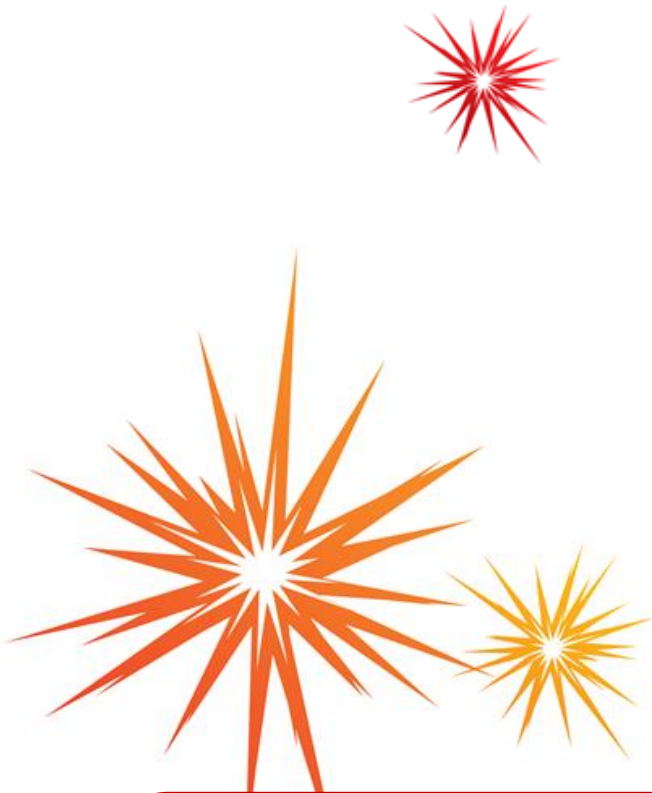




Philip Barker
CENTRE for
CREATIVE LEARNING



University of
Chester



Virtual Catalyst Event Report on:

Whose culture is it anyway?!

What collectively do we need to change to support and sustain these roles?

Via Zoom, Friday 11th September 2020



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Catalyst Event Report on

Whose culture is it anyway?

What collectively do we need to change to support and sustain these roles?

Purpose

This online Catalyst event was developed as a collaboration between the Philip Barker Centre for Creative Learning at the University of Chester, Rose Bruford College, Brighter Sound, Open Eye Gallery and Orchestras Live.

The event was an opportunity to gather together people with diverse experiences, who are also working within the culture and higher education sectors, to consider how these sectors and how we as a society view, value, prepare and support artists working in community-based practice and what might the role of artists be in 21st Century society.

At a critical moment for culture, socially engaged practice and cultural democracy within the context of coronavirus, the event was an opportunity to think radically and to explore questions such as could and should we:

- Redefine artistic excellence in the 21st Century?
- Value more those artists working predominantly alongside members of our communities?
- Transform the current training and career pathways for artists looking to develop careers based within community-based practice?



A summary of the discussions, including the names of participants and those expressing an interest in being contacted at a later date, form the basis of this workshop summary.

The discussions are not presented in any particular order and do not reflect the popularity or the merit of the conversation themes. Some themes are closely interlinked and could be collated.

Convenor reports

Group 1 Convenor Name: Stuart Bruce

Topic of debate: Do we start with the artist or the community to create work that is genuinely relevant to both?

Participants: Helen, Stuart

Key points from discussion:

- Training artistic leaders to suitably equip the workforce to engage with the community.
- Tension between the commercial imperative of an arts company whilst trying to be responsive to community ideas or needs.
- Digital opens up new possibilities for community engagement, reach and collaboration.
- Giving a stake to people - where does that begin? Forced or organic?
- Embedding local people in the organisation can bring a community perspective into the artistic thinking.
- Partnerships give opportunity to bring together different stakeholders - cultural and community - share information and skills.
- Arts organisations need to be open enough to be able to respond to ideas that are different to their own.
- Engaging community organisations of all levels enables a tiered approach for the right people to be linked with the right artists and or cultural organisations.

Next steps:

- Create awareness during training of a more community rooted role and practice.
- Consulting / embedding local people in company's planning or artistic visioning.

Group 2 Convenor Name: Nick Ponsillo

Topic of debate: What might be the role and where is the voice of the community in shaping the training of artists?

Participants: Mezza, Anne, Phil

Key points from discussion:

- Artists getting to appreciate the dynamic between themselves and their audiences; who is the art for?
- How could local communities become involved in the practical training of artists; governance and co-design of artist training?
- Creating a better connection with the community; involvement at the heart of training.
- Shifting the focus from money; it doesn't need to cost money to have meaningful involvement of community voice in institutions.
- Is there a disconnect between the language of holistic training/creative entrepreneurship?
- Let communities have control.

Next steps:

- Guidelines for the involvement of community members in the co-design of artistic programmes.
- Development of guidelines for the involvement of community members in the training of artists (similar to involvement of people with lived experience in health training)
- follow the money - in reality how much money is going from funders to support community practice? How do we get what's needed?
- Specific pathways in community-based practice and/or holistic careers.

Group 3 Convenor Name: Jonathan Vaughan

Topic of debate: How do we train the next generation of artists differently so that they become Artistic Citizens/ Artists in Society?

Participants: Kate, Josh

Key points from discussion:

- Introduce role models who combine artistry with citizenship.
- Start at beginning - work with early years.
- Giving agency of creativity and communities.
- Make this all part of secondary and primary education.
- Redefine what success looks like for an artist.
- Lead by example.
- Work experience could be about changing communities not just about career building.
- Not just studying in an introspective way.
- Power of individuals to affect change in communities.
- What does an ideal student/artist look like?
- What are the skills we need and how do we understand best practice better?



IF you Find yourself
in a Situation where
you are neither
learning nor contributing
use your two Feet
and go somewhere
you can.

Next steps:

- Learning how to collaborate.
- Change students' career expectations so that they are empowered to curate and have autonomy over their own career trajectory.
- Community networking is critical.
- Micro changes to counter lack of movement at a national level.
- Give students autonomy over their own portfolio careers.
- Change the cycle of funding so that it can find its way to the coal face.
- Change students' career expectations so that they are empowered to curate and have autonomy over their own career trajectory.
- Entrepreneur skills, outreach skills, artist development, learning and participation.

Group 4 Convenor Name: Ada Jusic

Topic of debate: How to work respectfully in communities but also getting participants who don't perceive themselves as creative to participate in a way that's fun, meaningful and productive for them.

Participants: Julia, Louise, Liv, Kate

Key points from discussion:

- Value - the artist's work is not free, but participants work, and time is not free either. Funds required to make this work happen.
- Valuing what people bring into the room, not saying no, ice breakers, bringing out the playful aspects. Set ground rules emphasising kindness and having fun
- How we structure co creation and how we teach -Engaging people into things they don't know exist - Don't rush to provide solutions to people without fully understanding their situation
- Art in architecture - The concept of a safe place, where is a safe place? What does that look like? - Model public health - co-development. What's the starting place, how do you approach communities, who has to be at the table? How do we get to that beginning stage? What is needed? What do I want to do?
- Collaboration and value. Communities engagement is not free either! Support to participate transportation/childcare/food.
- Co-creativity, arts, dementia: <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QAOA-02-2018-0008/full/html>
- Co-creation framework from public health: <https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40900-018-0136-9>

Next steps:

- There needs to be some sort of framework for co-creating that can be a template for people wishing to engage in the community.
- Soft skills aren't soft! What do we mean by those skills? How do we support people developing them?
- The real issue is time and funders don't often pay development time. How do we change the perception of the artists' work? Changing the language about how we perceive arts/creativity/creative professions Saying no to roles that are poorly paid/unpaid/bad terms and conditions.
- Valuing what people bring to the room.



Group 5 Convenor Name: Anne Marie Nugnes

Topic of debate: Who determines what an artist is?

Participants: Anne Marie, Phil

Key points from discussion:

- Who determines what an artist is and where they can be found or 'trained'?
- Who gets to decide who can be a creative or creative?
- Let us not assume that artists are trained only in Further education, higher education or conservatoire settings.
- HE is much more connected to community organisations, facilitating and funding projects and initiatives that support artists' development and community orgs needs.
- Arts Council and other funders don't always value community based and societal impact work as much as the art.

Next steps:

- Do we need systemic change to train 'creative entrepreneurs' rather than artists?
- We need to work with funders and arts bodies to define ethical frameworks for respecting communities and definitions of culture.
- Integrate Culture entrepreneurs into public facing roles (i.e. with the NHS, government/policy)

Group 6 Convenor Name: Megan Clark Bagnall

Topic of debate: Valuing young/emerging artists through connecting with the wider world to help with understanding on practical's of art making.

Participants: Victoria, Laura, Hope, Vicki

Key points from discussion:

- What's the value of art for society? & How does society value artists?
- We've all felt under valued at the moment in this situation.
- Are organisations only going to make changes for financial funding reasons not because they want to?
- To what extend should cultural institutions continue to be tone deaf to a changing narrative?
- Value - tick boxes vs real value in the room.
- Values for funders - vs value of art & impact on participants.
- Boundaries & values - for artists.
- Value - what does value mean? The impact on participants lives is what we value not the data collection on numbers and figures but the real impact.
- We are on the back foot when working on a project to project basis. How do you make lasting impact when working in a short time frame?

Next steps:

- Quantity over quality is often pushed for. A project can lose value for participants when working in this way. More lasting change embedded when working with fewer participants.
- The best things that happen speak to people now and a wider reach for cultural change.
- It's important to look at it as a body of work" - Victoria "One of the principals of cultural planning is a round table discussion - listen to the changing narrative and what does that look like?"



- What are the structures of paying artists for large organisations? A different pay structure is needed. A more custom/open approach.
- Talking about financial fragility for artists, the food chain, women and needing PAYE for stability for family life. COVID highlighting the fragility of the system.
- Cultural Planning in Canada - Victoria Stasiuk. "I don't know if cultural planning will come back to what it was" - "it was a way to bring together art, arts organisations and integrate into local communities".
- VALUE - Quantity over quality is often pushed for. A project can lose value for participants when working in this way. More lasting change embedded when working with fewer participants.

Group 7 Convenor Name: Jan Ford

Topic of debate: Who holds the 'power' in training artists? Who is 'in charge'? Is it dominated by one particular group and is this detrimental to developing artists that are best equipped to work with communities?

Participants: Josh, Phil, Louise, Laura

Key points from discussion:

- There was optimism that things might change with ACE new Let's Create start, but usual suspects got the money. Diverse artists don't get opportunity to see themselves reflected on the stage.
- Have to bring a lived experience to training.
- Why are young people not directed towards a portfolio career rather than just being a 'performer'? Why won't 'the grown ups' give up the 'power'??
- Constructs young artists are learning in are dominated by white, middle class culture
- Learning on the job? Different types of validation of learning perhaps.
- Does anyone ask artists what learning structures they want?
- Exam boards are rigid, e.g. Turning a tanker. Do not reflect cultural diversity even though the art form does.
- Some shift in class backgrounds happening.
- Same barriers - trying to get more diverse artists when they don't get the experience.
- BGT - Diversity (dance group) - would not be seen as innovative for Arts Council. Complaints - white people - I voted so therefore I 'own' them.
- If we could persuade planning people in LAs to employ artists. No point of training people if there are no jobs. If there were community arts activists' jobs in LAs then there would be career destinations.
- How do we get those in 'power' to change structures?
- Why are training institutions so 'conservative'? Worried about money so keep ploughing the same field.
- Lack of representation in academia - are the constructs right and relevant to people from diverse backgrounds?
- Not 'teaching at them', but 'learning with them'. Needs more investment.
- We have created the 'grammar school' system in arts training!
- Are academic systems and structures a barrier to diverse people?
- Proud parents -v- making the world a better place.

Next steps:

- Co-design courses with those who are likely to employ artists - Greater Manchester Combined Authority.
- How about training being driven by community need not the needs (£££s) of academic institutions??

- Understanding the training ecology. Do we understand what is thriving and not? KEF agenda may help with collaboration and cross disciplinary work. Usability of research.
- Employers, emerging artists and training institutions combine to create training?? Get 'new' people round the table to design training and not replicate existing course structures.
- Test collaborative design and delivery of training.

Group 8 Convenor Name: Esme Allman

Topic of debate: Defining 'radical' change against the backdrop of Pandemic, Protest and Brexit.

Participants: Mezza, Hope, Megan, Helen, Jen, Jenni, Ada



Key points from discussion:

- Radical ripples - best change happens in small ways.
- Being radical without being 'shouty' whilst keeping aware that change is urgent.
- Who has missed out in order for me to be here? How does my art/practice respond to this notion?
- Listening with acceptance and without judgement. Accepting everyone's lived experience alongside gained knowledge.
- Radical change happens at the top.
- Value artists.
- www.soundcastle.co.uk Theory of Practice, working towards creative autonomy for communities.
- Understanding rural and urban communities and the differences between them.
- In dance there has been change - international and diverse companies. Development in LGBTQ communities. Better representation.
- Pandemic has highlighted lots of things that need to change - but will they? How can we keep up the momentum?

Next steps:

- Making radical arts through cups of tea and relationship building. Not making conventional art.
- Radical Art needs to have a legacy and ensure that it's enabling and not just becoming something that is offered and not wanted/needed - the radical thing is ensuring that change continues to happen.
- Widespread inclusion - involving the right people in the space and provide a space that people are able to question decisions. Give and take agency.
- Educate
- Being open to allow people to say 'no' to change as well as yes. Listening.

Group 9 Convenor Name: Ann Marie Nugnes

Topic of debate: As part of connected curriculum and 'real world learning', how can education establishments forge better links and partnerships with community organisations to better prepare future artists?

Participants: Louise, Laura, Fiona, Sam, Jonathan

Key points from discussion:

- There isn't the same quality assurance for teaching methods.

- Community partnerships often have the expectation that FEs/HEs come with large pots of money!
- Funding is an issue at grassroots level.
- What does a connected curriculum mean?
- Connective curriculum - preparing people for the real world (care homes, hospital wards etc) not just performing in a music hall.
- We need courses that better prepare students to work in the community – weaving community work formally into courses - rather than as an after-thought.
- Vocational training.
- "Kite Mark" national qualifications for music educators.
- Good quality teacher training for instrumental teaching is an issue - we need a better framework.

Next steps:

- We should have bite-size chunks of learning at slower pace, at the same time as earning and learning the craft 'on the job'.
- We need technical vocational colleges for students to hone their skills and craft.
- SHAPE is a good step in the right direction BUT there is diminishing interest in schools for arts subjects!
- We must establish the VALUE of arts right from an early age in the primary / early years curriculum.
- Inclusive practice should be at the heart of any course and vocational based training.
- "Earn while you learn".
- Perhaps we need to work with employers to shape courses to meet the needs of the skills needed at the end of the course 'in the real world'.

Group 10 Convenor Name: Nick Ponsillo

Topic of debate: How do we develop creativity in artists during their training and into practice through professional development?

Participants: Stuart



Key points from discussion:

- Structures work against the diversification of musician skills.
- Start process of developing creativity early.
- Concept of arts and culture not in one silo but away and outside of the usual place of learning.
- There are pockets of activity - Manchester Collective.
- Attitudes often developed and reinforced through traditional music hub structures.
- Revolution rather than evolution - is it easier to start again than maintain the orchestral status quo?

Next steps:

- Constant dialogue between community and organisation - open to influence by communities.
- Developing agency - in both musicians and the people musicians create alongside.
- Collaborative relationships with communities – dialogue.
- Sustained learning within other organisations outside of the conservatoire culture, learning through personal experience.

Group 11 Convenor Name: Victoria

Topic of debate: How should we train artists to have a toolkit that provides a way to be involved in local communities working on social justice issues as a freelance portfolio career?

Participants: None Recorded

Key points from discussion:

None Recorded

Next steps:

None Recorded



Group 12 Convenor Name:

Topic of debate: How do we prepare artists to work with people who might be facing challenging circumstances (physical, mental health, social conditions)

Participants: Julia, Kate, Liv

Key points from discussion:

- Partnership working - engaging the orgs we work with to support with specific training, guidance and expertise.
- What training is already being given? What training needs to be done to work in this capacity?
- Networks - sharing knowledge, models, good practice, research.
- Social Prescribing - how can we make sure this is standardised, support arts orgs to do activity with potentially vulnerable people. Where is the quality assurance and no funding for it?
- Responsibility of care for artists and participants.
- Important to make the connection between valuing and training.
- How to support young practitioners (including those in education or training) -- some placements can be quite challenging. What kind of support and pre-placement training is provided?
- Relationship between valuing/paying artists for their expertise and the costs of getting that expertise (postgrad education, CPD, etc)
- The kind of preparation and support that organisations can provide; vs how free-lance practitioners must provide this for themselves.
- Kinds of support in challenging environments/complex needs: pre-training, mentorship, support from clinical staff partners, reflexive process debriefings, peer support groups.
- As a matter of course, asking partner orgs/funders to pay for or provide appropriate support for artists in high need/complex settings.
- Evaluate projects robustly - what worked well, what didn't, involve all stakeholders and then put new systems/frameworks/support in place for future work.

Next steps:

- Cross-sector, leaders need to start discussion about this topic, identify key issues, develop an agenda.

Summary of the day

Our day together was full of energy, commitment and passion for the role of culture in and alongside our society. We couldn't be happier with the day and the ways in which the conversations developed – thank you for coming and for embracing the Open Space process wholeheartedly.

Cultural democracy was a strong theme. There was a sense that Arts Council England's new strategy, 'Let's Create', may be a further move towards a much needed shift in cultural power but, in this context, there was a desire for a much greater shift in the involvement and voice for the community in developing the training of artists. People with lived experience and members of the community have played a part in the training of health professionals for a number of years and yet this type of approach doesn't yet feature prominently within artist training. Further to this, there is potential for greater representation of the community in both the design of training as well as the governance of institutions training artists.

This sense of co-design was also reflected in discussions around the ways in which industry could have more involvement in developing artist training. The relationships between higher education and the culture sector has the potential to move beyond the placement relationship to a deeper one that supports curriculum design based on the needs of the professions, making training and graduates more relevant to the organisations they may work for and the communities with which they may create.

It felt as though we built a community over the day, radical thinking was at the lead of the discussion and 'radical ripples' spread between us at various points throughout the day. There was a sense that change in how the sectors value community-based practice was indeed needed and that a shift towards the holistic training of artists was recognised as being more important, yet perhaps more possible than ever.

Next steps

This event report will be circulated to participants and other interested parties. With your approval it will also be available to view on the Philip Barker Centre web pages. We may contact discussion convenors to follow up with you about your discussions and what you feel would be the most productive next steps. If you are a convenor do let us know how you feel the Philip Barker Centre can support the progress of your agenda item.

If you are not a convenor but have ideas of how to progress content or ideas, then please do get in touch. Equally, if you are a convenor and made some progress on your agenda item discussion since we met then please do get in touch. You can reach us by using either of the following email addresses: n.ponsillo@chester.ac.uk or pbccd@chester.ac.uk.

At the end of the event it was felt that we had quickly built a sense of community around the event themes. Therefore, we would like to reconvene as a follow up to 'Whose culture...' in the coming months as a way to report back on progress and keep up the momentum we began earlier in September. In the spirit of the radical ripples repeatedly emanating from the day one of the next steps might be the development of a manifesto for change. If you would like to support the development of this manifesto, please do get in touch using the above email addresses.

Thank you again to everyone who attended on the day and contributed to all the discussions detailed in this report and a big thank you to all convenors for raising their question.