

VAW BEYOND THE LOCKDOWN

FRIDAY 12TH JUNE 2020

Host: Gareth Coles (Voluntary Arts Wales)

DISCUSSION

- Blended approach is something we need to explore further
- We are learning by doing at the moment - maybe this is the best way
- Lots of conversations about access going on - access for D/deaf, disabled artists, Welsh Language access, access for people who don't have internet access, access for people who don't have experience of

Elise Davison & Steph Back - Taking Flight Theatre Company

- Taking Flight - inclusive theatre company that puts access at the heart of everything they do
- Started 12 years ago mainly as an outdoor arts company. Beth and Elise were asked to work with adults with spinal injuries and create a workshop. It changed their way of working and triggered lots of discussions about how inaccessible the arts was for audiences and participants. Taking Flight was born. They were interested in breaking down barriers for people taking part in the arts.
- They learned as they went along and made mistakes and tried things out.
- Elise has been discovering zoom since lockdown. It's been a journey of discovery and Elise has connected with lots of people that she wouldn't have the opportunity to connect with before.
- However, not everyone has access to a digital platform - there are lots of issues - wifi, bandwidth - but also lots of access issues.
- Elise audio described herself.

Tips on online access

- When you think about access - its a bridge - it's not about trying to anticipate everything - or the person who needs access going all the way across the bridge. It should be about meeting in the middle. It's different for every person.
- Whenever you start talking - say your name.
- Also internet connection can affect how people experience online sessions.
- BSL interpretation is a different language and, for people who speak BSL, an interpreter is essential.
- But it's hard to stare at a screen all day - so you need to factor in breaks.
- People are putting lots online - but very few people are putting captions on your videos. Please do that!
- Viva Video - you can make creative captions for free.
- Zoom doesn't have automated captions - you need to bring in a palantypist to type in.
- You Tube - provides captions and you can check through them to make sure they are right.
- Even the news does not always have BSL interpretations - it's appalling.
- So any captioning is really welcomed by anyone who does it.
- Zoom tips - check the light in the room - so that if someone is lip reading they can see you.

- If you know someone is lipreading - don't over enunciate. Only 30% of the words you say can be lip read.
- If you have people following through BSL interpretation - there will be a delay. So allow extra time for people to process and reply.
- Audio Description - some people are exploring audio description ideas - but there are other ideas. Taking Flight did a cabaret and they put all the participants into a whats app audio call - the AD muted and unmuted themselves. We have free things at our fingertips. We struggled to think how to make the BSL interpretation work, as the cabaret director was spotlighting performers - in the end we created a second zoom call so the BSL interpreter could be watched alongside the cabaret zoom.
- There are big conversation on social media about the lack of interpretation online.
- Audio Description - on Twitter - when using hashtags please start every word with a capital letter. You can also audio describe your photos - twitter offers this as an option.
- Zoom - if you are presenting pictures - think about describing them before you start presenting.
- Zoom - if someone is sharing a screen - you can click on side by side and pin the other person you want to see next to them.
- TF - are talking to Creu Cymru and Cult Cymru about running some training about online access.

Lockdown Landscapes

- This was going to be a production at the Egg - Lockdown happened and we started to explore running the project online
- We recreated the physical space using software called CAPTURE
<https://www.capture.se/Products/Capture>
- We created a separate WhatsApp call so anyone wanting to access the AD could be part of that call.
- The blocking in Capture, using mannequins to represent the actors, was discussed with and implemented by the lighting designer.
- At the same time, they rehearsed using Google Meets - a show was about a group of young people in Lockdown and how they connected through social media
- She was working with lots of people she had never met before - students, some hearing and some deaf.
- At the end they had managed to create a rehearsal room together online.
- Elise had lots of preconceptions about how a digital world would work that she had to work through.
- Each day they arrived together and warmed up - they did states of tension and explored Laban.
- They were nine recordings for each scene of the show and they mixed them together in the final performance.
- Elise could curate the screens and mix the production with her team. She could then discuss placement of the screens with the editor who then transferred this into the final production.

- Live actors sat alongside the capture stage design - it meant the university could assess their students. They could have incorporated animation and recorded videos. They could resize the screens of live actors.
- They are now looking at the disconnect between the capture version and the live video - Chris (Senior lecturer in lighting sound and digital production at Bath Spa and supervised the lighting design) is now looking to explore VR and how that could take audiences further into the virtual space.
- Chris is also looking at how to pull focus and caption within the VR world.
- It's a research project with Bath Spa University. There will be a research discussion and documentary that will be released soon.
- Elise attended the Never There Festival (<http://nevertherefestival.com/>) -where artists explored different platforms to create online work. She was particularly excited about Mozilla Hubs as a possible platform for future work. <https://hubs.mozilla.com/#/>