it as well

11:19:49 From Steph Clarke : Three dots in the chat - Save chat

Theatre in Real 3-D Space, even now (Emerie)

Session Convener: Emerie Snyder

Participant names: Atrix, Nicky Blackwell, John-Michael, EdieE, Anda, Jessie Anand

Big Question: If theatre's essence is that audience & performers share physical space and breathe the same air, how do we still make theatre in a time when we have to stay at a distance from each other?

Projects/references discussed during session:

- front-garden puppet shows
- QR-code audio exploration of a city space (see: <http://ericdickson.net/whoisthethird>)
- multi-form collaboration, translation between forms (see: <http://telephone.satellitecollective.org/> and join here: <https://phonebook.gallery/>)
- family treasure hunt in a neighborhood

Possible approaches, brainstorm ideas:

- the idea of the hyper-local (theatre just for the local neighborhood)
- Doing work in gardens or outside spaces. Theatres have become too big, too inscesable, too irrelevant (terrible spelling probs)

- story as game, unfolding through spaces -- a mixed set of instructions for participants, who might be both performers and audience at the same time
- Connecting the separate embodied spaces that each of us are in... e.g. all of us looking at the same sky
- using local community spaces - streets, tower blocks, and parks
- Performer/audience as same - creating depth.
- Combination of online & physical world through interactive websites, QR codes etc
- Geocaching
- There's an emerging theatre movement called 'post-immersive', which promotes this idea of audience becoming a player

Audience Activity:

Where the audience is asked to partake in a physical activity either in conjunction with or in direct response to the performance. This could be drawing, writing, playing an instrument or simply going outside to look at the sky. This allows the audience member to actualize the performance. Sense they are not experiencing the physical activity of sitting in a theatre seat, using the toilet with the other audience members and or the simple act of entering and exiting the theatre, these activities allow some form of physical connection. They can be used in a more specific way if desired. For example: A piece about the ocean could be accompanied by a shower or bath, or even watched while in the bath. The possibilities are endless and assembly is exchanged for more intimate experiences. It doesn't get more intimate than your own bathtub.

Idea for a live online show... playing around with the different levels of reality. "the actor sitting at their computer pushing at their keyboard in a lazy way....maybe wearing a crown and drinking wine. They are playing the queen of course and this sneak peak into their home only lasts moments before the zoom meeting ends and everyone is taken back into Hubs." (a 3D environment) This brief moment in the actors room creates stakes for the actor as well as the audience members. The audience is forced to put themselves in their own rooms at the moments between the links connecting.

The New Abnormal: holding onto being there in intimacy, together, up close(Susan Croft)

Session Convener: Susan Croft

Participant names: Pippa, Dorothy Lawrence, Sharron Devine, Bronia1, ZJ iing, Donald H, Cheryl Prince, Elise Davison, Suzanne Daigle, Jessieanand, Natalie Scott,

Question came out of a blog post about the intimacy of theatre on Her Inside: Women in the Lockdown.It's at: <https://herinsidestories.wordpress.com/> It's also fundraising for 3 charities.

The intimacy of exchange with the actor and the audience.

Pippa - I am sat in a hopeful camp. Feel we will be desperate for reconnection after the lockdown ends. Amazing things come when things are tough. think there will be an appetite for real events after that.

Dorothy - perhaps we should look to education. The consensus among educators is that reote education is fine and has some merits, but it is no real substitute for the classroom. If we looked at theatre in the same way, then the need to share stories in embodied space will survive. Theatre can be viewed as an elitist art form (Idont think it is but the perception is a problem), unless we can make a case for it's relevance as part of the bedrock of a civilised society then many theatres will close. How can we put theatre into such a postition that there is an outcry if a theatre is shut down, just as there would be if a hospital is shut down or a school. Perhaps we should take theatre back into shools or bring a class of school children into a big theatre, socially distanced and share access to these wonderful spaces.

Suzanne from America ~ not in theatre but my heart is broken at the prospect of losing theatre in our lives. My hope is that perhaps theatre in the streets, and everywhere can be reinvented to inspire the improv of life in the context of the hard issues we are living. Perhaps it can ignite gratitude too. Thank you.
The liveness of theatre as vital. Holding onto that - meeting in the space as live beings

Sharron - I came up through grass roots, I went into theatre in education. I learnt my craft in shcools.

Sharron - overwhelming feelings to protect liveness and intamacy in all kinds of theatre and in my own one on one practice. (Human Specific Practice). Work that analyses the human condition. The Human Being is at the core of my work in this practice. To be live together, close, intimately in a space, I do not want to make socially distanced work in this practice. Don't feel that I can, it would change what my work in this area is. Would alter the depth and reach of the experience for me and my audience member.

For theatre's surival going forwards. Theatre in Education is crucial and important work for performers and young people. Make theatre a vital part of the school and education curriculum going forwards. Grassroots and communities neglected in parts of the UK. All vital to feed into Cities civic spaces and buildings. To build relationships between communities and theatres/cultural spaces. Must invest in the youth and the local communities.

Cheryl-Theatre fully embodied movement, physical intimacy so imortant, not want to be take it away
stories told via body

Bronia- story teller, a lot of work in schools, practice and intimacy and interaction with children; we create as a community of artists; how do we get more work in schools?

Importance of theatre inb education - responding in the moment to an intimate audience

Intimacy - what are the possibilities now in the new abnormal - with gloves, masks, sanitiser, 2 meters distance?

ZJ - Ling - came here on a fellowship. I am stuck here because of the lockdown. I am doing a fellowship and I came here as an observer. I work in the National Centre of Performing Arts in Beijing. I work as a production co ordinator for Operas. All the imported art forms - it should not be elite. We see a very diversified audience for our performances. I genuinely believe intimacy matters most. What is going on in China is that I have seen the gradual opening up of the venues. We are going to stage a large scale opera. 30% capacity.

I am going to have to leave soon, but am so inspired by the models of creativity and accessibility emerging from the digital tools but also very anxious about what is lost and especially when the digital model is cheaper and on certain levels more 'accessible'. So many of my key experiences are ones of theatre that was up close and personal

Dotty - what ZJ Ling says about Chinese model is something that can happen with subsidy but it cannot happen without that. An economic model that relies on Box Office is much more vulnerable.

Touch..

Elitism - based on economics in part? Reduced numbers of audience. Cost? I read a proposal from a UK venue director about theatre being free for all [not necessarily a free-for-all! ;:)))]

Didn't mean to knock or reduce online access as being incapable of generating feeling, just value the excitement of live collective experience. Don't miss it yet but it seems so vital...

Donald here in this colour code...

Nat - lab collective . The bath tub. An intimate immersive piece where audience member is in the bath tub and the interaction unfolds in this way. It was a live-streamed audio.

Sam - focusing on the body is a good idea. happening now. An event quality. I am hopeful that the more we are stuck to screens the more people want to see something live.

Theatre created presented experienced at varying levels of intimacy and maybe now via more means digital distanced. We'll adapt? 'Fight' for support, find audiences, be more inclusive...

A 'new' kind of theatre somehow both live and 'flat' digitalised - live created by me/us/in my environment alone or collectively but responding to the digital? (Listening to Tassos and all previous people...)

What can we trigger in audience? The experience will be even more different for each person, household than it might've been before - not just how perceived but received...

'collaborating with audiences' [Tassos]

So it's happening - in or out of bathtub or whatever the location...now contemporaneously.

Finding claiming space, going local [as opposed to loco!], 'encourage small shows for small audiences' (sam)

Drive-in theatre - plans afoot for this in the coming summer...

Not a new idea but the urgency relatively speaking of theatre or the benefit of using theatre performance etc to understand ourselves...

Using local networks which have grown out of Covid 19 support or people performing in the streets to entertain themselves and neighbours as a way of rebuilding an accessible community model of theatre.

But anxiety about Government orces trying to socially engineer out the arts as an area which people train for, because they do not see it as useful - or actively reject it as oppositional. But great to hear that Arts Council are challenging that with their new report: please put up the title

Emergency Exit Arts does a live webinar each week. Also Outdoor Arts Suzanne. create something - joyful for the spirit on some really heavy topics. Help people get out of their heads, learn and live improv. Be introduced to theatre. Their is a long for interaction and perhaps the acting community can invite and teach.

Esse - extension of accessibility.

Huge benefit of online performances but huge amount of loss too

Access to theatre is the fundamental right to people. Theatres should be subsidised more, enabling this access. There used to be

Tassos- screen experience,

On another level I am optimistic because theatre has always reinvented itself out of cultural pressures, possibilities, economic need to reach out. I document the alternative theatre movement of the 60s, 70s and 80s

at www.unfinishedhistoriies.com and there are some amazing inventive models there

Emergency Exit arts hold webinars. Ace Lets Create 2020 strategy is patching into the need for companies go into care homes, schools.

What does the future of actor training look like? (Liv)

Session Convener: Liv

Can you teach people to act using on line tools. Drama schools and universities are trying. But is it really possible? Do we not need to be in one room together ,SD of course?

I think organisations like the one I lead (The Actors Centre) should be responsive to the needs/wants of those who are about to enter the industry/sector, or those already working within it. Online might be one way, this won't / doesn't work for everyone.

Hi, this is Ragnar. This question is very intyeresting to me. I am teaching in NYC, both my own acting class and for a University. I decided to cancel my own class, as physical spaces were mandated to close. My university course I taugh online; it did not feel very successful. I also have an acting school with 2 colleagues in Hudson NY, the Michael Chekhov School; we are contemplating an online optopn for the summer, or whether we will keep the school closed for the time being. I would love to continue this conversation, but have to leave now. If someone wants to be in touch about this subject, you can reach me at ragnar.nyc@gmail.com or at: <https://michaelchekhovschool.org/contact/>. Also here is a recent short audio-article with contemplations on this theme" Absence of Theater": <https://vimeo.com/401047198> Greetings, Ragnar

how do we keep up with endless fast moving new technologies and which ones do we choose? (adrienne)

Session Convener: adrienne

No report.

as a sector, do we need a bill of rights for independent artists and freelancers? (Jenny Harris, she/her)

Session Convener: Jenny Harris

No report.

How can we have less geographically restrictive conversations beyond lockdown? (ie potentially online)

Session Convener:

Participant names:

No report.

What can larger arts organisations do to help amplify voices of smaller arts organisations and individual artists? (Madeleine Thorne)

Session Convener: Madeleine Thorne

Participant names: Kate Wyatt

Perspective of individual artists –how larger (and small) organisations could help:

Infrastructure

Someone to support you

Allows to speak with just one voice –stronger relationships

Question: Could role of “Associate Artist” be investigated and expanded?

This could include access to spaceswhen not used / resource access

Could be channel for emerging artists

Need clarity of what ‘Associate’ isand can be – not about money – can be so much more

Mentoring?

Wonderful opportunities that nowcan’t be used – young directors / creatives in emerging programmes / associates/ young artists programmes - what can we do for these people?

Training is possible while furloughed

How can we do coaching/ mentoring though this period / separate to our orgs – how can we set something up / match those who could support with those who have time – mentoring, or sounding boards for ideas, or general support

So many opportunities at the start of pandemic – overwhelming – offers have now died off and now it's needed, people have capacity to think

Question: could the impact negatively on freelancers who usually charge for this? Need to think carefully about when to be generous and knock on for others

Eco system of sector vital for all – everyone needs to survive this – how can we think differently / be radical / change our thinking to make sure all can be survived

.....

Social distancing in venues:

What happens in the gaps in between – if you can only have 500 people in 1000 seats / what is happening in those space seats? What are the symbiotic relationships that can be formed to develop artistic ideas for how we can use the seats? How can we use art to do these segregation? Rather than more formal (EG Berliner Ensemble) or for artistic signage?

How much more imaginatively and creatively we are all going to need to use space? E.g Fevered Sleep project on grief, designed for pop up shops in a high street or Baseless Fabric Theatre opera on high streets – how could collaboration help smaller orgs to thrive and larger orgs to maintain audiences? Collaboration important...

We should be turning to artists to lead on the problem solving

Amplifying the experience of Deaf and disabled artists - how can we acknowledge the experience and promote inclusive practices? (Lilac)

Session Convener: Lilac

Participant names: Kathryn, Aimee Corbett, gobscore, Pady, Sarah Brigham, Sonia Allori, Katie J Redstar, Gari, MG2, Ria Parry, Anna Carr, Rachel Drazek, Dimity Nicholls, Sheryll Holley STTR (Captioner), Hannah Q, Elise Davison, Ali Gordon, Jonny C

What do we know about the current experience of D/deaf and disabled artists during Covid 19?

Will we have to start all over again to build what we had before?

Feeling of grief and denial - looking to be gently realistic

Lawnmower- Arts org working with learning-disabled artists/ adults

We Shall Not Be Removed - Slack Group - Advocacy for D/deaf & disabled practitioners

GIFT Festival

Optimism- dreadful thing, and insecure, but we can find opportunities to move it forward that perhaps were taking too long before

Network- promote and actively work with, encourage collaboration with deaf and disabled artists is really important now.

Individual responsibilities- What'sApp group for deaf/ disabled artists? One way.. Is email the best way?

Looking Ahead- after lockdown. What do we need apart from money? How do we need to feel safe to move on?

Approaches to working remotely with adults with learning disabilities and drama (Aimee)

Session Convener: Aimee

Participant names:

If you have experience of doing this and or know an organisation that is, I would be grateful for pointers and a chat about different approaches. Thank you.

Loss and Mourning and the role of theatre

Session Convener: Charla Givans

Participant names: Pady Oconnor, Sam Butler, Liz Stanton NYC, Kate Alderton, Rupert Smith, Noelle Thompson, Claire Coache, Mandy F, Sharron Devine

At the start: I'm alone in the Jellyfish room; the room is apt for loss and mourning. The jelly like quality that mourning can bring...ah, I thought I was alone in the room until I heard sweet voices of hello. The room and people were hiding behind the notepad. Thinking I was alone when I wasn't. Seeing faces in the squares made me smile with tears.

I called this session to give space for loss and respond to it.

Sam, Fevered Sleep had been working on a piece on grief, which would have been up and running but can't exist because of the pandemic.

Where is the space for mourning for the people who have lost people?

We haven't finished losing people. for another 12 months ???

I want to respond to this topic as an artist. Where can we make this work if venues don't want to programme it.

Discussion about the potential that works focussing on distraction and happiness will surge when theatres open. How as artists and humans can we carve a space for making theatre that responds to the deep losses experienced by people on so many levels.

Do we need to make sure that the work that was being made at the time of Lockdown still gets produced? If so how can we do this?

Liz wants to gather a group in a big outdoor space. This group would make big sound to keen and lament. Liz and Sharron have a voice connection to maybe explore?

How can we keep the gap open between grief and back to the new normal so we can process the ongoing loss. This gap is where for me theatre sits - the space between what was and what is and what will unfold in the future. It feels important not to rush to forgetting and 'bouncing back' whatever that means. Bouncing back to what? Lives have changed. Life has changed. Much has been lost and there are fragments to be gathered together.

Loss and mourning having lots of layers - it may be a collective experience but there are many layers.

People experiencing loss of friends and family due to covid and the impact of that on us. Living alone during this.

Rupert asked us if we are writing about our experiences. He noted that he is writing about moments of beauty.

Sharron created a project where she asked people to share the sound of their voice during lockdown through various platforms - listening to the stories and voices. Independent artists and individuals feel isolated in our industry at the best of times. A need to connect and talk during this time.

Sharron - more flexibility and understanding between makers and venue's and spaces to find and feel our way out of all of this so we can rebuild what live means and safely for ourselves and our audiences. Unsure of what theatre and performance will look like in the future so we all need to remain open together working that out slowly.

Cheaper ways to make work will be required coming out of lockdown, one on one, promenade, site specific/outdoor. Social distance would be easier to build into these kinds of works and performances. DIY/Guerrilla

Pady-Spoke of not being able to be physically present in his work and adapting to this.

George Floyd.

Does the theatre industry need to speak as one voice? (Stuart Mullins)

Session Convener: Stuart Mullins

Participant names: catherine Kodicek, Atrix, mark Courtrice, Amanda Davey, julia Mucko Tony Bell, Adrienne

Stuart:

Big panic as Parliamentary Emergency committee was convened with the usual suspects invited to speak.

This is so often the case. The independent sector or community sector, which is invisible cos its not a building, remains unvoiced.

I've often thought the way sport is funded is a pot nail model. One organisation for grassroots and another for elite activity.

Atrix: important to have somewhere local to go into community arts
hyper local communities coming together unlike every before, something important to us all
what are those activities that happen
need someone that ensure that government ensure know what people need from community arts in a task force to promote a hyper local thing

If everyone in the arts was paid a genuine living wage, could have people working properly without donations, would need government to be complicit in that. could change this if enough people persuaded to point out its an ecosystem, TV, film, theatre feeds into this. If people outside of the employed bubble wanted to protect the freelance workforce got together and supported them, it could change for good. National living wage for all artists or all adult wage in the country.

proven that people with no income will pull together and will help out and make PPE etc.

I would love to see the community practitioners and freelancers to be represented in the committee for renewal.

If we share some ideas about important things then it is of these that we must speak with just as many voices as we can muster. There will be a big national conversation about what has gone wrong with our society after this crisis and the topic of what is wrong with funding, organisation and relationships in the arts are a topic that we must be able to be heard about. What we care about is more important than the voice with which we speak about it, be it local, large scale small scale, community or international.

The importance of the local. We can change things from the roots up.

Amanda- I think there is something about the language we use, is it accessible, does the 'person on the street' understand or care about the term arts and culture.

Whilst we are delivering art for free, or being creative during this time, what is the need to fund, there could be an implication that artists and creatives will do 'it' anyway.

It should always be about values / personal / community / organisational.

To come back to the title of the session, I think it is hard to speak with one voice, there are so many voices within the one - how are we all represented, will we have the opportunity to sit around the table, probably not - is there an economic value to what we do, what is the power that we hold, yes, strength in numbers but we are not all wanting the same outcome, which is what?

What does the ideal model look like?

Every public institution is in crises. Its time for a new beginning, but not one based on the old model.

History and this moment: How did we get here? (John-Michael)

Session Convener: John-Michael

Participant names: Dotty, John-Michael, Adna, BSL interpreter Grace, Dimity Nicholls, Don Youngberg, Emerie, jonathan Man, Karen interpreter, KDMC, Lee Corner, Nick S, Pauline, Philip Venable, Portland, Stephen Collins, Suzanne Daigle, Vanitas arts, Degna

We we, Brits, look at the US, we see the UK. That was us. Britain sold enslaved Africans to the Americas and grew rich doing it. Whole cities owe their wealth to the slave trade; some of Britain's grandest theatres -- Colston Hall for one -- were paid for with profits from the slave trade

Not only engaging with people of color as audience members and collaborators, but inviting them to the boards of arts organisations, thereby making ourselves answerable to them, making ourselves answer their questions, which we didn't think to ask ourselves.

wounds

Is South Africa a model? Yes, they held a Truth & Reconciliation Commission, but has there been reconciliation? Have there been reparations? What could reparations even look like on a societal level?

Jonathan - what's happening in the States is horrifying. I hope it's the end of celebrity culture (e.g. President of the US). It's awful to see what is happening. I'm here to listen.

J-M - How deep are the roots? How far back does the history go? How is this different from Ferguson, Rodney King, Civil Rights movement . Going back even further - what does it take to make change? The United States fought a civil war for four years; hundreds of thousands died, the president was assassinated, the Constitution was amended three times, and in a few years, slavery had returned in all but name. To make a change you need to find the origins.

What is meta-justice? Theoretically, practically.

Caromawer - It's not only about having conversations -

Emerie - (in Brooklyn) two police SUVs drove into a group of protestors. The concept of police in the US is part of the problem. Law and Order, power and enforcement. Encourages power trips rather than seeing people as human beings. How do we defund police? In a capitalist society do we need to focus on the money?

Dotty - policing by consent is a core principle of policing in the UK. Also all police have unconscious bias training

Dotty - Media representations - is this part of our responsibility as story makers.

Symptom and condition relationship there.
The police should stop looking like a fucking army.

Militarised police are a symptom; the absence of consent is an underlying condition. Both need addressing. Do we work inside-out or outside-in? (Yes, both!) Defunding the police, denying them military gear addresses the symptom; how to build trust and address the deeper conditions?

Dotty - there need to be more black leaders, more 'ethnic' leaders, more women.

Jonathan - we're failing on the most basic frameworks. Theatre of the oppressed Augusto Boal, pioneer. Migrant workers workshopped their stories, became unionised. in UK Cardboard Citizens. How do we practically support people within the system?

Adna - Forum Theatre and the theatre of the oppressed. This format could translate well to the online format. A useful vehicle for generating ideas and solutions to this crisis.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Oppressed

We need to raise our voices. There are lots of things to distract us. Things snap shut and this is one of those snaps.

Suzanne- from Florida, I live in the US. I am traumatise by what is happening in the US right now. I feel such a longing for some of the quiet people, of all nationalities to get together, to engage. I wish we were all on a conversation on Zoom right now, finding each other and talking freely. When I leave this meeting I will make some phone calls. Reaching out to ordinary people I know of different colors to co-host together. I feel a bit shell-shocked about what is happening now, but not surprised.

Patricia Miller, San Francisco, which is Ohlone lands. Its our practise amongst many of us is to name the indigenous lands we are living on. Its one technique of decolonized practise. The session one called Theatre and White Supremacy was very full and the notes are full of links to resources you can see. Thank you.

Discussion about absurdism vs radical embodied experience.

Ionesco, using absurdism to write about the rise of fascism and how we were complicit

it's only 400 years ago

The rise of fascism - every time these things happen there are lots of people on board and it keeps on happening.

Our world seems fragmented and I my attention span is ...I cant watch a movie. Does the moment want vivid, immediate, specific, unflinching theater? Or does an absurd critique give us the distance to reflect on the moment?

Or is escape the thing that people most want, that we can give them?

(The Adventures of Cavalier & Klay by Michael Chabon on the power of escape)

Dotty - I think as makers of work it is our job to find out what audiences are needing.....if we are

What is our responsibility to audiences?

What is our obligation to audiences? What is our responsibility in the long term? It seems to change moment to moment. As creators, we may feel a desire to approach the moment head on, to come at 'the sharp edges'. When is the moment for that? How do we listen to audiences?

Dotty - in terms of audiences I think it is our responsibility as makers to find out.

METAPHOR

(speaking to the issue of the moment without going at it directly --

transposition) Rather than writing specifically about an actual forensic event we need to find the metaphors that speak to the event.

How do you speak to what is happening now? Maybe its by finding a dream image - John-Michael

Suzanne - there are a lot of things that are messed up. What if the future we are moving into? We have so many things we need to speak to. Money. Who said that we had to be ruled by money. Shifting the conversation. A new future. The word Dream.

Can we transcend the moment. create micro moments of connection.

Covid has arisen as an impact of the ecological crisis - what if there will be more pandemics (which are likely)? How do we *adapt* potentially long-term? (Kay Michael, she/her - may not be able to attend but go ahead!)

Session Convener: Kay Michael
Participant names: Adna Sablyich

We had quite a fiery bond in this session over wine! Here are some notes I scribbled..

Subtitled: 'NO TEARS FOR THE CHANDELIERS'

We actually bared mentioned the climate&ecological emergency. I think we both operated under the knowledge that that is a fact. And so we nose-dived into the deep waters of the ROLE of theatre in this context and moving forward. It was quite a big dreaming space that we were really glad to have found each other in.

- Could we be so brave to ask: 'What if we don't need theatre?'
- How else could we offer our skills to wider society as collaborative, imaginative creative people?
- Can this moment be seen as a necessary dismantling of the ego of and within the sector?
- What about recognising we can DISMANTLE the *stage*! We broke the 4th wall years ago. What if this was an opportunity to go back to Greek roots of theatre as a democratic forum in the open space of the natural environment.. and served and reflected back the local community. No more theatre as pure commercialised entertainment - but a space for the *actual* community to *actually* come together.
- Perhaps we speak like this because we both feel we don't have much to 'lose'. We work on the edges of the sector.
- Started asking ourselves about our local and immediate communities - we shared experiences of our lockdown and how we've related to our local places and people. Adna spoke of families and children coming together to play and communally use the community garden on her estate. Whereas before it was just predominantly just her and her son. Now she's set up a whatsapp group for the mums in the area to arrange days in the garden together and creative theatrical activities for their children.
- We spoke of what we understand as theatre taking on different forms. ie how can we take the values and skillsets of it to create community and include as many people in this as possible?
- What if we occupied different spaces to bring local communities together? What if current theatre buildings unable to be open housed the homeless? (for example)
- What if we (society at large, ie not just limited to theatre!) were driven not by the market but of community and the values that underpin it?
- Adna spoke Z-UK's 'Post Immersive Theatre' Manifesto: <https://sci-hub.tw/https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14794713.2020.1766282>
"*Technology is not the Answer.*
*We should not care about **what** is immersive,*
*as much as we must care about **how** is immersive,*

*who is immersive by,
and who is it for?"*

- Adna also shared about a project she's initiated to bring together local kids in re-creating the story of Midsummer Night's Dream for this year's Solstice - through socially distant craft-making (hats, masks); audio book style storytelling for everyone to access; and free play time.

Bring It On.

If 'adaptation' to ongoing crises is to be found anywhere, it's in humility, individual and collective agency, reciprocity, local participation and engagement, and working with what we have rather than clinging on to the past and what was.

Also - everyone should read this blog, which draws the connecting line between the pandemic and the ecological emergency. It's vital reading. More pandemics will come. And any 'progress' we've made during this time in terms of a reduction in carbon emissions is a fraction of what's actually needed to keep our planet stable:
<https://medium.com/stories-of-extraction/pandemic-and-planetary-emergency-713d0af9f9d0>

Necessary reading on adaptation to climate change ('A Map for Navigating Climate Tragedy'), laying out that, according to the science, societal collapse is inevitable and soon (likely within this decade), catastrophe is likely and human extinction is possible (trigger warning):

<https://www.lifeworth.com/deepadaptation.pdf>

Rehearsing and making work safely in the time of covid-19 (Franciska Ery)

Session Convener: Franciska Ery

Participant names:

Franciska: the shared contract, sharing in a space between performers/makers and audience...rethink it?

what precautions should we be aware, what are the new rules of a physical creative space?

Helen: look to other industries? construction, for instance. 2 metres, handwashing, split groups.

Who with and where are you working? track and trace in place? many variables. [theatre, like life, made under new terms of adaptability]

who should do this, how should it happen?

create a live document, a living resource...

even boring things, like how do you access a venue, who's cleaning the venue, etc.

A real reciprocal responsibility to keep people safe across a given team...

Look at guidelines re speed to testing..

hospitality industry.

F: A live document [thumbs up]. Who could be policing this? New terms and contracts about transparency...

Intimacy, vulnerability of theatre-making. How to accommodate someone who might be struggling with the virus, shielding for someone...

H; It's down to the team. Open up that conversation with them so everyone is engaged. Distinction between project run by organisation versus smaller project.

F: What's the game-plan?...

Edy: In USA directors and choreographers union, Actors Equity says gonna develop guidelines, Dirs and choreogs say no, it's the organisations that must submit to the union of plan and how it fits into state and local guidelines. Who's going to be in charge to make sure there's PPE, Clorrox, etc training not SM or a director, etc. Hope, trust, that best practice will be shaken out. Shared guidelines amongst organisations unions etc that can be shared with smaller practicing entities.

Helen; Free-lance and indie makers need to feed int best practice because what's best p for large organisations etc may ne be as relevant for free-lance indies etc.

Sam: You can never really completely eliminate risk. Have to be a degree of personal responsibility. Transport to work would be more of a worry to me than a fairly controlled working environment.

Edy: Air systems in USA is another worry.

Helen: Have conversation with team in case you made need to move elsewhere. Where does it take place? Does it rehearse outside? It depends what you're doing, We need to think a little bit more outside of what we've been doing.

Elise: working remotely those who were shielding...Don't forget about what has moved us forward thus far. Talk to team, Don't make access requirements not be elephant in the room. If we wanna make peeps safe we have to place that responsibility with everyone.

Donald: We are doing an online prelude of a show we were meant to tour now. Next year we have a show but who knows what will happen - I need to make sure I am safe. It is about economics and reduced numbers, but theres so much that hasn't been discussed yet. There is an enormity of decision making but I am convinced there will be solutions. We shouldn't look at it as restrictions - there will be hoops we will jump through.

Gem: It's just a different set of limitations [now]. What are the most exciting things you can do within those limitations?

Edie: Applying creativity and flexibility to situations as they unfold. Have to shift and change as we go along.

F: How to make audiences be part of show is already starting to be addressed. But how to make a show is a grey area.

Quarantining an entire a company...rep theatre...!

How do we support children during this time? (Megan she/her)

Session Convenor: Megan

Participant names: Claire, Aimee, JonnyC, Joanne Petre, Degna, Dimity, Kat Bridge

We've been talking about the effect on children, both on a macro and micro level. In the UK, some schools, in a staggered way are going back to school and that's bringing up a whole load of questions too.

In the US schools are cancelled through the rest of the year.

What are the long term implications of this time period?
We shared some collective grief and processing.

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit by Judith Kerr
The Tiger who Came to Tea
10 year old reading it and asking lots of questions, I think she will find her way through this if I can support her.

Children are resilient. Maybe we need support.

Parents in the Performing Arts - advocating group
Mothers Who Make - support and action group

How do we create safety and security for them?

How do we find spaces for ourselves where we can share the burden of dealing with the current situation in a way that means we can be emotionally supportive of our children without scaring them? I'm not confident that we'll go back to a 'new normal' I think there are too many people invested in how the old system worked to let things change.

Rolo May, The Courage to Create, stretching until breaking.

Action?: Create a network where parents/carers can support each other

Children are important. But so are parents. Parents are inundated not only with ideas of how to help their children; but also what to do with their "spare time". As parents, we wish the theatre industry would recognise we have NO spare time.

Jonny C has kindly supplied the subtitle transcript from the point he joined the conversation:

NEW SPEAKER: This is a test. This is a test. This is a test.

NEW SPEAKER: This is a test. This is a test. I can't hear you, you are muted, Jonny. So welcome Jonny and Joanne, Claire can you still hear me?

NEW SPEAKER: I can. I just came in too.

NEW SPEAKER: Look at that, we came back from the loo and propagated. I was just thinking, well maybe it's time to go somewhere and some friends joined.

NEW SPEAKER: Hi, Jonny!

NEW SPEAKER: Hi, Jonny, hi, Joanne. Are you able to unmute? It's OK if you don't want to, that is OK too?

NEW SPEAKER: I've just put my daughter to bed so I'm a bit not with it.

NEW SPEAKER: We were just actually, I don't want to say lamenting or commiserating because it wasn't negative but relating about our experience as parents during all of this!

NEW SPEAKER: I've come here because I wasn't sure what the title was, are you talking about our children or children and young people?

NEW SPEAKER: I'm really talking about both. I was saying to Claire that I'm feeling a particular empathy towards the experience of children in general. Like we are having this collective experience globally during the pandemic. And now also with this recent protests and everything that is going on. So I've been like, one of the things that's been with me is that really with the exception I would think of the Jewish ghettos, even during wartime, children have been able to play with other children.

So just that stress of children being cut off from this outlet of play and then, you know, I firmly believe that children need their spirit received by many adults in order to really be healthy and so when they have like, in my case it's just me for the most part, so then they have one scattered distracted grumpy at times more than grumpy I would say, mom, and so I'm just wanting to have a dialogue about, as we are dreaming up like, my intuition says things are going to be this way for a while. So I don't feel like there is enough discourse and I think it's because we are almost scared to talk about it. Like I saw one article in the New York Times about the effect on Spanish children. Children in Spain were not even allowed to leave their home, they couldn't go out and walk, total lockdown.

I just feel like we have to have these discussions even if they are hard. Claire you were just sharing about kind of going to the antithesis about how maybe we wanted to parent or how we envisioned childhood for our children and there's the mourning of that and there's also the OK, how do we bring in play and connection and what are the opportunities, how do we do this? Especially long-term, now with the protesting I'm having my own anxiety about us going back on lockdown.

NEW SPEAKER: Sorry, it's the captions - protesting. Protesting. OK. OK. Sorry. Blame the captioner!

NEW SPEAKER: I can come in a minute.

NEW SPEAKER: How old are your children, Jonny?

NEW SPEAKER: So, I have, it's really important for me to come into a discussion because I too want to have a dialogue and I'm a freelancer as well and I'm deaf so I've got layers of barriers, a freelancer, being deaf and having two children so I've got one child who is ten weeks. Yes, ten weeks. And one child is three years. I've been asking all these questions, lots and lots of questions and it's bothering me. In the situation we are in, people are just banging on Zoom and doing this and doing this and doing this, and there is so much going on. It's a bit overwhelming for me, almost like I can't find the time to engage like I did before because obviously before I could just drop my daughter off to day care or wherever and of course, I'm not complaining because I'm doing more home-schooling than I've ever done with my daughter. And I love it. I really love it. I do believe our children or any children have

the right to play, have the right to be exploring, have the right to do many of those things and I'm struggling with that, finding the balance between work, getting the opportunity for my children to do this. It's great to hear what you are saying and just trying to find that connection that you guys have.

NEW SPEAKER: I'm realising that I'm a bit remiss because I didn't set up a note-taker. And I'm wondering if we should take some notes even brief ones on what has been just said?

NEW SPEAKER: Do you have to take notes? You do, don't you?

NEW SPEAKER: There is no "have to" ever in Open Space. But...

NEW SPEAKER: Definitely there are suggestions.

NEW SPEAKER: Could be a bit cheeky but I could ask my captioner to send you the notes.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. I can just take a moment. Hi, Aimee. We were just discussing that we just said a whole lot and didn't take any notes about it! And maybe we should take a note but the summations, since you are just joining us, is that we are talking about kind of on two levels, our personal challenge and day-to-day experience of parenting during this entire experience and also our greater concern for children during this time and the long-term effects of this and how people at least that I've noticed have been resistant to have these conversations. I would think even a little bit out of fear because if we don't name it, we don't talk about it, we can almost pretend like somehow this is all going to just blow over.

I think that it's important to have a dialogue, both for ourselves so that we are tending to what has built up so we can get back be in the ring, so to speak, because I don't know about you, but this is the most intense experience I've ever had as a parent in the past couple of months. Hands down.

(Laughter)

And here comes summer! And no summer camps, at least in the US, and like, there's, we are talking about being present and there is no end in sight of it being the way that it is! And that I find to be incapacitating at times.

My children, when we are talking to your point, Jonny, my children unless it's something they are tuning out and watching, a lot of times they are not interested in Zoom play dates, classes online, nope. I have children that get their needs and get overstimulated.

They get over-stimulated. So then they have each other, you know. I'm glad they have each other, but I'm finding a hard time playing. You know? Like, I love to play and it's not easy right now because I have to keep a house and work and run a studio and take care of their needs and all their appointments and then I'm just done! We have we have when talking about even this conference and being theatre artists and many, many ways, I was telling Claire I was in a play that closed due to the pandemic and I just put almost that whole part of my identity in a room and closed the

door. It's like, now, head done down, I'm hope, I'm parenting, I'm in this experience and talk about a whoosh!

NEW SPEAKER: It's weird. It's the same feeling. I was on a European Tour, about to go on a European Tour and I had to stand down. It's lovely to hear you saying this because I want to hear from other parents or other people. I'm hearing that. To hear that gives me some kind of reassurance I think.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes.

NEW SPEAKER: That I'm not the only one.

NEW SPEAKER: No, you are definitely not. I'm not a parent but I am a teacher and I've been doing, well I stopped mainstream school teaching and became freelance to do theatre-making then of course this hit and all my theatre work disappeared so I've started online home-tutoring, it's interesting hearing from parents because I had lots of ideas in the beginning but the main thing is, they just need time or space for various reasons where they are children are kept entertained and interested in something where they are not needed, just to have a bit of head space.

It's interesting because in the UK now they are staggering, depending on the school and the area and the age, children going back to school. And that is obviously bringing up a whole load of questions. I have friends that are teachers and they've been teaching key workers to children in school and saying how hard it is to keep them social distanced because they are like primary school children. I do wonder what impact that will have with teachers constantly saying "two metres, two metres, two metres!" That's the reality.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. How can they play in the playground?

NEW SPEAKER: I know, there is no playground play! I'm letting my child climb on my car as if it was a playground.

NEW SPEAKER: No playground play?

NEW SPEAKER: The playgrounds are off limits, closed in the US.

NEW SPEAKER: It's been like that in the UK but I don't know if they are starting to open up now but it's definitely been like that around us. But I don't know, like do you have any space near your home which you can go outside to, Megan?

NEW SPEAKER: Thankfully, yes, I'm blessed, I'm in a smaller city so we have a yard, we can walk in the neighbourhood, we can run. I think the larger fear is this cognitive dissonance we are experiencing in the States of, we have got 100,000 people dead and climbing and now we have protests all over the country. Like... we have more than a third of the world's deaths, just here. I saw the pictures of the kids in China with the hats on like helicopters so they know to keep their distance. Again, like, I even noticed myself recently around someone that I could hug and I had to remind myself like, oh you can go hug this person now. Because it's already becoming a

thing that I'm learning to NOT touch and that breaks my heart when I think about my children. You know, in school, like...

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. My daughter... so I only have one child. She hasn't been able to play with her friends for, where are we, two months now, two-and-a-half months. So we tried like Zooming and having online chats but like after a certain amount of time, they just, I think they feel the lack of connection so much quicker than we do. Aw Megan.

NEW SPEAKER: How old is your child, Claire?

NEW SPEAKER: She's ten.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. It's tough isn't it?

NEW SPEAKER: It's really hard and, you know, we are both now trying to work as well so Megan and I were commiserating with each other earlier about trying to be all these different things. On cue.

NEW SPEAKER: Children are just binge watching TV so that I can do this, you know!

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. But that's OK. Like, that is OK like you do need space to do this.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes.

NEW SPEAKER: This is the situation we are in and so don't give yourself a hard time if that is something you need to do at points.

NEW SPEAKER: You know, yes, I am one of those people who highly believes in letting emotions run freely, especially right now! And groups like this are essential for processing. It's been so interesting to listen when I can - hi - to my children's play, especially after they've been watching the shows, you know. But I think that, even as she arrives, one of the things I was mentioning from the previous session is my worry that like I'm not curating their screentime so they are ingesting a lot of stuff without me there side-coaching.

They are two little white males at a really critical time. That's like this existential thing that's also with me because I try to that you can do them about ingesting things that are good for them also including screen time. They'll watch this hetero-normative crap when I'm out of the room! Which, you know, I guess...

NEW SPEAKER: That's the stuff that they would come across if they weren't in lockdown. Do you know what I mean? I'm just trying to say to you, like give yourself a break when you need because I think outside of the virus when they are out, they'll come across that kind of crap and have to deal with that when you are not necessarily there.

NEW SPEAKER: I know. I get that, but I'm saying like when we are talking about this responsibility that we have when, I just feel like this gulf is happening that I know other parents can relate to. It's just a gulf right now.

NEW SPEAKER: Do you think everyone is so far ahead of you and you are stuck in the traffic? In terms of trying to find a balance between work and your children because maybe they don't have children?

NEW SPEAKER: Yes, exactly. Already for example and I don't know if any of you are single parents, but like there's already so much that's so out of balance with our culture and then throw this into the mix and having people isolated, it sheds so much light on the areas that need such deep work and I feel like the population that's most vulnerable to that is kids and Aimee thank you for saying what you are saying, I'm trying to have grace with myself but feeling empathic and feeling for children and talking to other people who're either educators or worked in day cares and like I just hear this collective ailing on behalf of the kids. At the same time, I see this resilience among children and the ability to play and process all of this. To a certain degree and their incapacitation.

NEW SPEAKER: We are in it and are going to be unpacking it for a long time afterwards. As a theatre maker, I've made a couple of shows for children and I don't know what it is yet but I think there's something, you know, in my own practice and responsibility that I can take on and try and find a way of helping heal. But the other thing I was just thinking was, my daughter's been reading a lot in lockdown and she just read a book called *When Hitler's(?) Rabbit* by Judith Kerr.

NEW SPEAKER: When Hitler what?

NEW SPEAKER: Say that again?

NEW SPEAKER: When Hitler stole *Pink Rabbit* by Judith Kerr.

NEW SPEAKER: Hitler stole pink rabbit. I know Judith Kerr.

NEW SPEAKER: So Judith Kerr who wrote the *Tiger who Came to Tea*. My daughter grew up with that. She also has written a book about her own childhood as a Jewish girl growing up in Germany and they had to flee to escape the Nazis. I'm trying to say something about the resilience of children and whilst this of course is going to have a huge impact on them growing up, it's also... I also have faith in their ability to find a way of navigating around it. I can certainly take notes for you, Megan. While you get your child a snack. I don't know if that makes any sense but it just struck me. My daughter has just finished reading it. She's had lots of questions that she's wanted to ask me about in history and her trying to understand that made me think that like she is going to figure her way through this, as long as we can support her!

NEW SPEAKER: Yes, yes.

NEW SPEAKER: What you are saying there, so maybe it's not the children, it's sus.

NEW SPEAKER: Maybe!
(Laughter)

NEW SPEAKER: Maybe, do you think maybe we need the support? I don't know...children are resilient. She's only three. Should there be things in place to support us as parents? That's it. Maybe this is a support group. We are talking to each other.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes.

NEW SPEAKER: Have you heard of PIPA(?)

NEW SPEAKER: I have never heard of it. What is it?

NEW SPEAKER: They are called parents and carers in performance arts and it's run by an actress called Katty who was in EastEnders and she has got this organisation in response to this conversation we are having because obviously, as a parent, I can't go to auditions at the time they wanted, I have to have flexible hours and, you know, the list goes on and on and on. So it's an organisation that helps to speak to big organisations to really almost give them a bit more of awareness to support freelance parents. Let me see if I can find the website. I don't know if they have something like that in America? I assume, are you American, Megan?

NEW SPEAKER: I am American.

NEW SPEAKER: Do you live in America now?

NEW SPEAKER: I live in Buffalo.

NEW SPEAKER: OK. OK. I was just talking about maybe it's the parents that need the support, you know, in terms of flexibility, awareness, I don't know. We have something called PACA, (?) and they talk to big organisations who give more awareness to parents who want a career.

NEW SPEAKER: Susan shared something with me that Phelim's partner has an organisation as well that we don't have in the States. Listening to these organisations, I'm like "this is great!" No. Obviously it's a bit medieval here in the US as you know.

One of the other things that hasn't been said that I want to mention is...OK... is the lack of like we are talking about screen time, we are talking about resilience, but also like theatre for children and theatre classes and work chats. I was saying to Claire that I'm going to be teaching theatre online this summer, however that's going to go for kids. Just how much that live performance, like my children love that and to have that gaping hole, like we are talking a lot about theatre being... just often the conversation centres on adult theatre-making, on performances for grown-ups and like here in Buffalo we have one of the big children's theatres in the United States called Theatre of Youth. And it's not that I have any answers, these are just things sitting with me as we talk about Respair - what is that going to look like? For some children, the bus trips they took in the US to go and see children's books

and theatre productions, like these seasons are were cancelled through January 2021. I don't know how it is in the UK, but here, friends of mine that are artistic directors, they are planning January 2021 maybe for re-openings.

NEW SPEAKER: It's the same.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes. These are things I would love to talk about with other educators and parents. Like we had this conference a couple of days ago where we were talking about, what is this going to look like teaching theatre online to little ones? It's every day for shorter chunks, is that better than spaced out? These were going to be camps that were intensive. And, how do you build community and foster connection for little ones via forums like this? You know... I even mentioned like break-out rooms, not unlike what we are doing, with Open Space. Like, creating smaller groups. Because I noticed that my children and some other children get really overrun like when it's their whole class meeting, they go into shut down, but if it's only three or four, they can follow the conversation and stay with us. I'm being shouted at, I encourage you all to chat. I'm going to leave this open for now, I may be back soon, I'm getting summoned.

NEW SPEAKER: Dagna, do you have children or work with children?

NEW SPEAKER: Yes, I've got two children, two teenagers so the home-schooling for me has been, I'm just going to trust that you are going to do it and I'll leave you to it because when I've tried to get involved or steer things at the beginning it didn't go too well. I've had to try and step back a bit with my youngest daughter who is 13 and possibly neurodivergent just to make sure she's getting the things she should be. Because the age that they are at, I kind of just feel like I have to trust them and hope that whatever systems are in place post-COVID-19 that the education systems are going to be able to support those who might have missed out or haven't been able to do it.

I've got to trust that, as long as I'm here providing a safe or as safe an environment that I can do, that that is going to be enough because there's no great deal I have control over apart from what is happening in the house.

The main issue I've had is, is the fact that in order for the government, whether that's here or elsewhere in the world, to get us to do what we are told, has been to make us all scared and so when you make children scared it's hard to reason with them so suddenly no, it's fine to go out. A week and a half ago, I had to physically lift my 13-year-old who was taller than me to go out of the house to go for a little walk because she's literally not left the house at all since the beginning of lockdown. That is what I am struggling with - how do we create the idea of safety and security once this passes which I don't imagine it will pass for quite some time yet. But that is the thing for me, how do we support them through that fear?

NEW SPEAKER: I don't know.

NEW SPEAKER: You would think we'd have it all figured out...

NEW SPEAKER: I don't think he's taken that active a role.

NEW SPEAKER: I think it's that idea about building community if there are organisations like the performing arts, parents and performing arts groups, or whether it's the people that you would normally be working with or your friends that you might check in with and just every now and then let off steam or have a place where you can off-load your own fears and own heightened emotions I think because it's, as Jonny was saying, maybe it's us that need the support and it's like trying not to lose your mind in this time. Particularly with what is happening outside of COVID-19, all the terrible things happening in the world, it's like, yes... how do we process that? And how do we... because I don't, sorry I'm mumbling slightly but I don't believe that we are going to suddenly emerge into some sort of new normal when all of this blows over, I think we are going to find ourselves very much in the old order of things, I think there are too many people with too much money riding on the systems so stand.

That is not something I want to let the girls know. It's all doom!

NEW SPEAKER: I just realised I've written no notes at all Megan during that whole time I was listening to Degna talk and then didn't write any of it down.

NEW SPEAKER: Is there any way you could summarise?

NEW SPEAKER: I don't want to phrase you, can you paraphrase yourself?

NEW SPEAKER: I'll paraphrase something then.

NEW SPEAKER: Welcome to our new arrival, I don't see a name in your box. Which is odd. There's no name. So, hello, friend! There it is. Dimity. Hello. Is that how you say it? Yes.

NEW SPEAKER: Degna, you are typing how great, thank you. So, Dimity, can we ask where you floated in from, so maybe we have some cross pollination or are you here as a putter fly?

NEW SPEAKER: I'm from a small theatre organisation but mainly making cross artform work participatory work in London. The space that I've just come from, if that is what you meant, I came from, history - how did we get here.

NEW SPEAKER: Was anything... I've been in this space the whole time so I'm just curious what might have been said in there and that we could potentially connect it to what we are talking about in here?

NEW SPEAKER: I think what I took from it was lots of people talking about the theatre of the oppressed and what a good technical background that might be to help us through difficult times and there was a woman who particularly worked in the UK with police forces in drama settings to do role play.

That brought me around to thinking about how history, how did we get to be here is how on the arc of history you often find the snap back when the system is objecting to being threatened and how solidly and forcefully that snap back happens and it feels

like that's happening to such a degree at the moment. We have nature snapping back, systems snapping back, we have got white supremacist snapping back and it's overwhelming for everybody. That's what I took from the conversation.

NEW SPEAKER: I'm glad you mentioned that, that was something I was curious about is how applied to theatre, theatre of the oppressed, certain theatre therapy could be more actively used in terms of helping children, especially those children who are having a really rough time and disregulated. Some children, this is affecting them but not so deeply and others so I notice that some children are really, really affected by this and others not as much so that is an interesting thing to bring up because I have been thinking about some of those tools and how they might be applicable. Digna, I didn't ask you, where did you float in from?

NEW SPEAKER: The same session. Yes. There was some overlap with the session that we'd been in during session 1 so because I wanted to find out how we support children, I ducked back into this session. But yes, it's that whole idea of snapping back, it's a really interesting one because it feels like a lot of things were at breaking point.

NEW SPEAKER: I think it's a Rolo (?) May talks about the pulling further and further and further like the overstretched rubber band and then... so I haven't actually thought about that concept in a bit and I'm grateful you put words to it in that way. There's what we would call maybe the shadow and the light of all these situations, like Claire you were speaking to like longer time for reading and diving into things. My children are helping me make bread and do the garden. They are not watching me run in 10,000 directions and watching me leave so much. So there are these... it's just such a fascinating time with what is coming up and there are longer times now to have these opportunities to have conversations with your kids, perhaps to counter-balance some of the uninterrupted screen time they are having, yes. Anybody else have anything? Go ahead?

NEW SPEAKER: I was just going to say, with my three children, they're 14, 17 and 21 and the most important thing I think I can offer them at the moment because they are watching social media, they are watching the news, they are so shaken by what is happening globally with the pandemic and also now in America, and I'm just trying to reassure them that yes, this is a snap back and that history repeats itself and each time it does things get a bit better.

NEW SPEAKER: I'm coming...

NEW SPEAKER: That is part of the dialogue. And we are a white family growing up in West London and what responsibility does that place on us to be allies and them, as the next generation to be allies and reassuring them that they are safe is the most important thing whilst pointing out our white privilege and how that foregrounds their safety.

Yes, I guess for me because I've been working and distracted on my own screen in work and stuff, I think young people I work with and my own young people, to me the

most important thing has been reassurance that this will pass and things will get better.

NEW SPEAKER: Just before you join and while you were off dealing with the last one Megan, Degna was just saying that your 13-year-old daughter, that is correct isn't it, with us so scared that you had to carry her out the house and I just wondered, like, how did it resolve?

NEW SPEAKER: Well, she's not been out of the house since. Yes. She's a very...she may be neurodivergent, she's at that sort of age where she doesn't speak to me about anything fundamental. I'm sure that in terms of like a gender spectrum, I don't know where she sits on that but she hasn't told me anything about that, but I'm using she as her pronoun but that may change over the years. So it's really like, when you are dealing with somebody that doesn't see the world in the same way as you do anyway, in regard to whether you have any diagnoses, she doesn't process things the same but she functions well in some other aspects. It's hard to resolve anything. You pick your battles. She went out a week and a half ago, maybe in another week I'll try to get her out again and see if things are improved.

When you have got teenagers, you kind of have to allow them some level of autonomy and respect their own boundaries in a way that you wouldn't necessarily have to if you were dealing with primary aged children. And just hope that if something, if they, she comes across anything cataclysmic or starts to worry about anything, that she would tell me about it or feel able to reach out to me, but I don't know, I don't know really so... yeah. They grow up really fast and you don't know if you are doing all that you can and then you are faced with something so beyond your control that then nobody knows how to deal with it, it's like oh, no, parenting is hard enough as it is!

NEW SPEAKER: I just want to say welcome to Kat. I know I am conscious of the fact that we only have a couple of minutes left before we convene in the big space together so I just want to give a moment to really honour what has been brought up and I think many of us end up in theatre because we are already empathic, we are already sensitive souls and I think that that layered on top of this experience, whether we are educators or parents is a lot and I'm grateful to have this space to hear and bear witness and share what some other experiences are. I just want to see if anybody else wants to say anything in these last couple of minutes? I can also relate because my, as I was sharing, I have a very sensitive child who has a lot of complex needs and there was the weather in Buffalo, as you maybe have heard joked, it can be summer in the morning and snow in the afternoon! Not even kidding. So my sensitive child at one point was having panic attacks if we even tried to leave the porch. That was very difficult. And I'm grateful that that seems to have passed. Other things are coming and going but I... I find myself personally like, there's almost no time, like even pulling this off today was a gargantuan feat and I did it, I'm here! There is so little time for creativity. Like, with, and again this comes back and I'm going to get emotional again but to Jonny's point about caring for ourselves, it's like squeezing water from a rock. I love when I'm seeing these posts that are reminding us, there is no responsibility to create anything right now! I love when I read that. It's such an important permission. Like if creativity does happen, of its own volition, welcome

it, celebrate it, you know, maybe it's happening in conjunction with children, but there's no pressure to do it. Really holding space for our children, for the majority of the day.

NEW SPEAKER: I mean, all I can say is, this is the first time I've had this conversation as a parent. So I thank you for that. I thank you for creating that room and I think it's taken a weight off my mind a bit. I feel like there should be more conversations but, you know, we'll disappear into our own worlds and be in our house with our children and just carry on.

NEW SPEAKER: I'm not sure if anyone is familiar with re-evaluation co-counselling but they actually recommend having groups for parents and this is in non-pandemic and non-protest times where you get together even a few times a week with other parents to tend to your stuff so you can get back to the good work of trying to raise these warriors of the heart, little ones or not so little ones so that is something I would be interested in as connecting with other people who are interested in continuing our conversation like this and potentially putting that out there to the larger group about meeting regularly about how we are doing this and making it through and space to cry and also space to celebrate and brain storm, you know, would be grand.

NEW SPEAKER: Maybe we should make a theatre piece together!

NEW SPEAKER: That would be cool too! Degna you were about to say something, sorry?

NEW SPEAKER: No, just to echo what you were saying, obviously because some of the sessions, there were supposed to be action points that come out of them, something meaningful could happen so maybe it's about whether it's something that is set up independently or whether it's set up with Improbable about how you go about setting up the idea about it's an international support network of parents working in the arts who can drop in whenever they need to in some way, but I don't know who has the time to set that up or the resources to hold that space. I know free Zoom rooms you can chat for 40 minutes if there are more than two of you but then you need to pay otherwise.

NEW SPEAKER: I have two paid Zoom accounts for the Yoga studio and especially in international, it's different hours, so I would be willing to use my Zoom accounts for something like that. We could definitely chat further and perhaps the first organic step would be setting a time, just setting a time together and whoever shows up and seeing what we have the bandwidth for which is obviously going to evolve based on what is going on! Yes. Any final thoughts before we reconvene with the big group and I just want to thank you Claire and Degna for also helping me with our hodge podge notes.

NEW SPEAKER: Thanks for calling the session.

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you.

NEW SPEAKER: OK, see you in the big room. Nice to meet you all.

NEW SPEAKER: Lovely to talk with you, Megan and everyone else.

NEW SPEAKER: Yes, Jonny and all of you, yes. Thank you.

What may have changed in 6 months' time? (Tassos Stevens he/him)

Session Convener: Tassos Stevens

Participant names:

The Same but we will have learned something

Thinking about navigating the interim period between now and the more settled future

Scenario Planning Shell - i.e. social proximity vs distance, or bounced-back economy vs recession, or new settled normal vs continued uncertainty. First step - imagine the 4 worlds. Second steps - what are the implications for me / my work / my organisation? Then out of that - what are the themes? Actions to take? Things to stop / start doing?

Travel companies - might incentivise less frequent travel, for example using annual carnets. What might a theatre equivalent of the annual carnet be?

Perhaps nothing will have changed in 6 months time...

How might this change our perception of the state - once the period of intervention ends

Need to decentralise theatre-making. Small cells. Outdoors. Site-specific. Funding locally, making locally. Becoming less building-based

Social inequality exacerbated by economic impact of Covid19. Will affect who makes and experiences the work

Its interesting that when asked about what people think the bigger picture, what might be the future of the arts we talk about art, things we have seen or heard about. How do we make our artistic response a strategic response?

Do take a look at the notes from the Lemar chat.

Visual vernacular (VV) - may increase as a result of lockdown - not sign language but an iconic form of visual expression

Gender: how has the current situation impacted women? and how do we ensure equality of voice as we design the future (Kate Wyatt her/she)

Session Convener: Kate Wyatt

Participant names: Fiona Williams, Kat Bridge, Sonia Allori, Rachel Caccia, Sophie Flack, Jo Turner, Freddie Crossley, Mandy F, Bonnie Adair

starting point for conversation

- research and studies are showing that this pandemic is impacting women more than men - do people have any experiences they want to talk about?
- How do we make sure we don't regress on the progress made? And how do we rebuild the sector with diversity and equality at the centre of it?

Pandemic has opened up access in some ways. It is proving that flexible working /working from home is possible. Zoom has opened up opportunities to join conversations, network etc beyond your region and also internationally. Proves we don't all have to be in the same place at the same time.

This time has proved that we can work in different ways which will help to diversify boards by taking work and meetings online. Need diversity on boards to ensure diverse thinking. Also need more artists on boards.

Global communication seems simpler
Giving access to conversations

Saving on travel - easier to participate
We've seen how easy it is to be flexible
How can women support each other

Are we as women excluded from artistic conversations at the moment?

is it too difficult at the moment for large organisations to consider radical change?
How can we poke them to do so?

For some women there is an impact for caring for children
Evidence of women picking up administrative tasks when colleagues are furloughed
Men seem to have more time on their hands comparative to women - is it okay to prioritise employing women at the moment? How can employers offer flexibility at the moment? We've seen it's possible.

Men need to part of these conversations. Everyone needs to be part of this conversation. This is not just a female space, non-binary. Just like the anti-racism conversation. White supremacy. Points for action. What do you intend to do.

People in positions of power need to keep looking for the people who don't look like them.

Where is the peer support for this?

It's okay to not know enough.

working online can be a real saving for individuals and organisations. means artists don't have to travel so much - opens opportunities. Need to find a way to support people who do not have the same resource and those from less privileged backgrounds.

Question: Do you all feel you have the same access as men to conversation / creativity / ideas

- No. Picking up all the work / communication terrible / can't be a part of new creative work
- Independent producer – work with female / non binary artists / home-schooling / freelance practice – male colleagues seem to be able to make more of opportunities – mensay they have a lot more time – women are finding the opposite as they combine work, children, home-schooling etc
- Not purposefully excluded, but difficult to know where conversations are taking place, also trying to keep the whole ship going – plans feel completely stalled – don't know where to start as no-one there. Everything shut and no one there.
- Know a female director who is actively trying to employ women in this time – is that ok?
- Language different from women / more understanding / different approach – could we use language differently?
- Young male director, feels in place of privilege – employed by someone who looks like me, but I can think differently – what am I doing here? Should I be here? How can I listen better and shape a career that can enable people that do not look like me? How can I help be a part of the solution?
- If you ever are in a position of power – just ask direct questions and relentlessly demanding an answer
- How can we all be an ally?

Question: Are you an active feminist?

I don't know enough, language and labels frightening for men – what if we want to do something more quietly?

How can we support men to have these conversations with us?

How do we make sure the right people are in the room? (E.g men at the top who have the power to make change)

Opportunity to rebuild from the demographic that is now there. So much broken than we will have to rebuild – now is the time. Rebuilding structures. Same for white supremacy conversation. Time to educate ourselves. Own the action coming back into the sector.

There is a fight on our hands. Need to claim our own agency.

VALUES – independent artists need to choose to work with people/ organisations who hold their values. Do you realise the power you have over those organisations?

Audiences don't want to go back to what's safe. Audiences are taking this opportunity to test out new things – how do we capitalise on this?

Equality Issue currently being raised with equity – public money has not been properly distributed by ACE to women – emergency fund is only going to those already in receipt of public money – which just further amplifies the inequality of that fund as men have proportionally received more funding traditionally.

Also less funded work for female creatives means more take other work to earn a living (PAYE) and so fall in the government gap for self employed support. Women more likely to be in that bracket. This is public money. Is there an equality law around this? Knock on effect. EQUITY. Might be evidence here that can be gathered.

How can we make sure theatre doesn't become even more elitist as a result of covid? (Florence Espeut-Nickless)

Session Convener: Florence Espeut-Nickless

Participant names: Madeleine, Caroline, Cheryl Prince, Cindy Lin, Anthony Lee, Julia, Fiona Williams, Tarek, Eliot, Alex

No ones here yet. So I'm having a think about this question on my own.

Rather than just list my worries and concerns around this question, which is my natural default, I'm going to think about action.

How can we do this?

What needs to be done?

What resources / support do we need to achieve it?

Worked at Opera North. Opera can be seen as elitist

Theatre was elitist anyway. Worried that this will get worse.

Very expensive.

Working class theatre seen as a separate thing.

Why can't it just be seen as theatre.

Theatre can be so exciting.

Kate O'Reiley, check her out. (not sure if right spelling of her name)

A lot of woke stuff out. Polite stuff.

Feels like a whole different world.

Opera North brought different communities in. Gave free tickets. Worked with community organisations. Lots of different themes. People were open to it.

Easier for more affluent people to be artists at the moment.

Opera performers can be diverse.

Struggle to get work made, when don't have money.

Working class stories hard to get on.

Funding really hard to get. ACE applications really difficult to write. Don't have the time to write them, can't afford to take time off paid work to write them.

Infuriating how inaccessible funding applications are. That people get funding because they are good at writing, articulating themselves.

Fundraiser perspective. Don't have the resources to support all artists. Making connections helps with funding applications.

Often hard to get funding as an individual. A lot of trusts / foundations only fund companies.

What can we do to make theatre accessible to all?

Creating space for this conversation more.

Some kind of lobbying group. If as a big group we keep making noise about this, hopefully change will happen.

Labels. What do we think about these?

For organisations useful, as they want to be representative of society.

Can be useful for different demographics. Can reclaim and celebrate 'working class' identity for example. Class is an invisible diversity, so the labels can be useful.

Otherwise people can make judgements about your privilege or lack of it.

This conversation could go on for hours, days, lots to be said.

I'll be honest I can't type, make notes whilst listening, engaging in the conversation.

So I'll write what I remember, but stuff will be missed for sure.

Hopefully others will come and add to this too.

florence.espeutnickless@gmail.com - if anyone wants to contact me that was in the group or wasn't.

I will connect up the people who left there emails. If anyone else wants to join that conversation get in touch and I'll add you in.

Other things we discussed:

- * How can we ensure that venues programme diverse stories?

- * The importance of high quality arts education at school

- * The importance of seeing yourself reflected on stage if you are to go into a career in the theatre

- * The practice of "cleaning up" regional accents at drama school - hopefully this is less prevalent now!

How do we gather together and make our collective voice heard at government level? (Vicki)

Session Convener: Vicki

Participant names:

No report.

The experience of migrant artists in current situation - how do we feel now?! (Lilac)

Session Convener: Lilac

Participant names:

Slowly and methodically bringing work that is in line with a venue's agenda - plan and align

'One bird doesn't make a spring'

'one swallow doesn't make a spring'

A chance to re-stitch previous cultural world here and now - working on people being able to talk about what matters to them

A conversation about growing of audiences

Putting the body into non embodied spaces, audience and actor

Session Convener: Patricia Miller

Participant names:

Its 11:34 am Pacific Standard Time otherwise known as 734 British Summer Time. My body is embodied upon my living room couch in San Francisco and is enjoying a very late breakfast as I consider whether anyone else will come to this conversation, whether other bodies will arrive and open this virtual space.

I step away, make some PG Tips, visualize myself in the UK meeting with minds, sharing thoughts while in fact I am alone, in the living room hearing endless sirens of downtown San Francisco after a third night of curfew and protest. Helicopters rake the sky.

If I was in the embodied Battersea Arts center, sitting in a room with a glass door pane or on the floor near the coffee station, someone might take pity and enter.! Begin a cocreated conversation about how conversations start, how actual bodies can make virtual connection.

In the viro sphere, Zoomlandia, Intsagram- instacart-instagratication..... intimacy directors give workshops on choreographing human connection for a theatre that is on a nameless pause. Business managers calculate how many seats is the bare minimum to maintain social distace and achieve the productivity goals set by the capitalist frame. Evereyone whines, when do we go back. But theres no going back.... its going to be different... it lready is.

I give up on waxing lyrical and go seek connection and convesration in anotheoer room. If you come to this space, add something about

Bodies in space.

I went, it was diffiucht. I felt like a gatecrasher. I felt like I threw a bomb over my shoulder and walked away. I came back here. Still on my couch. Choppers overhead.

June 5

Its three days later and my body is deep in Northern California summer, on a land project in the foothills, working with my hands as much as a broken leg will allow. I sit amongstthe trees and cannot resist a zoom call with Latinx playwrights and young theatremakers. I have been atteninding for months, listening, ususallythe only white face in the grid. They are talking aout siezing space, reclaiming history and visioning their bodies into what they are calling white space. I feel the weight of the worlds, the fractures and the light pusing through the cracks.Breathe into this deep pause, recognize that socially distant is actually only physically distant. Theatre is more urgent than ever before.

I pause to mourn sitting in the dark with strangers to mourn sharing weight in contact choreography in rehearsal, to mourn a pint in the pub still frothing and rolling with friends as we spill out of rehearsal. Recently scientists reported what theatre makers know already, humans watching a play or hearing a story together begin to synchronize heartbeats. When will we do this again. When will the haptic experience of an embodied audience alter my cells. And then I turn back to the zoom and the passionate future theatre makers speaking there and I am so glad to slip under the door, like a piece of paper. I collect as many seeds as I can to plant in my classroom where I am also the only white person in the space.

I report that conversation back to the Improbable space. Doing what Phelim calls bumble bee work. I am glad my company is called pollinator. Honey will come from this. Are you making it?

I will return my hands to the soil and release my mind from the theatre.

Although I didn't join you for this session, this question has really stayed with me and is still very much alive in me as I flit from zoom to zoom this week, informing and shifting- thank you!

What would you need from a (Creative) Mentor during this time? (Guy Dartnell)

Session Convener: Guy Dartnell

Participant names: Bethany Cooper, Elizabeth Lynch, Simon, Gobscore, Shanti Freed, Elise Davison, Sharron Devine, Gari,

Guy - So I'm here on my own - I'm going to use chat to talk with myself until others may arrive. One interesting thing I took from the session I was in before was the need for mentoring and where to get it. I brought up the issue that there seems to be a need, maybe an expectation in the current situation for people to offer themselves for free. Some experienced people who are being furloughed from their normal job are in a position to offer themselves as mentor/coach for free. And given they're not allowed to do anything in their own (normal) job because they would break their furlough conditions the urge to offer help to others in the form of mentoring becomes attractive because of the desire to have a role in supporting others in these difficult times. In a situation where people's present and future earnings are vulnerable and unpredictable, access to mentoring (and other services) for free is welcome. However Mentors themselves need to earn money and so a dilemma might emerge for them potentially around whether to offer mentoring for free (or pay what you can) to contribute to the spirit of solidarity around the Covid situation, against how much to try and maintain your own earning potential so that you don't become a financial victim of the Covid situation yourself.

(PEOPLE BEGAN ENTERING THE CONVERSATION FROM HERE ONWARDS. I HAVE ENDEAVOURED TO WRITE DOWN WHAT I REMEMBERED OF WHAT PEOPLE SAID, WHILE NOT WRITING THEIR NAMES. THEY MAY RECOGNISE THEMSELVES AND MAY WISH TO EDIT/CORRECT WHAT I'VE WRITTEN. SHARRON WROTE NOTES FOR A WHILE AND ALSO COPIED THINGS WRITTEN IN THE CHAT PANEL. I'M HOPING IN GENERAL THAT OTHERS WILL ADD AND CHANGE WHAT'S WRITTEN BECAUSE I KNOW THERE WERE IMPORTANT THINGS SAID THAT I HAVE FORGOTTEN.)

The conversation took place between a mixture of people in terms of their roles - some were mentors (or mentored as part of other activities) others could be described as artists and people who might be looking for mentoring. Some mentors were themselves questioning what their position as mentors was now. "What the fuck am I going to do?" I myself said one purpose I had in calling this session is not to offer mentoring, or myself as a mentor but to discover what others might want from a mentor now. Do they want what they would always want or are their needs Covid specific?

Early on one person talked about having just finished their training and how the Covid situation had prevented them from launching themselves. They said they were looking for mentoring around such things as funding, running a business, becoming self employed and paying tax. Another person talked about how they were on the verge of launching a new era of their work lives - such that they may have been able to stop relying on PIP - and how Covid had impacted on that. They were more interested around mentoring as a way of connecting, having a conversation.

It was pointed out that for people with a learning disabled background the current situation around access is not a new one. The same person talked about how this current situation might be the "best time" to change how we are in the future, that we may all end up working together in new ways, more connected ways, where access is not a separate issue.

There may be not be enough mentors at this time, as it feels like people really need mentoring advice at this time. Everything feels so unknown for the future. How do we mentor at this time when no-one knows what will happen and whether people can actually achieve their dreams and visions. This came after somebody had suggested that one of the aims of a mentor was to help people realise their dreams and visions.

Guy - I mentioned at one point that I thought the role of mentor suggested somebody with some experience in the area to be mentored around, certainly in relationship to creative activity. I suggested that being in a pandemic is new - nobody I know has experience of mentoring artists through a pandemic, so in that sense who is best fitted to mentor people in the present situation. I wondered if everybody in the conversion was as equipped as anybody else to mentor others. I asked if it would be important to people to be mentored by somebody who was actually a (qualified) mentor? Perhaps mentoring in the present situation might be better served by people co-mentoring each other?

The person who talked about being a relative newcomer, having just finished being a student suggested that people like her might be able to deal with the uncertainty of the present situation better than more experienced people, because they had less to lose and were likely to be more able to adapt to the changing circumstances. In their "lack" of experience they could be more flexible in their approach being less tied to trying to re-establish what they used to have before Covid set in.

Is it okay that these skills are shared free of charge?

It is okay if boundaries are clear at the beginning of the relationship. Reciprocity is important also for some who may not have the funds to pay for these skills. Some people thought it important that mentoring be charging/paying for. That mentors have a set of skills and it's important to acknowledge that financially.

Elizabeth - Quick notes- be specific about the offer and any boundaries- mentoring, advice, coaching, always space for reciprocity, everyone can be a mentor, e.g. I have been mentored by young people, but boundaries, purpose need to be clear - nb counselling is a professional sphere usually - therapeutic, psychological - its important I think ,that if you mentor others, you should be mentored yourself...

Elizabeth - Entelechy Arts have talked recently about their 'remote grieving strategy... Mentors don't have to fix things, they just need to help people think and work it out for themselves.

Somebody talked about how the present situation had enabled them to recognise that they can't control everything and how they had been learning to let go and focus on responsiveness rather than control.

(GUY - I'M SORRY I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING ELSE AT THE MOMENT. HOPEFULLY OTHERS WILL)

Sharron - very interesting and useful to hear from mentor's perspectives on how many feel so needed at this time of flux in our industry and how there may not be enough mentors to go around. How can a mentor support and set goals with individuals when the future of our industry is so uncertain? Lovely also to hear a generous discussion around finding the right balance and reciprocity regarding costing for their time but also being open to helping out artists/freelancers who may not have the necessary funds to pay for mentors at this time or anytime really. Enjoyed also hearing about one very experienced mentor enjoying being mentored by young people and how important and vital they felt that was.

A Dreaming space. What's speaking through our collective night time dreaming? (Kate Alderton)

Session Convenor: Kate Alderton

Participant names: Atrix, Paul, Pady O'Connor

If you'd like to share a dream/ be sparked by a dream, feel free to add

Sometimes it's helpful to hear what's coming through our collective dreaming. Dreams can speak some of the things held on the outer edges of the mind/self/heart/collective and spark new thoughts.. let's see where they lead us....

I called the session late in the proceedings and arrived here, dreaming alone for the first part. After a time, I settled into the space, and then dreamers arrived.

Dream: A School Of The Future

The dreamer is tasked with an important task to communicate to a child a new type of school.

In this school you can learn anything, set your own schedule, dance, create stories and use movement/ tech / projection mapping to make anything happen. Be an animation version of you.

It's a school of the future. It's a place of no limits

Dream sparked discussion:

If there was a school of the future, what might that mean or be?. A place of no physical limits. How different might the world be if those skills were taught? It could take out some of the challenges of race, gender and ability. A place where you can be what comes out of your heart.

For my my son, who has dispraxia- he feels real freedom in his online world of no physical limits

Dream:Wire Fence Land

The dream is in a large car park surrounded by metal fences and shipping containers.People are living here. The dreamer queues up to collect a food parcel from a small cabin, and has to prove their identity by speaking their name over and

over. The official refuses over and over to release the food. Feelings of scarcity, restriction and control

Dream sparked discussion:

These two dreams were interesting sitting next to each other- one speaks of no limits and total freedom, the other of total control.

I feel both under lockdown

Dreaming the dream took me to a place very different from my waking world safety of food ,home, family. A dreamlived experience of the other.

Dreams are more vivid at the moment but hard to remember

The waking world is like a real life zombie apocolypse

Dreams are the odd and impossible, like being wrapped in a science fiction/ fantasy novel

We think of humans as independant from nature but we're not

What's happening with Time?

What does time mean at the moment? Is anyone else expereincing a different sense of time?

Sometimes I feel like I've lived and worked ten years in a week

We talked about day-dreaming.

To wonder and wander, to go to a place where the dreaming can emerge.

How do we day dream? What are the barriers to dreaming?

Why it's important to wander and find time to get lost in your thoughts.

Without dreaming we'd really be lost.

This led us to thinking about:

The stark difference beween what's present and challenging in the world and our need to still be able day-dream

Are we able to hold both? Is it possible?

Can feelings of loss and hope sit in parallel with eachother?

It was curious that this was where our conversation led us, as the two night time dreams that were initially shared held these parallel feelings

The Art Room

