

Youth Arts Network Cymru - CAPTURING THE LEARNING

5pm Tuesday 9th June 2020

Host: Miranda Ballin (Sparc - Valleys Kids)

NAZ SYED - FREELANCE ARTIST

- Didn't have a set group so she was trying to find ways to create
- Worked with Sofa Share Wales who gave her a platform
- She wanted to share with others and it gave her energy and creativity
- Each week she has a theme and she uses stuff that you have in your homes
- She makes packs that she drops off to local people
- How do we create and adapt? How do we get trust and connection with people with a screen in front of us?
- Things go wrong along the way but that's part of the experience
- Don't be afraid - be brave and share your work
- Naz really encourages people to collaborate, ask questions, and connect with others so that's what's been really wonderful for this.
- The school she was supposed to be working with she has managed to make connections with them and make things for google classroom.

ABDUL SHAYEK - FIO

- Abdul is Creative Director of FIO.
- FIO undertake a lot of projects with people and their work is very drama based. When COVID 19 struck we were in the middle of a range of different projects.
- The Young People's programme was going to have a major production this summer. They were also doing a project with women from the Bangladeshi community working towards a VR outcome.
- They didn't really believe the lockdown would last at first. This meant they didn't rush to get things online, but instead thought hard about what they wanted to do.

They launched three different projects:

- FIO pen to paper challenge - they are asking people to write to them from anywhere in the world and will write back to them. It's about going back to basics. It's a simple idea - it's not expensive or high maintenance.
- A New Normal - came out of discussing how they would engage young people. They started running sessions online for the group to connect. They decided they wanted to create a web series about pandemics, thinking about what the last pandemic looked like, felt like, was like, doing something about the current pandemic and then dreaming up a future pandemic and what it might look like.
- Unheard Voices came out of them thinking about their older women's project - it felt like it was an important time to reach out, especially within the black, Asian, ethnically diverse communities who are disproportionately affected and shielding. They reached out to them and asked them what they wanted - how they wanted to engage with them. They worked with a partner organisation, women connect first, who work with 120 women across Cardiff, and there's 20 languages spoken.

Challenges -

- Health and safety - Abdul had to wear gloves to pick up the letters from the post office! Making sure staff were safe was important.
- Safeguarding - making sure online spaces were safe for our groups.
- Data poverty - how do you engage with young people if they don't have the tech
- Translating stuff through screen - FIO love to connect and usually do live but now they need to change their practice.
- They focused on finding a way to understand what drives the project and then work on how the project is shaped online. They tried to keep things simple.

SARAH JONES - MESS UP THE MESS

- Mess up the Mess makeS theatre with and for and by young people.
- Exploring how to keep making participatory theatre online.
- They were preparing to do a big celebration around VE Day but had to think of a different way to do that.

They created different ways for people to engage and decided to work towards an online virtual broadcast that included the following participatory approaches:

- Visual art offline challenges.
- Zoom sessions including leading towards live and pre-recorded content
- Community engagement through a virtual flashmob.

Challenges:

- To be inclusive we have to offer a diverse offer for participants - one participant with autism and anxiety likes the regularity of the zoom meetings - another participant with autism and anxiety finds zoom a very anxiety inducing space and prefers to be messaged on facebook.
- Different participants have different needs and they need to meet them all -the challenge was to involve all these young people in the project
- On zoom it's hard to read the room - you don't know if everyone understands what has been asked of them.
- There's no side chat, or down time - it's very full on
- They don't know the full picture of the environment participants are working in and not everyone has the same wifi or is using the same devices to access online content
- It's hard to be fully inclusive. Inclusion is really complicated and multi layered - there's lots to think about. VE DAY project was hard to make accessible for welsh language and D/deaf audiences.
- Maintaining dialogue over time is hard.
- They wanted to keep engaging with the wider community around our young people. The community felt really engaged after the VE day experience.
- They also want to keep using social platform more to connect with local and national platforms
- They need to find ways to reach some of the young people we haven't managed to engage

GETHIN EVANS - Fran Wen

- Fran Wen is based in North West Wales
- Gethin has only been with the organisation for 6 months.
- When Covid arrived, they had just undertaken a tour.

- They have a youth theatre for 13 - 18 year olds.
- At the start of lockdown they wanted to continue with work but had to look at what didn't work digitally.
- Their youth theatre participants faced everything about them being cancelled - parties, school etc
- They launched a project with 30 young people - they practised overzoom twice a week and shared the work at the end of the week. They wanted it to seem as live as possible.
- They want to recognise how to adapt to every individual
- time is everything - it takes a lot of time to do 1-2-1
- They didn't want to exhaust ourselves and them.
- They realised it's a great platform for individual projects as well.
- Like sarah said, it's hard to feel peoples energy
- The hardest thing is you can't be impulsive in the way you lead and jump on new ideas
- But the young people were able to produce a completely live project

DISCUSSION POINTS RAISED

- As we move into the unlocking phase, the participatory sector needs to organise around a submission for DCMS as there is a danger of us being overshadowed by the larger organisations, even though we have been the people able to continue working and connecting with our communities. We need to be involved in conversations about what happens next.
- We really need to focus on what is happening with young disabled people and urgently need to connect with them.
- Congolese development project - protecting our participants is hard. It took us two months to come up with a project but we've focused on keeping our participants safe and being able to connect to them.