

# ***How can we build the future of theatre together?***

**An Open Space event  
Hosted by Theatre Bristol and Improbable  
Held online 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020**

## **Collected Reports**

*Improbable*



# Overview

On Wednesday 20 May 2020, Theatre Bristol and Improbable hosted an online Open Space conversation. This was a pilot event, aimed at providing the Bristol/South West theatre community with virtual spaces to hold discussions, alongside providing an opportunity for Improbable to test their Open Space Online format. Around 70 people attended across the course of the 3 hour event. The agenda was set by the participants as a group at the start of the conversation. Four main themes emerged across the sessions called:

## **Inclusion and access in future planning**

- How can we make it more accessible to working and underclass communities now and on the other side?
- How can theatre learn from current online accessibility for people with disabilities or financial/special limitations?
- How to build a more engaging inclusive and representative theatre culture online and after?

## **Radical dreaming**

- What could a future touring model(s) look like?
- How can we support artists/creators of the future? What skills will they need?
- The role of stage managers in post-COVID theatre
- Designers in a post-COVID theatre
- How can we make new projects without ACE project funding?
- What does the new normal look like?
- How can we use our theatre/buildings in the future?
- How can we radically change decision making structures to place artists at the centre of the collaboration?
- The potential role for rural in the recovery
- What are we going to let burn?

## **Engaging with audiences and connection**

- Performance without a physical audience
- Does it have to be online?
- What work will there be an appetite for (audiences and programmers) and how do we make sure it isn't boring?
- How do we overcome our anxiety and connect to each other?
- Creative ways to reach audiences with outdoor performances

## **Creative practice in the online space**

- The Politics of Imagination, Desire and Spectacle - a 'WHAT IF' game of imagining the future of performance
- What has the pandemic revealed to you about your practice that was surprising, new and invigorating?
- What does a live socially distanced performance and process look like and is that a positive creative parameter we can respond to?
- Should I make work about the pandemic now?

This document contains the reports from this event – the reports have not been edited or curated in any way (apart from the removal of some email addresses) and are presented as they were at midday on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020. We hope that these ideas, provocations, themes and questions may be picked up by participants at (or organisers of) future events.

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## Performance without a physical audience - creating connection in a time of Corona. (Ohsiankidd)

**Session Convener:** Ohsiankidd

*No report*

## Does it have to be online? (Graham Johnson)

**Session Convener:** Graham Johnson

**Participant names:** Graham Johnson, Helen Edwards, Gill Simmons, Hattie Gregory, Mike Pony, Ben, Tina Taylor, Kat

Easy to get fatigued by digital responses

What are the hyper-local responses?

Digital poverty has a real impact - many families only get technology at school

Digital is good but should be part of a larger picture

Instinctive reaction - why do we need to go online?

Streaming etc was already happening - if we give up on our skills to join that, we leave a deficit

We don't all have the skills to make digital work of the standards we want

Digital isn't all streaming - there's alternatives to capturing live performance and streaming it.

The tech we're using isn't designed for creative purposes - we should find new kinds of tech

You can see Prospero here <https://prospero.digital>

You can see some of the free resources here: <https://prospero.digital/library>

Hard to engage new audiences digitally - can theatre be a series of letters for example?

How do we continue audience development for new audiences through digital - can we do this through physical encounters?

How do we make live art now?

Do we want it to go back to the way it was? Is it likely to ever go back?

How do we improve our engagement with the wider community (outside existing theatre community)

Can we just be patient and hold off for a moment rather than rushing?

How are we meant to make good work in this atmosphere?

Has anyone had an experience that made them feel connected? Zoom check ins, writing workshops, Largely no

## I'm bored of posh theatre! How can we make it more accessible to working & underclass communities now and on the other side? (Florence Espeut-Nickless)

**Session Convener:** Florence Espeut-Nickless

**Participant names:** Deasy Bamford, Vic Llewellyn, Marietta Clare, Adam Peck, Megan VT, Kate Y

Who's not here? Why aren't they here?

Often the ppl that need to be in these conversations aren't.

Are more ppl accessing the online streams? Can we find this out. What do they think of them? NT Live etc.

How do we get venues to programme more wc stories and voices?  
Stop it from being a risk.

Who has the power to do that?

Be representative.

Going into the communities. Malcolm X Centre etc. Big venues taking work to community centres etc.

Do audiences wanna be just entertained? Or learn about life?

Venues intimidating.

Opening up venues in different ways.

As artists we have a responsibility to take work to different places.

Outside performance have to look into audiences eyes. In theatre's can't see them cause of lights.

Outside work. Anyone can come to it. It's free. There will be more of that. Festivals and stuff.

How support wc / uc artists to flourish? Makes it more challenging atm.

Theatres have responsibility to engage everyone.

Venues don't know how to do.

Open up spaces to community. Have groups etc in venue for community. Then will come to shows.

Access to space.

How do city centre theatres like BOV engage the wider community? Not just in Bristol, towns, villages in the region that don't have their own theatres, arts centres.

Who sits at core of venues?

Has to be genuine engagement, not tokenistic.

Appeal of BOV work and lots of other theatres, narrow.

Have centres / venues in wc area. Not always in city centre.

Think it's about the stories / shows that venues programmes. Don't buy it that WC audiences won't come. That's not my experience, if you programme stories, shows they can connect to they will come.

It's hard to measure because class isn't visible, so you can't necessarily tell if you have WC ppl in the audience, on stage etc. Other marginalised groups such as BAME and disabled people can (sometimes) be easier to identify, so organisations seem to focus more on these and ignore class diversity / working class representation.

Will it be harder for WC artists to work in industry now? More financially difficult? Can we stop that from happening?

Lots of these conversations happen. How do we put this into action? Make meaningful change.

COMMON host a weekly working class artists coffee morning on Zoom every Friday if people are interested. The Young Vic are hosting a conversation for working class artists on Zoom this Friday.

## **The Politics of Imagination, Desire and Spectacle- A 'WHAT IF' game of imagining the future of performance (and other possibilities) (Liz Clarke)**

**Session Convener:** Liz Clarke

**Participant names:** Sarah Warden, Tom Drayton, Mel Scaffold, Tessa Wills, Tom Marshman, Gill R2, Katy Noakes, Lyn Imperatore, Mike Pony, Becky Chapman, Tanuja Amarasuriya

Inspired by a book called "From What is to What if?" <https://www.robhopkins.net/the-book/>

(Liz returning with musings and to write up some more notes on the session- Sunday 24th May)

*When the future disappears from our imagining, when we get stuck in the present or in the past, we're in trouble'* Rob Hopkins

*Play is a political Instrument* Grace Turtle

I called this session as a playful response to where we find ourselves. We are storytellers and agents of the Imagination, we have within us the power of reinvention, reflection and rebellion. But, in terms of reshaping how things are all too often we get sucked into conforming to the 'way its always been done'. The conversations happen in the same format, we have the meetings, other people have the meetings behind doors we cannot or do not open. We have opportunity here and now to imagine a new future. I have been really struck by *From What is To What If?* Coming to the book with the backdrop of pandemic is eerie yet hopeful, as if space for new beginnings was being granted. The book is concerned with Re-Imagining lots of aspects of society, with chapter headings ranging from *What if Things Turned Out OK?* and *What If We Started Asking Better Questions?* to the really audacious *What If Our Leaders Prioritised the Cultivation of Imagination?* It acknowledges the power of Art for individuals, for communities and for societies.

In true 'Whoever comes are the right people' stylee the group settled into creative, completitive and creative chat about Imagining new futures and asking What If?

An example from the book that I shared with the group in this session was the mayor of Bogata (1993) Antanas Mockus who shot to international fame with his playful interventions which upended city life and questioned 'the way things had always been done'. At the time the death rate on the city's roads was a record levels and the traffic police corrupt. The mayor hired 420 mime artists who stopped traffic, applauded good drivers and gave red cards out to bad ones. He sacked the entire traffic police department and offered them a payrise if they retrained as mimes. 400 did. The city's fatalities fell by 50%. As Hopkins says *We need to be able to imagine positive, feasible delightful*

*versions of the future before we can create them.* Amidst the seriousness we find ourselves in I wanted to hold this window space for experiment, creativity and community, to ask WHAT IF? and have a play with imagining our future. Together we discussed Grief, Reinvention, how much we love unconventional ways to make performance and finding ways to do different situations.

Our small gathering was uplifting and intimate. We talked about:

Table Top theatre games.

Telephone theatre games

where are they and how can we create them. Playful ways of making art and theatre

Board Games - random and openness uncertainty - incorporated into this.

Rebecca Solnit quote : We're in the middle of a fairy tale right

now. <https://www.motherjones.com/media/2020/05/solnit-crisis-pandemic-coronavirus-paradise-built-in-hell/>

The digital realm - not fulfilling - shot through with grief. Need to acknowledge and be in grief and pause.

Grief is a biggie right now. Grieving lives, loved ones, how things were, our careers, our shows, our identity. Some of us felt that the 'grief bit' of the process in this crisis was being glossed over, brushed aside in the rush to reinvention, digitisation, moving everything online. Of course, as artists and individuals we had different responses to this, from being hopeful that what we know (in terms of theatre) is not dead, to wanting to embrace a quieter, calmer way of life.

Death, futures that will not happen, multiple.

TB - Hermit Project A member of TB talked about this project and how Grief is really present in their thinking right now

How to meet the grief in every area

Grief is a leveller - a loss of power leads to shared meeting/collective ownership. with each other rather than to each other.

Important to connect with one's actual experience in order to empathise with people in a way that we might not have done before.

We talked about how we were feeling in terms of our practices and where we might be with them.

I invited the group to take part in a silly game, a children's game really, but one that would free us up to imagine the future of performance. In this Alphabet Game we came up with all the things we wanted the future of theatre to be.

Alive

Brave

Cataclysmic Confusing

Dirty

Empathy

Fucked up Frightening For Everyone

Forge in imaginations

Gender Equal Gender Full Getting rid of unnecessary bureaucratic red tape Giving not taking  
Grounded not being reactionary - from place of grounded values, not dictated to by institutions  
Handcrafted in terms of ethos and what we create Heartfelt  
Inclusive instinctive and intuitive In Real Life Interactive intimacy  
justice Jobs for money for life for livelihoods for society Jokes Jolts as part of fabric of everyday life  
Off Kilter. Kittens.KILLING ALL UNNECESSARY ADMIN.Kaleidoscopic  
Love Longevity Listening Life enhancing Liberating Liberty Land based Loads of opportunities  
Meaningful Money for the arts moments of pleasure Minecraft Momentous Miraculous Moving  
Magnitudinous Magnifying Made real  
Naughty New Nimble, No where and Everywhere Never boring  
Orgasmic Overpowering original Opportunistic  
Pertinent Powerful Pluralistic political Playful  
Questioning, Quick witted,  
Rebellious, radical responsive, real  
Strident sensational, shine a light on quiet voices, Shared, Shed! Subliminal  
Tricksy Trickster Testing Tearing it down Truthful  
Unwavering upside down Universal ugly Unleashed Unchartered, Unmasking bureaucracy  
Violent Vexacious Vivacious Virile Virtually Real Vaccination  
World Changing Weird and wonderful  
Xylophone X rated Xraying to make sure no nasty bits  
Yucky Yummy Yelling from roof tops  
Zestful Zealous Zeitgeist, Zoom-free

One of the group read this out to the rest of us (THANK YOU TO THE NOTE TAKER AND THE READER-OUTER!!) and we were all struck at it's poetic nature. "We did a poem!"

Thanks to all who made this time together feel really tender and optimistic

One more quote from *What is to What If: We need to create stories where the kind of future we want to see becomes commonplace, everyday. We need to tell stories where the mere telling of them can create a degree of inevitability about their becoming a reality, and a sense that speaking them out loud is also of great benefit to our own mind, a powerful antidote to despondency and trauma.*



## What could a future touring model/s look like? (Mark Helyar)

**Session Convener:** Mark Helyar

**Participant names:** Maeve O'Neill (Rua Arts), Lizzy Stephens (Hammerpuzzle), Tim Bell Mark Wallace (Beaford) Kirstie Davis, Daisy Drury (Lost Dog and Extraordinary Bodies), Cat Boot (Can't Sit Still), Tessa Bide

Digital Offer from Can't Sit Still reached 3,000 people which is 3 times what a theatre show would have reached.

Digital Offers - Are artists being paid properly when stuff is being shown online?

How do we make that Digital Offer sustainable? Does it really work in terms of connecting to communities?

Beaford Arts - when we postponed our season we offered a small commission for something that would work online. The take up and viewership has been pretty good. Don't know yet if it was more virtually than real life. Small bite size stuff was the reason it worked.

Is the high viewership of current digital offers due to lockdown circumstances?

Difficulty of rural communities being able to watch online with secure wifi for a 90min show. Shorter offers work.

During a transition of spaces being open, will the appetite for online engagement dwindle?

Impact of Covid19 on live audiences - who are we without the liveness?

If we're going to be in/out of lockdown over the coming months/years how do we program? What are the cancellation policies? Impact on creativity and planning.

Planning so that 'show can go on' one way or another? - Current funding, marketing etc is not set up to support this.

---Being fleet of foot will be a vital element of touring - being able to respond at short notice

Many variables to be brought into play - company, venue, audience, funding

what will the funding models look like that sustain touring and the above variables?

Bringing everything back to the local?

How do you make a socially-distanced show for touring?

developing a risk assessment model for touring

may not know the answers at the moment - key currency is ideas

More joined up conversation needed between artists, companies, venues, promoters, schools...

co-producing tours around unconventional spaces - particularly (maybe) for emerging companies making work for the first time - could be a big ask for artists who don't normally produce their own work?

Having an authentic experience either way (even if live show is cancelled) and planning this. Current situation: planning for everything (all eventualities!). Everything is changing so quickly. Covid19 clause is needed

What if touring to a region where it has an outbreak nearby and audience loses confidence?

Bringing everything back local - audiences will trust local theatre companies

Lyn optimistically thinking rural will be first - not realistic.- esp. if rural communities are in their own 'bubbles' and are wary of taking a date on a tour which has visited other geographic areas.

Where is the security for small companies and artists if venues aren't offering guarantees and project funding isn't available?

Corporate sponsorship for shows to take place in schools?

Will there be a bubble of bringing people in and out of local spaces?

Is there room to join up venues, companies and artists more for touring?

Importance of filming & video to create digital offers

A touring digital showing for a limited time at each 'Venue'

Conflict / tension between online and offline work. Still in transition processing and understanding what work we want to make v/ tour and what audiences want..

digital vs live what works, what do we want to keep for the future, how do we keep the live experiences...?

What do audiences want?

to want to feel part of an audience..

Balance of making for digital and making for live

## **What has the pandemic revealed to you about your practice that was surprising, new and invigorating (Natalie V)**

**Session Convener:** Natalie V

**Participant names:** Jesse Briton

Revealed pressure to have a product or 'thing to show'

Circus - you must have something in the air

zoom and online being able to turbo charge projects

becoming more collaborative as it's easier to meet, time more available

collective sense of experience

lack of random collaborations

a developed sense of who and what our own networks are. Stengthening existenting but defining boundaries.

how do we find collaborators outside our immediate proximity?

Have I been as open in recruitment and collaboration as I could have been? How do I do better now?

"Recorded element of something made it seem more real"

Circus = The extra-ordinary interaction with the enviroment (things that every human being can have contact with - greater than your own physical understanding of the space)

Human Beings can have agency over space and objects

"Ah this is what i've been looking at forever!"

Chance to revisit ideas i'd forgotten I'd had

Time to focus and defne what my strengths are. Feeling more purposeful and less accidental, less reactionary.

If this 'unimaginable' thing has happened, what other unimaginable things could actually happen.

Analysing definitions and structures, can we imagine somehting new?

I don't have to project anything because we can't. nobody knows

Easy to shoe-horn projects into things without seeing the essence

Definite ideas do not equal richness of idea

## What work will there be an appetite for (audiences and programmers) and how do we make sure it isn't boring? (Nel Crouch)

**Session Convener:** Nel Crouch

**Participant names:** Jesse Meadows, Tom Spencer, Rebecca Wood, Rosalie White, Billy Alwen, Nik, Ben Atterbury, Marrietta Clare, Kate Yedi, Vic LLevellyn, Tanuja A, Luke Emmett, Ali Robertson, Kate McStraw, Steph Kempson, Mike Pony, Nick Sweeting, Mel Scaffold, Liz Counsell, sian kidd

What do audiences want? Work about corona?

Feedback from venues is people want escapism.

Fear about no risks will be taken as venues will need money.

What is there an appetite for? What assumptions do we make about what audiences want?

What new structures will force us to make work in a new way? This could be exciitng.

Access barriers will be even bigger. Financial and physical reasons. How do these people be part of the planning? How do we keep work accessible?

Normally we offer a spectrum for audiences - we can't second guess what they want.

We will have to play with form to make a new theatre space work. Experimental artists better equipt to play with new space and audiences. Theatres will need them.

We are going to have to find new spaces.

Anyone else been making work in their home and not thought once about the audience? It's odd but nice!

Theatre can give people an opportunity to do things that are not screen based. VE day gave people chance to get out on the street.

Reward audiences for coming to the theatre. It needs to be better than a flat experience on a screen.

People will see something that they are reflected in whatever the form. How can we have the confidence to really talk about what we want to be talking about.

How can we not get caught up in our own digital sphere and not get caught in a bubble?

How do we inspire an individuals creativity? Pre COVID lots of people think theatre is not for them. Encourage creativity at a wider level for then people to engage with arts in the future.

How do we make sure artists are part of the conversation? We need big imaginative thinking. Need conversation between artists and venues. There is openness to have those conversations.

Venues and organisations are struggling and might not make it out. Places that exist won't be able to use their space in the same way. Short to medium term is to reimagine - has to be the creative conversations.

The Public Theatre in NYC - what do we need to talk about - set on zoom is a good example.

The normal gate keepers are small - anyone can programme work now! The landscape is burned and the venues don't have all the seats.

Lack of seats will impact fees that are being offered. Already wasn't good enough. Venues are going to struggle to fit box office targets anyway.

Interesting discussions about alternatives to indoor venues and outdoor festivals that won't involve zoom. How can we follow artists to communities rather than have to bring communities to the space. Who are the people you can reach safely now? Artists as host guide translator and safe guarder of those people. How can we look for the people we can serve rather than wait for them to come to us? How does the independent sector talk about the inbetween spaces - all the other places we might have an encounter.

How are we going to pay for all this?

Institutions get all the money to make theatre happen. Who are the key workers of theatres? The artists? How can we have a different conversation about how we get money. How do people get funded? Universal income would mean artists and venues could stay open.

Venues being turned into a creation space?

Major venues are thinking about how to resctructure. And how can they operate differently.

Rotterdam people can now gather in groups of 30.

Relocalising and springboarding into a sustainable model. Making it smaller - is this exciting to move away from the pressue of mid scale?

## How can we support artists/creators of the future? What skills will they need? (Kate Webb)

**Session Convener:** Kate Webb

**Participant names:** Lynn Carroll, Lucy H

Conversation about this was already taking place at Circomedia before Covid.  
Business are seeing drama in a different way now- has more value. Circus still has a way to go in changing perceptions  
Circus builds soft skills- patience, resilience...

How do we support young professionals-

Most schools are implementing business skills and entrepreneurial skills within education. Circus Works have run European projects about how their youth circuses support progression in to the workplace

Finding ways to maintain the social element on line. Youth circus is about the social element

when can we start again and how? should we reinvent the old or try something different? circus sector have started protocol work - socially distanced work - some use full work from USA around this. should we share across sectors?

handstands!

Options for students- difficult for final year and 1st years. Final year performances - working out how to make them happen. SD audience in the round? Circus on film?  
Students may need to adapt and look at other skills alongside what they usually learn.

take this conversation to a groups of orgs working with YP. using learning from other countries.

Actions-

Smaller group to discuss artists of the future

Tobacco Factory

Creative Youth cNetworks

Rising- Leadership work

Old Vic

CircusWorks

Circomedia

Rise

Watershed

What we need to consider is how these young artists need to be prepared for the landscape beyond Covid. As it is unclear what this will be

## What does a live socially distanced performance and process look like and is that a positive creative parameter we can respond to? (Sarah Fielding)

**Session Convener:** Sarah Fielding

**Participant names:** Gwen Hales, Adam Peck, Tessa Bide, Bronia Housman, Tom Drayton, Emma Megan Vaughan, Thomas Bettridge, Alex Murdoch, Angela Bull (Epsilon)

Productions), Rachel Bell, Chris Swain, Tom Bevan, Ben Atterbury, Sammy Florino, Luke John Emmett, Paul Sutton, Lizzie Crarer, Maddie McGowan

Thinking about devising, and that sometimes creative parameters (such as social distancing ) are good for challenging thinking outside the box.

Easier to create performance that is socially distant from audiences but how to keep performers socially distant from each other.

What does an R and d process look like ? can you work at 2m ? Engaging households? Family groups?

Elaborate costumes/haz mat suits ?

Including practical actions like using hand sanitiser as part of the performance.

Quarantining theatre groups is potentially expensive and hard for performers with families/other responsibilities.

Is only small work possible?

Promenade through the streets

people's houses are their auditoriums

drive through theatre

Street theatre and subversions of public spaces and acts feel exciting.

Theatrical public acts like NHS clap and the doctors turning away from PM's car in Denmark are striking.

Acknowledging existing examples from performance: outdoors, promenade, vehicle/bike shows

Taking on board current limitations: No contact, no closed spaces, no big congregations...what can we imagine as performance?

How strong is the pull to retain normality?

How to monetise non-building based performances?

Accessible theatre has never been more important or needed.

Taking theatre to the streets enables great accessibility but hard to balance economically.

The importance of 'liveness'.

Talked about a piece of theatre proposed that has no audience but performed live, and feeling sad about that, and how do we make good decisions about work we need to make when we'll have been out of work for ages...

Using virtual spaces that are designed for commercial rather than creative purposes.

Paul Sutton: Ms.



Signatories: Rebecca Wood, Max Dorey, Bronia Housman, Alana Dunlevy, Zoe Squire, Charlotte Cooke

#### WHAT DO WE NEED?

- Inclusion in generation of content during Covid crisis
- Awareness from venues of designers' process in relation to time and payment structure - shifting payment brackets.
- More transparency from venues/companies for future productions cancellations.
- Streaming rights being considered
- Advanced permission and terms granted from the whole of the creative team.
- Content value - crediting of non-visible contributors including design/technical in social media etc
- Parity with all members of team- if anyone is giving permission or getting paid, everyone should be giving permission or getting paid.
- Time of streaming made available for free being negotiated
- Donation tipping point - royalties/percentage of original fee aligned to revival?

#### WHAT DO WE WANT?

- Support and communications from NPOs; financial, transparency of programming and general emotional reassurance.
- Regional/local theatres to develop better ties to local artists
- Venues facilitate the networking of local artists; using this as time to meet and collaborate with local creatives with different ideas.
- Making our process more visible: building awareness of time and skills spent around generating the content and non-visible team members. Time/process
- Better support structures to ensure that any NPO look to help various career levels- graduate/fringe/mid-scale/established and aren't lost.
- Financial opportunities created: Assistant roles, supporting more senior artists peer to peer mentoring
- An ability to shift perception of design as a tag-on; we want to redefine roles. We are visual artists who practice their art through the medium of theatre.
- To be looking at designers as primary artists and trusted by venues to be leaders in developing projects.
- Given time and opportunity to develop this idea of design-led
- For the future model of 'distanced engagement' needs to be beyond just filming shows, collaboration to imagine what that might be.
- To be exercising our abilities to think outside the 'box' with other creatives
- Opportunity to get visual theatre artists to talk to each other from all disciplines as we usually don't have the opportunity or time to talk to each other (LX, Projection, Set and Costume, Sound).

#### WHAT DO WE HAVE TO OFFER?

- Design that raises audience experience over 2d/digital experience- to reward the audience for returning back to physical experience.
- TIME! We all have time.
- We want to develop an online directory of local designers - is that appealing?
- Non-lateral thinking process, spatial awareness and visual literacy.
- Skills to imagine theatrical events that are less reliant on traditional theatrical forms: buildings, actors.
- Skills to remotely collaborate with other designers to generate content when we can return to a more traditional form.
- Experience as frontend creators who develop a lot of parameters and solve logistical restrictions.



- Skills to imagine spaces that might be safe for actors to be the same space but kept apart?
- To have designers included when having initial discussions and R&Ds
- To consider designers as artists and collaborators rather than fulfillment technicians.
- To consider designers as artists and collaborators rather than fulfillment technicians.

## WHAT ARE OUR DREAMS

- SW programming has a greater reflection of local artists working in it from all disciplines.
- Our local scene is enhanced with this opportunity to collaborate closer with local artists.
- Fees fairly reflect the amount of work that is put into projects
- NPOs come to designers with opportunities and ideas as well as shows and employment.
- Designer led projects that can engage the audience, these would be facilitated by NPOs. We hope this would lead to a full commission.

## Creative ways to reach audiences with outdoor performances (Gwen Hales)

**Session Convener:** Gwen Hales

**Participant names:** Lucy H, Billy Alwen, Kate Webb, Jesse Briton, Sian Kidd, Paul Sutton, Lynn Carroll Megan Vaughan-Thomas, Lexi Strauss, Sarah Fielding

The reason for calling this session is to begin to understand how to give the best opportunities of training and support to aspiring producers who may not know the routes in, or may not feel the industry would/will welcome them ?

I will share some thoughts about how to monetise outdoor work (Billy)

Start small - introduce audiences gradually back into becoming an audience again - lobster model small scale work like Kitchen Circus is happening - potentially one to one engagement in parks

Paul sutton - prospero technology- can monetise

<https://prospero.digital> for the main platform

You can see the Desire Path in the prospero Library: <https://prospero.digital/library>

Email me at paul.sutton@candt.org

The Associate Producer model has some details here: <https://academy.prospero.digital/training-blog/what-is-an-associate-prospero-producer-how-do-i-become-one>

Made in Bristol training scheme are working on an outdoor piece as their final performance - in late Aug or early Sept. be great to take these ideas to them and also if there is anything to see- to help them - they would love to. lucy.hunt@bristololdvicorg.uk

Wassail Theatre (Jesse Briton) - New commissions for work connecting artists to somerset audiences (outdoor and socially distanced) -- <https://www.wassailtheatre.co.uk/commission-connecting-communities>

Frank (Jesse Briton) - a touring production inside a translucent bubble (help?) -- [https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/ntw\\_shows/frank/](https://www.nationaltheatrewales.org/ntw_shows/frank/)

[www.siankidd.com/](http://www.siankidd.com/) @ohsiankidd - I've been working on two large scale patchwork bee marionettes, the project is an exploration of sustainable puppet practice and is a collaboration with artist Louis Masai, costume maker Annelies Henny and musicians Samaia. Interested in bringing to outside spaces, particularly allotments and green spaces.

[lexistrauss@hotmail.com](mailto:lexistrauss@hotmail.com)

Im a fine artist, just in process of devising a solo project suitable for variable contexts.

We will be running the CircusWorks conference online with weekly sessions over the next few months. Insurance will be one of the issues discussed. Will be in touch shortly with more details

Thoughts on audiences creating/wearing crinolines and pool-noodles on thier heads....herded into pens to watch performances.

## How can we make new projects without ACE project funding? (Tessa Bide)

**Session Convener:** Tessa Bide

*No report*

## Anxiety & Connection: how do we overcome our anxiety (audiences, artists, etc) and connect to each other? (Maeve O'Neill)

**Session Convener:** Maeve O'Neill (Rua Arts)

**Participant names:** Lynn Imperatore, Gillian Roberts, Tessa Wills, Tom Bevan

There will be a huge amount of the population with PTSD - how do we address it?

Anticipation of audiences with anxiety

Anxiety of returning to a creative practice - always there but now it's different

How will it impact children & young people?

Venues are scenario planning for re-opening: audiences are a main worry

How will the wider impact be felt? People are missing being together but maybe aren't thinking about the impact? Being anxious of groups is now going to be a widespread feeling.

Increased mental health awareness

With testing, distancing and ppe it will be safe for groups to meet but how do we make those individuals feel comfortable?

What can we provide?

Can the performances / building acknowledge the anxiety?

Acknowledging that we will all have changed.

The environment has to acknowledge it.

People will feel more safe outdoors than in enclosed spaces.

What's possible? What's financially feasible?

100 theatres surveyed: 20% confident to return to venues as an audience (15% over 65yrs old)

From TomBevan to Everyone: 12:38 PM

<https://www.indigo-ltd.com/blog/after-the-interval-when-will-audiences-return-to-live-events-and-venues-after-lockdown>

Social distancing models don't work financially

The appetite will be there to be with other people

The government will not think about how audiences, artists and venues 'feel' so we will.

The importance of making everyone feel safe and comfortable.

How do we find new ways to bring audiences to theatre? But who wants to be in the theatre? Make it accessible and fun. The anxiety of doing the wrong the thing. e.g. being in an art gallery without that 'knowledge'

Things could really and should really change. Overcoming the intimidation.

Making it meaningful when people come back together.

Visual art doesn't crossover to the digital as well as theatre?

If we re-open, they come and don't feel safe, they won't come back.

Venues have to survive in order to be able to experiment and find a way to welcome back audiences.

What are set builders, technicians, designers and stage managers going to do? We can stage a 1-2 person show with no set but that structure doesn't work.

We don't know the ending.

Lynn: <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/04/13/mortality-and-the-old-masters>

This session was with 4 participants including a visual artist and theatre producers and a venue producer. We spoke widely about our own anxieties and issues facing our industry that are causes of anxiety - re-opening venues and museums, staging live performances, creating new work and welcoming audiences. It was reassuring to connect and acknowledge shared concerns and feel hope.

## **What Does the new normal look like? (Maeve)**

**Session Convener:** Maeve

*No report*

## **How can theatre learn from current online accessibility for people with disabilities or financial/spatial limitations? (Steph)**

**Session Convener:** Steph

**Participant names:** Steph, Maximus and Liz

Keep access for disabled or spatially limited artists.

Some disabled artists can only be artists - they are forced to reach outside the normal structures and find new ways to make money.

Theatre can be a conservative medium, maintaining a status quo of the way things are done.

What can we learn from disabled artists, gamers,

How can we make theatre immersive even when we are not physically in a space?

Haptic technology -  
Rumble pads

Don't drop this access after this. Want this lesson to become a campaign.

How do we listen to disabled artists because they have been answering these questions already.

How do we make sure these artists are honored?

How do we hold people to account to do these things?

Why can't people live stream shows more? Why can't recordings be made available for people with access needs?

Manifesto:

Disabled Artists should be more central in conversations about creating work with technology and in new and accessible ways.

Honor these artists for the work that they've already done and continue to do, often unsupported.

Remember that some of these artists can only make work like this, as we are not welcome in traditional work environments. Don't take this space away from them.

Remember that disabled artists lack resources to earn money outside of the artistic work they are doing, don't take their space from them.

Don't let access drop for people with spatial or financial limitations, access isn't just about ramps, captioning, hearing loops and BSL. And allowing technology to reach new people benefits everyone.

## how can we use our theatre/buildings in the future (Sacha)

**Session Convener:** Sacha

*No report*

## how can we radically change decision making structures to place artists at the centre of the collaboration (Kate Yedigaroff)

**Session Convener:** Kate Yedigaroff

**Participant names:** Adam Peck, Jesse Meadows, Becky Chapman, Rosalie White and Frankie, Nick Sweeting, Tom Spencer, Graham Johnson, Florence Espeut-Nickless, Tessa Bide, Cat Boot, Emma bettridge, Alex Murdoch, Ben Atterbury, Mel Scaffold, Megan Vaughan-Thomas, Tanuja Amarasuriya

How do we fuck up this moment?

Not slag off what exists but what are the most exciting ways to imagine making stuff happen together.

Is it a funding question?

How do we avoid the hierarchy?

Who is making decisions about who gets money?

What is the table and how do we change it? Subverting and opening up process?

Need for transparency.

Is there an equal playing field at the moment in that we are all quite fucked. Big guys struggling. how can we emerge in an exciting and collaborative way.

How about divvying up the money in open space?

The conversations seem to be dominated by status quo.

how might we use this moment of smaller scale practice and apply to larger structures. Eg a small charitable foundations. Bigger organisations seem to lose that transparency. Do we need them to operate more like jury service. So critical voices are there.

Problem of value time money discrepancy that exists. Is there a way for artists to feel that piss is being taken. Burdened by hierarchy that is not working for you.

what is most radical financial shuffle.

If people start to think about maker and facilitator. Deadens the skill. Are the labels helpful ?

Story of venue proposition where staff sacks and where artists take over.

Talked about removing bias in recruitment processes e.g. Tarek tackling ageism in BAC

Too many producers and administrators. It will be interesting to see who is preserved.

Artist led organisation is the largest funded organisation - ROH - should we be more like that?

Should boards have more artists on the board? It is about time for free - what are the implications of that?

### **Who are the key workers in our industry?**

A levelling out needs to happen. Pay is equated to value. How can we show artists are valued? Economic inequity across all sectors are considerable and need addressing collectively. We do not need to model on what teachers or nurses are getting. Idea of value needs to acknowledge full complexity. Broader than money but must include money. We need to life value away from work. Big existential questions.

The idea of economy is broader that artists do not get changed.

### **Programming**

How do we collaborate with other producing companies to create a joined up offer to programmers to reach audiences?

Are there examples of youth boards we can explore?

Co programming with children - integrated into practice. Dublin.

Who chooses who is employed? Remove biases by removing age on applications and on interview panels. BAC

Town Hall citizens assembly to share out money

Curators and producers have great heart - great skill in navigating the offer from artists for audiences

**How do artists feed back to funders and programmers** - Needs to be transparent on how things are working. And need to know how the info is being used.

Sector support organisations - tend to be about institutions not independents.  
Neptotism in arts organisations unspoken.  
Need to 'own up' to what is happening in our organisations in terms of protecting teams/core  
Artists should be represented the whole way through.

Ways for artists and venues to work more collaboratively so involved in all conversations. Build authenticity by building communities in making of the work. Enables us to own the work.  
Marketing dpts don't see the work. That is about lack of structural empowerment. Do you know why the decision is made in venues. That is about structural inequality in venues. Difficult conversations to have with venues. Because of power imbalance. How can you have open conversation? Needs digesting by organisation, but they don't get back.

Organisations and venues - our audiences are changing. Is there research into what audiences are watching now? How to reach those audiences what they are watching now.

No body knows what to do right now. We are trying to have a plan. But no one has one. Can we reimagine something that feels better.  
There has been a lot of conversations about shoring up status quo and how do we fit? Based on existing models. Very product led. What do we want to feel and the purposes of what we do. If this is outcome what are our routes towards that? Need to get out of panic and trust that a requirement that how we live as humans needs us to look into our souls. Art will happen.

Need to balance philosophical and practice.

To shape industries towards that we must think about what we want, not just what happened.

Need Holistic version of these things.

Do we need a (French?) model where artists have a universal basic income?  
No excuse for everyone not to have a seat at the table.  
Leadership roles should shift to listening and facilitate decisions not made by them.

We tend to use language that reflect other models - 'product' etc Maybe we need to change the way we and where we put vision and mission. Need to move from selling to being. Not what you can buy but what our ethos is. Examples of value rather than changing product

Need to reevaluate each other. Remember the hierarchy within artists.

## The potential role for rural in the recovery (Mark Wallace)

**Session Convener:** Mark Wallace

**Participant names:**

Rural Networks have been really active and supportive during the crisis

Risks

How could residencies work and produce interesting work with local communities as a model of working? Is this an exciting way forward?

People within communities want to celebrate, want to get together. Artists can enable this.  
How can outside space be used?

possible role for small casts to go on the road for outdoor shows - "bringing along a picnic, getting quite drunk, sitting in a park together"!

but what about accommodation for this kind of tour? How will the actors stay in villages?

initially, is it in fact a local mediation role for the arts organisation? Just linking local artists with local communities?

First, get comfortable with a performance at the end of your street

Then, maybe, bring in a guest artist from outside for a residency with local artists

Could this guest facilitating artist then tour to another community, after appropriate quarantine?

How do we give the visiting artist enough information in advance so that they can find their place locally?

Role of the host organisation/ network is to make the artist ready, so they're not just parachuted in and always feeling like an outsider

arts organisations/network could be the matchmaker - themes and forms which both the communities and the artists want to explore

Don't ask the artists to pitch - ask the communities what they want to make. Artists can then work within the existing frames of reference.

And what the arts skills which are already available locally? 'Resident' artist should complement that, so that all artists are valued and support each other

Also - there are people in communities who don't consider themselves professional artists, but whose skills are valuable to the project.

NEXT STEPS: Mark Wallace to email this group once next stages of possible funding become clearer. *[emails redacted]*

## How to build a more engaging inclusive and representative theatre culture online and after (Deasy)

**Session Convener:** Deasy

*No report*

## Butterfly Room: What are we going to let burn?

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO LET BURN?

The phrase 'it's got to wash its face'

The phrase 'the bottom line'

Spending public money on free gifts for 'VIPs'

Celebrating diverse income streams above diverse audiences

Really expensive crisps in theatre bars

Assumptions about risk

free tickets for people employed by NPOs

-For me, personally, I'm going to keep hold of the much more healthy work/life balance I've established during this period. I've spent far more time with my partner and my family (albeit over Zoom) and my life hasn't been as crazy fast-paced as before. I do miss some of the madness - but want to cling on to some of the calm I've found. (Tom, Producer)

Bureaucracy, taking too long to make decisions

-

In a crisis Maslow's hierarchy of needs seems prescient. In this time rather than overclaiming what the value of the arts is as a need perhaps embracing the below:

"We're not what you need to live, but what makes life worth living."

Patriarchy

The concept that Shakespeare is a relevant playwright.