

## **WOR CULTURE : (Re) Imagining Programming and Performing 2020-2021**

Welcome to this reflection of our second *Wor Culture* event which focused on **(Re) Imagining Programming and Performing 2020-2021**. Here, we'll give the key points from our presentations, reflect some of the discussions, provide some (hopefully) useful links and resources, and let you know what's happening next.

For those of you who couldn't be with us for our zoom gathering, further information on what *Wor Culture* is about can be found at the end of this document. Please get in touch if you'd like to contribute, have any suggestions, or would like to share any links or resources.

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events.

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## **PRESENTATIONS**

Our event was kicked off with four presentations: firstly **Sarah Munro, Director of BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art** on their plans for reopening and civic purpose going forward; and then **Dr Hannabiell Sanders, Artistic Director of Harambee Pasadia CIC**, on modifying how they will deliver events and connect with audiences; followed by **Dr Kate Craddock, Founder and Festival Director of GIFT**, talking about the 2020 festival's move online and what it could look like in the future; and finally **Caroline Pierce, Producer, Creative Consultant & Coach**, on engagement-led programming principles.

[If you click on the Presentation caption it will take you to You Tube where you can view presentations with or without subtitles]

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK8000rQ\\_DA&t=986s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YK8000rQ_DA&t=986s)

[Sarah Munro \(Director of BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art\)](#)  
[Dr Hannabiell Sanders \(Artistic Director of Harambee Pasadia CIC\)](#)  
[Dr Kate Craddock \(Founder and Festival Director of GIFT\)](#)  
[Caroline Pearce \(Producer, Creative Consultant & Coach\)](#)

## **CHAT**

During the event the chat function was used to allow people to share comments and ask questions. We've grouped the comments here under a couple of the key themes that emerged:

### **WORKING IN-DEPTH WITH COMMUNITIES & ARTISTS:**

**Cinzia Hardy** : Working in depth with local and international artists over a longer periods of time is how the LIFT Festival in London went when I was there and totally altered its raison d'être in a very positive way.

**Anon** : I also subscribe to engagement led programming, works every time! Success by design and less transactional relationships.

**Leila D'Aronville** : Great stuff CP! It is important to get to know your audience and engage meaningfully, and also in the case of venues - work with guest programmers! So interesting and great!

**Cinzia Hardy** : I completely get your thoughts...I've been working like this for years with my company November Club. Many examples within our repertoire of work over the years, including work with National Trust...all about connecting with their staff and volunteers before any artistic ideas happen - also our work on Beyond the end of the road with young farmers, a cattle market and rural communities...would love to speak more with you...

**Cinzia Hardy** : I think one of the great lessons we are all learning right now is that more in depth and slow approach to making/programming is the way to go..2 - 3 years to explore, research, develop before actually making anything.

**Amy Golding** : I agree in a slow process in making work, building trust and getting to know people to create with/ alongside so its relevant to them.

#### EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSIVITY:

**Anons** : If equality is key do you think that the process of how people get exhibitions should be more transparent? It seems there is a lot of informal networking that is key but is also exclusive? This might not be true just my perception

**Leila D'Aronville** : Is there an opportunity to programme more (all regional venues) from within our local talent pool. To try and re-invest in our local workforce.

**Gillie Kleiman** : This still describes a “democratisation of culture” process which means culture is a thing \*we\* know about and we find ways to pass it on. What about a proper system of cultural democracy (ie everyone can make culture)? What would that take?

**Cinzia Hardy** : There is no replacement for the live experience. Re-imagining to be able to cope is good but not a replacement way of working for the the live experience...the world has changed and we need to be honest about the ways that work for us as individuals artists/organisations

Jan van den Bosch: You talk about access for audiences. What about access for makers? Not all the makers I work with find accessing technology so easy.

**Vincent** : Both digital and in the reality have to be offered otherwise we are only offering cultural events to a certain section of the community ...whereas we all want to be and need to be as diverse as possible!,

**Leslie Caryn Palanker-Jermyn - Assistant Learning Officer for Arbeia South Shields, Roman Fort and South Shields Museums and Art Gallery, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums** : a workshop on how to engage SEND audiences via digital would be great as there are so many aspects to consider in terms of inclusion, and funding issues are worrying as money seems to be going to larger projects to sustain the cultural sector.

**Allie Walton-Robson** : Headway Arts have been making work in working class disadvantaged communities for 25 years. We are based in Blyth, Northumberland. Our methodology is rooted in building real relationships and trust with our people. Our artists and audiences know us really

well and trust our space as somewhere they feel safe (I hope it still can be) We adjust our work to context and as Indies we can move really quickly e.g. we pre-empted lockdown and readied our learning disabled artists for digital working so on the first day of lockdown our community was online together. Arts Council Emergency funds allowed us to buy tech and deliver it with support packages.

**Yvonne Conchie - Rural and Community Heritage Freelancer** : Heritage Lottery have this Digital Attitudes and Skills for Heritage survey running for organisations to use with their staff and volunteers at the moment. "The DASH survey (designed and managed by Timmus Ltd, with the generous support of an advisory board of industry experts) collects information across an organisation's staff and volunteers which helps them to better understand and support their people now and in the future." *Please note this survey has now closed but you can find out more [here](#)*

**Michael Barrass** : I think there's a really interesting discussion we need to have about who has the power in arts and culture. There is lots of arts and cultural activities happening in communities, but it doesn't always fit the mould the sector's 'ideal' of arts and culture, so I think we need to think how we share that space together and don't assume our version of arts and culture is the only one.

**Mark Gardner** : How do you make sure the support and collaboration goes out to more than the people at the top table/in the cliques and be inclusive? Having been to a lot of cultural focus groups I have not seen any output

## BREAKOUT ROOMS

After the presentations we split into Breakout Rooms (smaller discussion groups) themed on:

- New Audiences
- Programming in outdoor and other spaces
- Reimagining festivals
- Thinking Digital

Here's a summary of the key points from those groups

### New Audiences

- **Rethink how we define our engagement** because the 'audiences' has connotations that don't cover all of the ways that we want to engage with the public.
- Discussed **lack of skills to engage digitally** with audiences.
- People with skills around engaging SEND audiences but not the digital skills to engage through lockdown looking to **be part of a network to develop the digital skills** to help engage in the right way.
- Discussion around outdoor performance and **unexpected interventions for a way of encountering new audiences** who might not be expecting to encounter you, but an understanding there needs to be some **planning around social distancing** and potential for audiences to behave in ways that you wouldn't want them to behave.
- Difficulties in making new work for audiences, and engaging with new artists and people while they're in lockdown.

- Opportunities to **make new creative connections** that would enable us to make work for new audiences.

## PROGRAMMING IN OUTDOOR AND OTHER SPACES

- There were concerns about **sources of funding post-covid**.
- Programmers are trying to **keep connected and informed during lockdown** so that they can bounce back strong and active when the time comes.
- Organisations with indoor spaces are now **considering the use of their outdoor spaces perhaps more than before** because of the physical distancing.
- Events/collaborations having to be cancelled is having **big impact on freelancers**.
- Point raised about the **difference between programming and producing** at this time and the relationships between the activities.
- *Digital* was discussed but also the **importance of maintaining/devising/delivering work without a digital element**. Some definitions of digital engagement is exclusive of and excludes many communities.
- Community based **co-production not being seen (by funders) as as valuable/important/significant** as other work.
- **Moving work online isn't always appropriate**, sometime there is no substitute for face to face interactions. We need to ask why we are moving to a digital approach and when a blended approach is required.
- How can North East venues can **increase programming with North East talent**?
- **What spaces are available?** A list of skills and resources would be really useful, who has access to what and can these resources be shared?
- Covid-19 has presented a real **opportunity for more collaboration between venues and freelancers** within the North East.

## REIMAGINING FESTIVALS

- There was enthusiasm for the ideas of **resetting and reimagining** as discussed in the presentations.
- People expressed interest in the idea of **re-engaging local communities** and bringing in artists in **deeper forms of engagement**.
- The whys of Festivals and an **understanding of the value** they create for audiences and communities **needed to be better understood**.
- Discomfort with assumptions in the current discourse was articulated. At this moment of pause, it was argued that organisers and practitioners should not revert to seeing themselves as experts but **reflect on how to get genuine engagement with people and communities** and how they perceived, understood and engaged with culture in context.
- Ideas about re-setting and re-engaging should **not revert to the 'old normal'**.
- There should be a **re-evaluation of how to connect with communities**, to explore what works and how to achieve genuine engagement.
- How do we **foster collaborations and build wider supportive networks**
- Models of **funding and monetisation** need exploration.

## THINKING DIGITAL

- Artists/theatre makers with **concerns about how and where to start** when making work for online platforms (working in a creative and more experimental way in particular)

- Creative facilitators with questions and **concerns about how to deliver workshops online** in schools (and other organisations that present institutional barriers) and **how to engage/work with young people**
- Questions about how to establish **digital intimacy with online audiences** and **overcoming confidence barriers** of facilitating your work online.
- Examples offered in the group of **organisations who are leading workshops** to address some of these concerns e.g. **Collective Encounters** and **LAB Collective**
- Broader conversation and thoughts about **how best the university and the cultural sector can work together** to share learning and best practice and even offer training/workshops (which could be a great opportunity for exchange between orgs/individuals).

## RESOURCES/READS/SECTOR NEWS

This is not a comprehensive list (and many sources will have been updated or have become outdated by the time you read this). It is what we've come across, what people have been reading recently, and resources suggested by yourselves.

Outdoor Arts UK resources for those interested in taking work out of venues:

<https://outdoorartsuk.org/advice-resources>

Arts Council Digital Culture Network <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-digital-culture/digital-culture-network>

UK Covid-19 Freelance Resource List <https://ukcovid19freelanceartistresource.wordpress.com/>

The Space - Build Skills to deliver great art on digital platforms <https://www.thespace.org/resources>

AMA training and workshops <https://www.a-m-a.co.uk/>

Accessibility in video conferencing <https://www.drakemusic.org/blog/becky-morris-knight/accessibility-in-video-conferencing-and-remote-meetings/>

Bounce Forward Events <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/bounce-forwards-events>

If you have any other resources you would like to add to this list please email [bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk)

## Finishing Notes - What is Wor Culture?

*Wor Culture* is a forum for discussing issues relating to the culture and creative sectors in the North East, and contribute to shaping its future. The gathering is facilitated by Newcastle University but we strongly encourage you to propose topics for discussion, join in the debate, or offer to lead a session.

At the moment, due to COVID19, this is an online gathering using Zoom. We will be looking at alternative formats in due course.

## How is the programme put together?

The sessions focus on topics suggested by you. You can also suggest speakers (or offer to do a presentation or provocation) and/or host a session (we'll support you!). All suggestions to:

[bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk)

## What is the format of the event?

Normally the event follows a format where we have a series of short presentations (c. 10 minutes) to help establish the context for the discussion. This is followed by a Q&A. We then have a series of breakout groups each focused on a different theme or topic. You choose which

one you want to join beforehand. Breakout groups are smaller, focused discussion groups. After this each group feeds back into a general discussion.

There is a function in Zoom called the 'Chat' function which is like texting or messaging. We use this to gather questions and comments. Participants can also use it to contribute or send a private message to the host if they do not want to speak using their video.

**Want to be kept in the loop?**

For information on future sessions you can sign up [here](#)