STAMP DAY 2

**Arts with communities: What’s happening, what has changed, and what’s still to do?**

Curated by Anna Dominian from the Barbican

Chair: Jo Chard Creative Partnership and Programme Manager at Guildhall School of Music and Drama

Shamira Turner – Theatre Maker, She Goat

Kane Husbands – Theatre Maker, The Pappy Show

Suzanne Gorman – Maya Productions

21:49

Hello everyone. Hello. Just wait a couple of minutes people to arrive, we might kick off. So hi my name is Nick and I'm head of theater at the Pleasance and have been one of these stamp organizing team helping to set up stack connects. So welcome to stamp connects and for those who are joining us as first time stamp is a network of over 50 organizations who work together to take practical collective action to improve the ways in which artists are supported by our organization and valued in society more wisely. Steps connect online, which is where we are today is the biggest event we run every year, but we normally do this in person, that sort of short it's town halls so this is the first time we're hosting the event online, so do forgive us if we have any technical glitches at any point, but we will attempt for this to be as smooth as possible. And also since they're captioned by auto AI to activate those closed captions, you can click on the closed caption button at the bottom of your screen, or found by clicking on the three dots at the top of your screen if you're on a mobile. You can then click View closed captions. You can also see a full transcript of the event by clicking on the top left hand corner I'm probably pointing in a different direction with the top left on my screen, which says, offer AI and that'll open a separate window with a live transcript. If you could only use the chat function throughout the show to pose questions to the panel and Anna Dominions from the barbecue family wants to give away, and I are here by picking up chat questions, as well as kind of any support you need during the sessions if you have any issues please drop by either one of us a message at the end of the session during the question section we will pose these questions back to the panel. And hopefully, that way we can condense down questions on a similar theme and make the best use of the question time at the end. As I mentioned if you having any trouble with your tech or zoom but Anna and I are on hand to help out, and you can write a direct message to us in the chat and we'll be able to help. We are going to record the sessions and look at choir was I must have done something there is already recording.

23:47

If you just hit record. Oh yes it is happening.

23:52

So we are going to record. Today's session with abusers sharing the audio file on the website either website afterwards. If you have any concerns about this, please message either one, and do feel free to either have your camera on or off, but it is the audio that we're looking to share. And finally, today's session is BSL interpreter. So it's being BSL interpreted by Laura, M, and by Laura CI, so I'm just going to spotlight, Laura, M, who will speak first and I spotlighted them so that any users who would like to follow along with Laura can pin her screen. Halfway through the session we'll pause briefly and we're going to swap to Laura G so do bear with us about halfway through while we do this. Just going to Valerie. And I'd now like to pass over to Joe the chair for this session. Yeah,

24:52

It's Nick. So hello everybody I'm Joe chard, and I'll be chairing As Nick said. So the way the session will work is each of us we introduce ourselves briefly, and then we'll have a conversation for about 20 minutes, leaving about 15 to 20 minutes at the end for audience questions. So I'm a queer activist and producer working across the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and barbecuing. Before becoming a producer I worked as an environmental and human rights campaigner for a number of different charities and organizations. Currently I lead a new department called creative partnerships and programming, which are, amongst other things, focuses on testing unorthodox and new ways of working in order to make the arts more representative and open. This includes working with communities and the charity sector to create projects that place people with lived experience at the center, and working on projects that are co Created and directed by people, mainly in and around the city of London and neighbouring boroughs. At the moment we're working on a festival called disrupt which is taking place in July. That will be exploring how communities and the performing arts have collaborated during the pandemic, with a particular focus on new or different ways of working, and one of the aims in the work that I do is to create a space to test out different models of producing funding and organizing so that we can see how and if these changes can affect some of the structural inequalities that currently impact the arts, with the overall ambition of providing greater access and participation. And so now I'm going to ask each of our panel members to introduce themselves. We're going to start with shimmer returner who is an artist, musician performance maker, and the co director of she go performance company shamira When you're ready.

26:39

Hi. Hi, I'm shamira, and for anyone who needs a description, I'm a white woman with a blonde hair cut into a fringe and a bright yellow shirt, so as Joe says I'm the co artistic director of she goats, and the producer, and we make work that really sits in the kind of overlapping place of live music gig and theatrical performance work mucked around with gender and is rooted in autobiography, and a key focus for us is making our work inherently accessible to visually impaired audiences, and finding creative and economic ways to do that because we are small scale. I'm also a founding member and associate artists of little bolt theatre, so have made and toured numerous works with them over the years, but worth mentioning in this context is our work for rural touring and for anyone who doesn't know what rural touring is that's where you make a show that can cram into a van, including all of their bodies and lights and whatever tech you need, and then drove out to more rural locations and sets that show up in their village halls and community spaces so we've made two shows for rural touring and three tours with the foreigner Maltings over the years. I also work with other companies in various capacities, as I know we all do shape shifting for the needs of a project and worth noting in this context is two shows, one is Jasmine Johnson's more than two which was supported by the Barbican and culminated in a stage concept album, and for that we worked with people identifying as queer polyamorous, and it drew on verbatim text and also put those individuals into the show, and the work so it was a really cohesive experience with those communities, and human jam made a couple of years with Camden people's theater, we worked with a assembled Community Choir of Camden residents impacted by hS two, and the renovations around Euston. And so again that was about giving them a voice and putting them front and center in a theatre production at CBT. With she goat, we were due to talk, our latest show the undefinable last year, and we're two dates into the tour when theaters close their doors, and that tour had community engagement activities, woven throughout it. So the show is about unconventional and nonconformist relationships, and really the lack of language or prohibitive nature of language around defining relationships and expressing those feelings that we feel are undefinable. These are conversations we really wanted to have with people on the road. And so when the talk, needed to be canceled. We reimagined that activity into an online and digital version, which became our curious hearts song clubs, and these are online listening parties where each one is bespoke, and usually and I the other half of shakeout tailor the events around the participants joining us, so that's really an exercise in creating a safe digital space for a genuine exchange of ideas, and it focuses on reaching out to communities identifying as LGBTQ ai plus queer elders, vulnerable, isolated, and we hope that we, we've done six of those events so we hope that those kind of generate many communities with each event, And I think that's me.

30:16

Thank you.

30:19

Sure. We'll talk more about about those things in a bit. Next I would like to introduce Suzanne. So, Suzanne Gorman is the artistic director of Mark productions and a champion for social change and racial justice in the arts, Suzanne, go ahead, introduce yourself when you're ready. Hello,

30:40

thank you, Joe, and Shamima yet. My name is Suzanne Gorman. I'm the artistic director of my productions, and I am a British South South Asian woman and I am wearing a kind of pink top, and I'm in my office at home. And yet this this morning, I suppose I wanted just to give a very quick overview of my productions, and then talk about two projects that we have, have run that involve community engagement, and my productions, you know, we make diversity attempts to create change. And we do that because we genuinely believe that everyone, regardless of age, ability culture or class should have access to good quality theater experiences. And so what we look to do is to bring together organizations and individuals who really want their work to promote social change and also really encourage racial justice in the arts. And so the way in which we do that is we have kind of three strands of work. Firstly, we make work that is led by an ethnically diverse artists. Secondly, we look at promoting workforce diversity across the arts. So that's about kind of looking at who is working in the arts, working with organisations either through research projects or facilitation or training to promote inclusion across the kind of workforce of the arts. And then thirdly, we also engage with young people and communities. Through community engagement projects through participation in the arts, and what we look to do with our engagement projects is really about unlocking creative potential of people, and developing skills. We also want to really demystify theatre processes so that they become more accessible for everybody to understand how we make theatre, we look to profile ethnically diverse role models when we're doing this work. And, you know, ultimate aims are to inspire a diverse pool of artists and industry professionals for the future as well as reaching new audiences and really engaging those that additionally can be underrepresented or least engaged in theater, and, and I thought I would just kind of give an overview of two of our, our projects. the first is the Croydon Avengers, and this was a piece of theater that we developed and taught for young audiences. And it told the story of three superhero young refugees, and community engagement was really really at the heart of this project right from the start, because it was inspired by a participation project that we ran called superheroes that the red that with a group of young refugees, and also young creators, and the project itself used theatre, and comic book storytelling and martial arts to explore ethnically diverse role models and superheroes and using that kind of cross arts form,

34:02

you know, sort of works very much for us when we're working with communities who may not particularly have English as a, as a first language, though, using different art forms is that is, we found was really good for enabling more participation. And what we did is we invited our writer on a deeper work Balaji to be part of that actual participation project, and after that he then did go away, and write our piece of theatre which we took back to our young refugees. And then, as the peace itself developed, we went into another r&d process did work, working progress performances but then opened that up to more young people so we actually then shared our processes with different with a youth theatre with the school with other young audiences getting their feedback on the work as it was developing so that they could really have that conversation with us as we were making work that was then taught eventually to other young audiences, and alongside that every stage we were running our kind of superheroes projects, and when we were touring the final piece, we did a video project with another group of young refugees, and then shared that at one of our venues. So that was kind of a piece of work that we did, looking specifically at young people but very much about kind of young refugees and asylum seekers and the piece of work that we're developing at the moment is called Benny and the grey cats and that's quite a slightly different kind of mode of community engagement because the starting point for this actually was has actually come from my own particular family history, the piece tells the story of a family of Anglo Indian musicians who migrate from South India to Sheffield in the 1960s, and we started this actually explored it through a Barbican open lab, and very much at that particular stage, we immediately invited a group of older people, some of whom were kind of from the Anglo Indian community and also a group of younger people to come into that open lab so we ran a, an intergenerational workshop, looking at the themes that we were exploring within the piece, and also sharing with them very early kind of stage material, and since then I suppose our community engagement as the piece has developed. So has the engagement that we're, we're doing alongside it so we're running a program called roots to roots, which then looks at the very simple model that I took to start betting in the gray cats which is looking at your family heritage or cultural heritage as a starting point for your own creative response. So we're working with other young artists or young people to run routes to routes and we've we're about to embark on our third routes to rich project, we run these projects in partnership with other organizations up in Sheffield, and this year we're also running talking about my generation which was something that we were planning to do last year but we did put on hold and that works with an older peoples group. It's going to be working with South Asian women in Sheffield, looking at the 1960s looking at Sheffield looking at Sheffield and Migration Stories. And again, what we're looking to do is kind of bring people together. So, our aim for this year is that we will bring our older peoples group our younger people's group and also the Benny team as we go into another RND physically if we can, fingers crossed together at the migration matters festival in Sheffield, and we are also going to be sharing a showcasing they're talking about my generation work at the disrupt Festival, and our ultimate aim, I would hope is that potentially with the work that's created by the communities that engage with this project is that when we do deal with the full production is that we could then have an installation or something an exhibition of work that is able to travel with us as we taught the show. So, that's me. Thank you.

38:17

Thanks, Suzanne, a really interesting introduction. And finally I'd like to ask Kane husbands to introduce So Cain is a specialist in movement physical theater and choreography, and the artistic director of puppy.

38:33

Kane. Hey, thank

38:36

you. I'm gonna let the squad down cuz d3 speaks so amazingly, but I'm gonna do my best. My name is Kane husband's, and I work as a movement director and a choreographer and a facilitator and I'm also the artistic director of a company called the puppy show, and the puppy show came about in 2012, actually just after I'd finished working on the Olympic and Paralympic ceremonies, which was amazing, like when I think of London back then how insane was that time,

39:08

and I'm a huge Olympics fan, because I think it's truly celebrates difference from all across the world, so that's been a real kind of cornerstone of what the of what the puppy shares practice has been. And I think when leading the puppy show initially when we started it was about bringing a group of people together to play games and to be in a room, and that, and I guess from my own personal experience, I'm a mixed race man with a kind of complicated mixture of ethnicities all wrapped up in there. And I wanted my working life to look like my friendship group, and they didn't realize that we were doing something very different, but we ended up working, and the puppy shows I guess footprint has been about working with diverse communities, and at times platforming people of color in leadership roles. And that's become our sort of mission. And I wanted to tell you about a couple of the projects that we did so in 2018 So after a long time of just training, we came about as a training company we didn't want to focus on output. It's about bringing people together to do movement and physicality and ensemble skills in a room to play games and to see what came from that. But in 2018, we made a piece called boys, which was with 10 Men of Color, and it was a celebration of what being a man of color in Britain and grown up in Britain is an A true celebration of their manhood. And, and the complexity of what that is. And we taught that show and it went a number of awards and, and we continue to perform that show. And I think, in total, now there's about 30 men that have been in boys, and they've become one of our wonderful communities that looks at a difference really there are a real spectrum of people whose families span the whole world but that has brought them all to this place right now. After that, what am I talking about a project we're doing right now. It's called Black girl magic. It's with 10, black women, they're at the unicorn theatre right now today that are readying a piece that is about work, about being a young, about being a black woman, and it's for a younger audience. And I think it's never felt more relevant to be asking some of these questions. I thought I'd finally tell you about a piece that we did. Elton Palace, which was working with a number of different charities and organizations were working with English Heritage Metro charity, the National Youth Theatre and the puppy show were leading, and it was working with queer people with trans people in the non binary community, and it was reclaiming that space, I didn't even know that Elton palace had a whole rich history of being led by queer people, and it was like let's take over this. This heritage site, and let's, let's, let's bring the stories that in some ways have been hidden to the forefront and to celebrate them so the puppy share his legacy or where we're moving is about celebrating a whole array of different stories, and it's about giving a platform to to the communities we think that often. Maybe because of the current structure that we're in mean that it's not always as accessible to get to the forefront.

42:51

Thank you very much

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Kane.

42:55

Well thank you all for introducing yourselves so adequately. So my first question for all of you, and I think we'll start with schmira, is how do you think the pandemic has changed how artists are working with communities and as Bowsher and Susanna first spoken about their work during the pandemic, feel free to bring in some of her in practice as well. So schmierer Yeah,

43:21

thanks Joe this is a really interesting question. And I feel like it's an extension or an echo of how the pandemic is impacted, all of our daily lives and work lives in general and nuanced ways, I feel key shift is from location to technology, and maybe we could put that just in, in terms of the focus coming off of how do, where are communities located in like geographical physical locations, how do we get to spaces, how do we meet in spaces, and more. Because of the needs of working around the pandemic and keeping each other safe, more how do we make connections online and in the same way that there are barriers and meeting people and bringing people to physical spaces, there are barriers in getting online and using technology. So there's different questions to address always like, Oh, who are we missing Who are we overlooking and including here. So I think that one of the potentially positive outcomes of the pandemic and how the pandemics, shifting how we're thinking about connecting with each other, is that maybe we've become a little more aware and more sensitive of the idea of individuals being isolated, those shielding because of the pandemic, but there are many who have been, that's an experience that predates the pandemic and will go on after it, and the feelings of being cut off and alone, and the practicality of feeling of being isolated, and something about it being more difficult, or not a preference to access physical spaces, but wanting to interact and and connect. So I hope that that's something that is more on on our radar when we think about connecting with communities.

45:24

Extra, I have one I have one question that I wanted to ask you which is about access, and if you felt like it felt like the knowledge around access for people with disabilities have changed during the pandemic as everyone's moved online Do you feel like people's understanding of it is improved.

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Anecdotally, for me, both as a recipient of I've been, I've been accessing and what I've been trying to do. The difference that I've seen since usually and I started our journey of trying to make our work accessible in various ways and stay within a small scale budget to now is really, really exciting and I think that there's, there's been some very innovative, individual responses but also things that should have been a given are more of a given now, this event is being BSL interpreted and not just by one interpreter but there's an acknowledgement that it's, it would be overwhelming for one person to BSL interpret an entire hour so we're gonna have a handover. And there's, there's the option of captions and I feel like we can help each other to become more familiar with the just that the things we can do. So yeah, there's more, there's more shared language there's more shared resources. There's conversations happening and sharing of skills and experiences amongst artists, and that's becoming more common place. In terms of, I'm finding I'm not having to explain the concept of an extra access item that we want might want to do for an event, it's already on people's radar, which is, which is positive. I feel that it's, it's yeah it's still pretty slippery, sometimes I kind of want to remind myself that it's, it can be a bit overwhelming, to try to the awareness of trying to do everything and not wanting to make mistakes and not wanting to miss anyone, I feel like we're all learners and for something and she goat that we've tried to remind ourselves is that Done is better than perfect in all things. So trying to really make a genuine connection with, with people and do one aspect of access, thoroughly and well, is, is valid, and sometimes it needs to happen in slightly wonky steps, you are going to drop some balls if you try and hold them all at once. So yeah, that's just sort of anecdotally my experience of how it's progressing.

48:05

Great. Thanks very much mirror, and on that topic I think we're gonna have a switch over, of our bedside interpreter. So we'll just wait for one moment. Great. Thank you. Thanks very much. So, Suzanne. I wanted to ask you the same question. So how do you think the pandemic has changed our artists to work with communities and in particular, I wanted to ask you about geographical area, and how you felt like the pandemic kind of affected that focus because of your work for putting Avengers. There's a real geographical focus in terms of the, the group that you chose to participate with, and I know that the way that you do my productions is very much kind of geographically focused, often, so how is the pandemic affected that in terms of moving online.

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I mean, it's interesting that that obviously with the Croydon Avengers, it was very location geographically, you know, based, and that a lot of the work that actually happened happened physically in Croydon, and with interestingly with Benny in the gray cuts because actually it's a piece of work that is about Sheffield. Already the partnership working that my production tourism, you know, where a London based organization. We were already working up in Sheffield, and I think that when the kind of pandemic, so, so in terms of kind of zoom meetings and things like that, as an individual, you know, running a project that was happening in London, and, and Sheffield, I was always used to kind of having phone calls, and video meets off often not zoo, but using other platforms. And so in some ways sort of transferring that side of things wasn't too challenging because I'd actually been working that way. And one of the things that I really enjoyed about both with the crow Dementors actually because we taught that up north as well, and also with with Benny's that Maya has always been interested in telling national stories not just things that are completely kind of locational or geographically based. So, so we were able to start to bridge that a little bit more easily but in terms of actually the practicalities of running the project will immediately yeah we had to kind of investigate how to work online right at the beginning of lockdown. Last year, And I think, again, that was very much a learning curve for myself and our partners. Ignite imaginations, in terms of how we were able to be creative, online, and I think that since running that particular project, everyone has, has learned a tremendous amount about what are the what are the, the opportunities that you get when you're actually with somebody who's in their own safe space, I mean I think that's one of the things that is a real positive is that actually people can actually almost be more expressive at times because they're in their own home environment. But But likewise that home environment, we, we always need to you need to be reminded of safeguarding and actually what that means and so I think there are lots more things to actually really be thinking about when you are trying to work with communities and young people in terms of safeguarding when you're working online and, and I think we need to recognize, as well. You know what the pandemic has done has given everybody an individual experience of this pandemic, and for some communities, you know, they have had a greater impact than others. And so I think there's just that real need for any artist any facilitator to just be even more aware of the fact that the group that you are going to be working with will come with a plethora of experiences, and actually how you hold that space and how you're able to facilitate their own creativity. You just need to be really really mindful of the fact that we all bring to a space, something very, Very different.

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Thanks very much,

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Suzanne,

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and

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Kane, I wanted to ask you the same question. So how do you think the pandemic has changed how artists are working with communities and in particular I wanted to ask you, because I know that in terms of your kind of ensemble work fostering a sense of community is very important, so you kind of mentioned that with boys. And how have you tried to move this into a digital space and has it been possible to try and kind of replicate this idea of community within ensemble, practice into a digital space.

53:02

It's been so interesting, hasn't it, I've been thinking a lot about performance, and that performance has existed everywhere, it's still exist, like, even without the buildings, it's still existing. It's like it's my own telling stories around the table and being other people and it's underneath there was a busker playing in the middle of the road it's like it exists, it's like we've learned that times being outside has felt safer than being inside. And I'm curious to know what does that mean as we move forward to go into the summer, what would that be for performance and, and where are the places that those communities are going, because in some ways it's made me question audiences, and where the audience goes and maybe you, you don't get the diverse, rich audience in your building, but why should we be going there why now that everything changes should I be coming to your building I wasn't welcome before so why should I be going there now. So maybe it's made me think that, who does the work maybe us as artists should be going to the community sometimes rather than just can we expect them to do the work and come to us. And, and in terms of the puppy show we've got a number of different companies, and we started to question what do we need what we don't need is to put on a shirt right now, but what we did need is connection. So it meant that we hosted talks every week for the whole lockdown it's been a year of talk. And it's just been a zoom call that people can drop in and out of those different companies and communities and we facilitate discussions, and they've. In some ways it's felt like we've got closer over this whole lockdown period, actually having big conversations about things like BlackLivesMatter and holding like an all black space or thinking in response to the police brutality, like what are we gonna do or thinking about how we, how we support the marginalized communities that at the minute are shielding or aren't out there it's like what would performance for them be like or is it about a zoom call or actually is it about going to the care home and having a video wave in the chat with your grandmother outside. It's like maybe that's what it looks like. So it's, it's may just be really curious to think about what do we need right now, and at times that was workshops. So we decided to host a whole heap of free workshops that were just on Zoom, we get people's bodies moving because we know we feel better after moving your body a little bit. And it also bridged a bit of you formed a bit of a connection even if it was with a stranger, and we really grew this topic of having conversations and talking and just holding space where we could speak. And I've been thinking about, there's been, like the word resilience has been banded around so much. It's like, I don't actually know if we have been resilient, or we just were thrown into a trauma but we had to cope with. I don't like when I was thinking about resilience. We decided to create a mentoring program. And it's not because we know any better, but we thought that actually having the kind of someone you could lean on or be in contact with or speak with on a one to one, and to open that opportunity up meant that we took on 30 people and we said to all kinds of associates, you could just be you could mentor somebody through, and one of those stories was like a young black man that I'm mentoring writing his dissertation on his mobile phone, it's like that's resilience, it's like, but it just really showed to me, the gap that actually moving it all online. But lights have got her actually moving everything online hasn't been easy for some people, it hasn't just been a direct transfer of making everything more accessible, it's actually just widen the goal. And I'm still trying to practice or going to continue the journey of like radical self care of trying to prioritize rest as the word as the pace of this world like gets quicker and quicker and quicker and that you're like, doing meeting after meeting, it's like how do we, I feel like if us as community leaders right now it's like we have the responsibility I think to carve the new way. Because what's familiar, is the old way. And if we don't know if we do want to go back. We can't go back.

57:30

Thanks Kay, that leads really nicely onto my onto the last question I'm gonna ask you. I'm gonna try and speed through because I'm aware there's 22, most and that are the audience we need to leave a bit of time for audience questions but a question that I wanted to ask you all, I think I'll start with Kane because you just spoke to eloquently Kane and it's relevant to what you were just saying so. What do you think needs to change post pandemics so that communities are more central to theatre and art making,

57:56

what needs to change. I think the, the hierarchies need to change, it's like the actually, a few people holding the keys at the top isn't the way, it's like, bring us into the conversation actually grassroots we're seeing real change happen on the ground it's like how could we at the top be learning from some of that stuff. How could we question the ways we do things not just the content of what we put on. I'm not interested in just in a show on this, or performance on this it's like tell me the process you did in making it. That was more non hierarchical that prioritize difference that like from its conception, not just was like the decoration at the end. I love that we gain this term performative fellowship, I'm done with performing it's like, Just do it. And so I think it's, I think I want to see change that is implemented. From the top, a little bit more and I think we can start to, we can learn from what's going on on the ground and how like, I don't know when Black Lives Matter happened how we started to have protests organized organized protests, and that's continued into like throughout this whole lockdown. And I go, Look, there's some organizational stuff that is happening that isn't about a few people, but it's actually really engaging a wide vast audience.

59:20

Yes, Thank you. Okay, I agree with everything. And I'm gonna go to Suzanne next. So, Suzanne, same question to you, what do you think needs to change post pandemics so that communities and more central to theatre and art making.

59:36

So, again, I completely agree with, with Kane about kind of leadership. And it's really important that leaders recognize and actively engage with the communities that geographically we've spoken about is one of the things but obviously now we have this ability to connect with wider communities online for me. Key things are really kind of about the visibility and profile of role models from diverse backgrounds, whatever that might be, and actually making sure that that you, You can see people that connect with you, not only on stages, but in those kind of key the gatekeeper roles, you know, in the backstage roles, you know, sort of, so one of the things that we're really keen on here at Meijer obviously is about how we kind of Change who can who's actually working in the industry because I think that's really important for the way in which we're able to engage the wider communities, either to engage as audiences on want to come, or engage online but also about who is going to be making the art, who is going to be marketing it who is going to be digital digitally producing it in the future so role models are really important for me. The other thing I think is about longevity legacy long term engagement, having, you know, worked in community arts and theater for for many many years now. I think that often organizations face a challenge where they'll kind of put on a show or work with a particular community once, and then it's not for another five years that they're able that they kind of come back around to that, that, or that community. And I think that actually thinking about how you can reusing now that the learning from going online, how we can kind of engage people for more long term engagement, and that and I think the final thing I want to just say on that and that is also about programming and allowing a diversity of stories to be told on stages so it's about long term engagement but also having different stories and unheard stories rather than producing things that kind of tell the story of a community in a particular way and then we often get the same one. A few years later. And I think that's what I wanted to say.

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Brilliant thanks Suzanne and schmira

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Finally,

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same question to you so you do think needs to change, or what do you think needs to change post pandemics are the communities and more central to theatre and art making.

1:02:21

Yeah thank you Joe. And I completely echo everything that Cain and Suzanne has said and all of those points so just to add a couple of details in terms of thinking also about what's actionable for for small companies and individual art makers. I feel like we, we need to extend to the positive disruption of these conversations about what's, what's not working and what's unhealthy about our sector, and into how our spaces are and, and kind of shine a light on what our own personal working practices are, this is sort of one area so I let Suzanne touched on safeguarding and something that we found within she goat is approaching. Meeting a community inviting them into a space and wanting to open up conversations that might feel vulnerable wanting to be in a genuinely intimate and artistic experience together. We took you have a sort of responsibility and act of care that you're hosting that space, and you're showing up on an equal footing with them to learn. So we built a kind of Charter, which is a shared bunch of agreements to ensure this safe space, and we take no take it upon ourselves to seek out feedback, and nurture those, those relationships. I feel like a community continues beyond a project and you don't just sort of drop a community once you finish the project, and in the same way. I don't I think it's maybe a little unhelpful to think about communities as these entities that are floating around that we're trying to tap into as artists. Sometimes we are seeking admission into a community and we're seeking them to trust us and sometimes a community gathers and builds around a project, for example with human jam we still get email threads about protest, interests, and those, those relationships continue. So I'd be interested in. As Suzanne touched on a kind of longevity and in a grassroots way, you continue the responsibility to the communities that you, you, you make an effort to meet, and as a sort of individual or small company, I would just consider arts within communities, this is arts art doesn't exist outside of community, it's in the same way that a performance doesn't exist without an audience receiving it in whatever shape it takes. So I would really think about why you want to connect with a community, what experience you want that to be like what is the burning question what is the area of interest and it's not that you're bringing something it's that you'd be discovering something together. So yeah, this is a question to come back to because I feel there's a danger sometimes with community engagement and access that it's the kind of add on or a tick box that strengthens a funding bid, and I imagine the fact that all of us are here today sharing this conversation means that we know that isn't the real situation that's not a healthy way to think about it, but if you feel a kind of pressure, and you're not sure how to approach, connecting with a community, go back to basics on why does this project need to happen right now. And who is it for, and how is it for them. So yeah, those are some of my thoughts on that.

1:05:55

I'd like to talk to you for hours, and thank you for being so candid and inspiring all of you. But sadly, my, my period is over so we're gonna pass over to audience questions, I think, I can't remember we agree that will be Nick or honor, but one of you is going to ask some questions from the audience.

1:06:18

You can just ask if anyone has any questions for the panel if you just drop them into the chat, we're going to try and condense them down so we can get through as many as possible. Or if you have one that you'd like to directly address to the panel just use the little either give me a wave or the little hands up icon that otherwise questions in the chat and we can feed them through.

1:06:39

As we wait for audience questions, may I ask something

1:06:44

similar at the beginning you touched on how you can embed community engagement in touring work and obviously that's quite hard as you're as you're moving through physical spaces. So have you know a really valuable engagement and in each case I just wondered what sheep, goats are doing in that area, or what the plan was, I know you've got cut shorts. Of course last year.

1:07:07

Yeah. Thanks, Anna, the plan that we conceived was to have these mini gigs like 1520 minute gig and coffee biscuits tea in the afternoon. So, usually, and I would be hanging out in a space, and we did a one test run of these, which at Camden people's theatre. When we premiered the show. So it's sort of been a kind of response to some some attempts, and this was the this was the version that we arrived at that we felt would be most conducive to a sort of safe space and and having these conversations, we make ourselves vulnerable perform a bit of our show. Talk about what the show is about for us and why we made it, and it is rooted in personal experience, and it is a kind of area of genuine investigation that we feel like there isn't the language, and sometimes there is but it's unhelpful, in order to express inexpressible undefinable relationship structures and dynamics and how that can feel kind of marginalizing, so we were working with Camden people's theatres community engagement officer Daniel Fulvio. And I would really advocate for working with somebody who has experience in this realm, and it's, it's a very beautiful skill to and it's a full time job if you're making the work you might not necessarily have the time to, to recruit and you might not be aware of the kind of networks to tap into so we collaborated with Daniel and the plan was to do these afternoons when we were on tour, and then the show, they would be offered free tickets to come to the show if they wanted to on top of that, so that's, I know I've just absolutely splurged on talking but that is the Redux, like reduced version of what we've planned, but I think that you could tailor, like this is an example that worked with a theater gig show of that theme, but I think that that kind of way of approaching it, you could end up with lots of different ideas

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about first question, so what kind of funding, do you use for your kind of community events in projects, that's for anyone who would like to answer. I can

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speak about. So Arts Council funding is definitely kind of central to making any of the work in terms of, for my A we aren't like we're a very micro organization we do spend a lot of our time, fundraising, and, and it can be a real challenge but I think our current program of work. I suppose local trust actually we you know with our, the work that we're doing in Sheffield, we have been, you know, successful with Sheffield town trust and kind of some Yorkshire based trusts and foundations. And so look so, and that so therefore we were talking about geographic you know geography there if you look at the kind of local area, then there may be some trusts and foundations, they're also supporting with kind of CO producers or partners, you know, sort of festivals that disrupt festival. Again, that has enabled us to be able to develop some of this work so it's kind of the, I think a mixed bag is what's definitely required.

1:10:36

Yeah, we're really similar without we aren't counselor really helped us over, over the years. We work kind of to commission with people or in partnership or. And then, because we thought like our companies always never fitted in anywhere we're not theater enough we're not dance enough or not. So we've just done it ourselves a lot of the time, we kind of we have a rolling track of, of workshops that people we always have three kind of bands that you could pay a smaller medium or if you want to add more and we always encourage you winch or it's free, and we say, after you've enjoyed it, you know, if you want to go back and you realize you could offer something to the company go back and donate to us something. And that means that whether we've had a venue or not we've been making the work. I'm like it's happening, I'm not going back in for anyone will make it happen ourselves so it might just take longer but we do have a little bit of a model that means that we can kind of stand on our own

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questions does shimmy, shimmy or so how did you create the charter as a shared agreement. What was the process like and is it accessible online.

1:11:48

Hello. Yes. How did we create it. Usually, myself, and Daniel identified the need for it. First of all, and thought that it would be good to have some ground rules that didn't feel like you were going. You're in danger of making a mistake. And Daniel had experience. He's also co director of something called a company called inky cloak, who had begun running an online drama group for queer elders, and they had been building their version of a charter, as a shared set of ingredients agreements for a space, so we kind of were adapting that to things that we learned about being in physical spaces and things that we were imagining about being in online spaces. So it's a sort of list of tenants or like shared agreements like, for example, we all not comment on each other's, what we can see of each other's spaces, and anything, this is a safe space we accept that. We all make mistakes we're willing to learn, and that we were showing up with intentions to connect and whatever we explore and talk about in this say in this space, stays in this space and we won't go on and share things that other people have shared outside. And so those are just some that I'm remembering off the top of my head but that's something that we send to people in advance of the event and then we recap all together to get us all on the same page. And isn't available online because it's it's kind of come up through quite a personal way, but if that person wants to email CBT and get in touch with me I can, I can totally share that and maybe that's something I can think about putting on she gets website in case that's a useful resource for other artists. I was that the extended for question, so anything I missed. Okay, thank you for asking.

1:13:54

Otherwise, there's no more questions in the chat such I don't know if you have any further questions you want to ask or if anyone still wants to ask them just drop them in the chat.

1:14:05

I have one question. So, with Kane and Suzanne's work, mentoring as class, take takes kind of quite a central role in your practice and both of you have mentioned it, so I wanted to ask, kind of, how, how much you feel like the mentoring within the work that you do relates to workforce diversity and how much also relates to the community based practice that you kind of that you both do either one of you can answer that. Yeah,

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can I say like it's so at the heart of what we think of because it's like, in the current industry none of these people would be in would be given the opportunity to be leaders. And yeah, I know. You're amazing voices to me and to our friendship group and to the people we work with but we go you absolutely should be a mentor to someone we see you as a mentor, you've been a mentor in this room. So us being able to give the opportunity to have platforming you in your voice. Again you should be speaking to somebody and be like a regular point of contact, like you're an amazing, inspiring influence. So for us, it's, it helps us uplift, some of the amazing artists that we know. But it also connects them with somebody who they don't know and that widens our kind of community as well

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a little bit. Yeah. Okay,

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I think, I think there's Nick there's another question isn't there in the chat, or someone who wants to.

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Yeah, if I can go to Nell first and then Netta following that so now if you want to ask your question.

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Awesome, thanks very much so it's just so much easier to speak than to write. So yeah I'm just thinking about what we've been talking about with meaningful community engagement and how it doesn't really help to come in, give people an amazing experience for one afternoon, and then go away and never see them again, and no follow up. But of course, most of us, as individual artists or is small companies kind of moving around and doing bits of work with bits of funding is kind of what we can do right. So, yeah, I guess my question is like how, how can we work with venues who perhaps have longer term relationships with certain communities, how can we best help those bigger organizations that have the resources to build those meaningful relationships to contribute in a meaningful way to those meaningful relationships. Oh, go ahead, Suzanne,

1:17:01

sorry.

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I think there is a question there about how central the idea and I am kind of like community engagement is to a larger organization, and, and how they then facilitate the work with the local community if that's if that's what they're engaging into, because I think that traditionally we have always had community engagement departments or education departments, and often the work can feel quite separate from maybe what is happening on a main stage and so I think. But I genuinely believe that there is hopefully a drive. Now, for the work to actually be more integrated within the organization. And that I think that there is a need for larger organizations to be connecting with freelancers and smaller organizations who are working in and around their areas. Because those organizations and individuals often are the ones who are connecting at the grassroots level with the communities or individuals that the venues. Should could want to engage with so I, I think it's about building the relationships between the smaller organizations and freelancers, with those. Those larger organizations, then there has to be an openness from the larger organizations to be wanting to actually do that and engage in those processes. So I think it's about them, building partnerships and you go in to those places, and also just talking to different departments, about the work that you're doing,

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we're conscious of time but then we had a comment from Netta.

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Yes, thank you. So first, I'll be very quick, I just want to say thank you for this panel because I was really moved by the different projects that were described here, and I learned a lot. And I wanted to say two things. First is that I think I rediscovered the meaning of community during the pandemic in terms of the word meant something a little different to me and being self isolating or being able to just go for a short walk and seeing a little bit people around where we still have social, especially just this suddenly means something else. Those are the people around me there's people close to me and if I do some artistic work outside, then this is my community and I was aware of that. Even I wouldn't have considered that maybe my community, my neighbors. So that's one thing the other thing I wanted to say about the diversifying the industry and what Kane, said, is that I think that in the past year, a lot of really good things happen and I'm personally part of or participate in migrants in theatre, and also mental arts UK which I think are brilliant organizations or movements that came up in the past year and they're trying to do work that is also

1:20:21

talking to

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larger venues and organizations and trying to make them commit to diversifying the repertoire and the way they work with artists, international artists or foreign born artists migrants. And I think that that is brilliant. So perhaps we, We have a little bit of optimism here. Hopefully, that the pandemic did bring an opportunity for change. And I'm really happy that the, the awareness around this is growing. So thank you so much.

1:20:59

Thanks very much nicer. We've got one last question, which was quickly. So I'm looking forward, what is the most important COVID-19 adaptation of process that you intend to take forward into your future art practice.

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Whoever answers first, it gets down to the question, because we haven't got much time to go around here that fails while answering, or has a good answer. Always I'll pick one of you. Okay, I'm just gonna pick some error

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is okay.

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Okay, I love this question. I'm looking forward to what is most important, adaptation, that's Yeah lead from COVID that we're going to take forward, and usually and I have been having a lot of conversations about this. We think we feel like there's been a bit of a kind of loop and unquestioned loop and how art gets made in terms of how do you get a venue to believe in you secure the funding, then you premiere it, And then you have to tour it, and we're trying to have some positive disruptive thinking about that because the things that are really interesting to us are kind of like different moments along that journey, but the actual journey. Feels a little unhelpful and a little exhausting in certain ways. So we, we've also shifted our practice online into digital realms as I know so many of us have, and we found it really interesting how that means we can reach different kinds of is different kinds of an audience and connects differently with people. We have gotten into making audio art, and we're trying to work out how to create a really live connected experience, when, When your art is digital, and maybe you're not delivering it present and in the same like you can't take the temperature in the room with how that person is receiving it. So we feel like the answer might be more hybrid dissemination of work. And we're already interested in how do we reach bodies in space and digital bodies, how do we do like alternative versions of our work. And I know this isn't particularly radical but it is an extension of investigations that we're doing so. A work exists as a live show, And as a podcast series, and as a workshop activity. And yeah, a word, a work that you're making, rethinking it in different forms and structures. I think that's something that we're going to ask, and we are going to take forward the idea of having, we have working as sort of working alliance or set of practices that we that we maintain to make sure it's a safe space, and as a to some in the room that is quite manageable, but we are building a kind of dictionary of terms that we help each other to, to know to sort of self regulate and to co regulate and to come together. And that's about actually having useful evaluation and useful check ins rather than something that you just have to do because you've got to write an activity report, which is a document you put at the end of a grant to close off and get your final percentage of funding, so useful, truthful, evaluation, and looking after each other because ultimately we're just people in a room wanting to make stuff. That's a sprawling of ideas of what she gets going to try and do. Next,

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all incredibly interesting.

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And I swear at six minutes past,

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we get out.

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We are going to be booted out in a moment so thank you Joe for chairing also thank you very much to Kanesha Mia and Suzanne for your wise words and also to Anna from BB King who coordinated. Anyone who's staying for the next session, which is fundraising for independent artists beyond the Arts Council, we are going to close this room down and reopen the same link just before that session which is at 1230 so that we have time for our speakers for that session to join so thank you all very much for sharing. Thank you all very much for being here and we hope to see many of you at another stamp session across the next few days. Thank you all very much. Lovely. I'm going to close the link. Thank you all very much.

1:26:00

Thanks everyone.

1:26:02

Nick does the recording just download onto my desktop.

1:26:06

I'm thinking it does,

1:26:11

in particular.