

Diversifying Curatorial Stewardship

Transcript of a conversation between Freddie Opoku-Addaie and Delia Barker

Freddie

Hi everyone. My name is Freddie Opoku-Addaie. I am the Artistic Director and Co-Chief Executive at Dance Umbrella, London's international dance festival. Now, those of you that don't know about the festival, it's been running for now 46 years, yes, since 1978. We present UK and international dance artists across our global city, from small scale venues to mid scale to large scale venues. In conventional black boxes to site specific works and alternative spaces. We also do our best to bring a programme that's really widening the conversation of what is contemporary dance within and outside of the Western canon. Since the beginning of 2024 we have been working with the exceptional and highly regarded industry leader, CEO of Brixton House, Delia Barker. The project that we have been focusing on is called Diversifying Curatorial Stewardship. In this project, we have been exploring ways of diversifying curatorial leadership and support real change within the dance community. During the project, we have been working and consulting with three groups of people, mainly from the industry of dance and beyond. The creatives that we've been working with have been artists, curators, producers. We have also been in conversation separately with our venue partners in London and nationally, as well as our national and international festival partners that we collaborate with. This phase draws to an end. The research of this project, myself and Delia met to reflect on the project process so far. I really do hope you get something out of our conversation, and I hope it also encourages more conversations like this across our sector and beyond, because this is where the real change can happen.

Delia

I've known you since, like,

Freddie

12, now I'm 21 years old.

Delia

Yeah, right, you reckon. I've known you since, since about probably mid 90s, right? When did you do Place Prize?

Freddie

Oh God, that was 2006 but I know we saw each other way before,

Delia

Way before that. Yeah, it's way before that. You've always been like, slightly, not the box they want to put you in. That's how I that's how you always, I always have you in my head as being Freddie, who's the, who is the choreographer who won't go into the box that the sector trying to put him in, which is the Black box. In a funny, funny way.

Freddie

Three T's, yep, tick box, tokenistic and tolerated.

Delia

Yeah. So wait, so you, but you've been, so you've been in the sector. We've been in the sector for probably a long time, even though I'm older than you, probably been in the sector about the same amount of time.

Freddie

Yeah, um, started mid 90s, yeah, at The Place Youth Dance.

Delia

When mid 90s?

Freddie

Youth, so that would have been like Youth, that's what it's called then, yeah. Youth dance with er Paloma Faith, all those guys were in the youth dance 96. Yes.

Delia

Wow. So we literally crossed over at The Place.

Freddie

Wayne. And actually Wayne McGregor did his first boys project when he came to Newham Six Form's College, New Vic, where Clare Connor was a dance teacher there. So that's why I know Clare from 96.

Delia

So I did so I told you, I did the photocopying for Wayne's programmes for his first Resolution piece.

Freddie

Yeah, 1994

Delia

Which is important, because then I was his chair. I just want to say that I was his chair for 12 years.

Freddie

And then that's why we've had this relationship with you since, what, 96 so I've known, literally doing a boys project, which was the first one, and then did some other international projects, and then went to be an apprentice in the company, and then stayed there.

Delia

You proper did the dance thing.

Freddie

I pranced around a bit. I danced around a bit. Yeah, so since mid 90s, just following all these artists.

Delia

So we crossed over when you came, when you did The Place Prize, right? Because I think that's because I was there as a trainee, trainee dance manager. And then I think I erm, I left. I went to jive and lindy hoppers.

Freddie

Oh God yes!

Delia

As an administrator and Bunty Mathias. Do you remember Bunty Mathias? I did that? God, we're really going back, right?

Freddie

Right. Still, 21.

Delia

But I think the first time that I came across you was you did that... What was your piece called for The Place Prize?

Freddie

Um, Silence Speaks Volumes.

Delia

So amazing. It was, actually, have you ever done it again, like, would you bring it back?

Freddie

We did it a few times, because, actually we did an international competition in Burgos, which it was actually from those finals that we were invited to go to Burgos, which is just outside Madrid. And actually we got, we won that competition there. So that was great, because we didn't end up in the main prize, which was still fine, because the work toured for another three or four years. Yeah. So that was really good, actually, to have that just get some money to make some like work, like 15. How many pieces were commissioned? About 15?

Delia

I can't remember that much.

Freddie

A lot of people. Obviously, if you weren't selected as one of those commissioned work, you felt a bit outside of that. But it was really nice, because actually the breadth of work that was commissioned, those artists are still going like, um, Raphael Bonachela, Hofesh Shechter, actually, what's the name? Punch Drunk's first work that it did on that scale was in the finals as well. Look what Punch Drunk are doing now. So, I mean, yes, and then what is it? Protein got...? You can go on so many, so many. Yeah. I mean, to be honest, you know, there's other competitions starting now, but I think it should come back, because, actually it was about commissioning new work. So even if you didn't win you had a work that you can still tour and live off as well. So yeah, Place Prize. I mean, that was pretty much the Turner Prize equivalent. Yeah, so that's the kind of a little bit of the freelance career, and then went into more, I would say, not necessarily making work, but trying to find other ways to kind of support living. So I was teaching a bit, making work here and there, and then did a few other commissions, and then worked with some independent artists as well. So that's the freelance I mean, what is it? I think, before becoming AD and Co-CEO of Dance Umbrella, I think it's about a span of what nearly 30 years or being a freelancer, so that lived experience, as well has really shifted from dancing for other choreographers,

making my own work, facilitating and mentoring other artists work, which actually was the result of me being spotted by Emma Gladstone, the former Artistic Director and Chief Executive who passed away earlier on this year. She actually spotted me when I did my first little curation or facilitating a group of artists work at The Place, actually, once again, come back to The Place, and she spotted me, and then she invited me to be a guest programmer in the festival. This was what 2016 at The Place, which was One Dance UK, when they became that consortium. So ADAD - dance of the African diaspora invited me just to shadow and support some of the artists that had work that was not quite developed or was research ideas, as well as those that really wanted to develop the work with more production values. Yes, and then Emma came to see that. So that's how that conversation started with DU.

Delia

So that's when we went across the path again, right? Because, because that was the money that arts that we used at Arts Council, when I was at Arts Council to work with the kind of developing practice in the in the sector. So then ADAD went in with One Dance.

Freddie

Exactly One Dance UK for that consortium, yeah.

Delia

Can't think. Whatever we called it, I remember both good pieces of work because it meant because it was good, because it meant that actually then, because I remember then you got you were doing that's for me, the next time that we crossed paths and you came up on my radar was because you were starting to move in a different way, I would say, like, not physically, but literally, but you were moving in a different way about that point, right? Because you were starting to have a bit more of a strategic conversation about things going on, like what was going on in the sector and whatever.

Freddie

Yeah, because once again, this thing about the box that I represented the whole of Black dance whenever conversation come up. And...

Delia

I mean, we both, do you remember we were having this conversation?

Freddie

Yeah, like I would be, and I would hear this from the inside and the outside, that there'll be conversation about, is Freddie's work Black enough? Yes? Or is it? Is it contemporary? Or is it, yeah, what is it? So that conversation where I started to get wind of because I knew people on both sides.

Delia

Yeah. And I think that's when we started talking because I kept, I kept having to defend, not defend you. That's not the right word. I kept having to push people back and sort of say, sit in my role as a dance officer, and sort of saying he has the right to be an artist. And this conversation about whether your work, because I think I feel what people wanted at that time was you to have was, was for it's things to be recognised, for the boxes they should be sitting in, right? And it's a bit a bit of like what we're going to talk about anyway. It's like it, you know. So people really thought that Freddie's work, it was confusing that they would look at you, they'd hear your name, they'd hear your surname, and they would have an expectation about what they were going to get. And then it didn't come. And then they were annoyed. Some people were literally annoyed about it. So I remember us having those conversations. I had the same conversations with Bawren. I mean, Bawren was coming through as well.

Freddie

He also did The Place Prize.

Delia

Also did The Place Prize exactly, you know, in those conversations about how artists can create and sort of be the artist they want to be, without having to kind of carry the whole whatever, the whatever the lens is that people want to all the box that people want to put you in. So put you in. So it was so it's really and that's why I was so happy when you went to Dance Umbrella. Because for me, having grown up with Dance Umbrella in in the sector, it was this thing, that it was this organisation and this festival, that it was because I came out through contemporary dance, it was like it was the place to see all the new work that and The Place was all...

Freddie

...multiplicity of voices across.

Delia

You know what I mean? Took me a very long time to realise that, that I was watching it through a particular lens, but for a very long time it was the it was the thing that everyone looked forward to. So actually, Emma's sort of ascension to AD, but then your kind of voice starting to come through, that

was like an amazing for me, a real amazing moment in the sector. Because I thought, Oh, actually, you're getting to play to the to your strength, rather than to the place where people were trying to pull you to. It was such a beautiful moment. Do you know what I mean? I remember having that conversation with Emma as well, when you did the thing at Young Vic, and I said, I lent back to her and I said, and you were on stage. And I said, I said, Nobody would have done that, and it was such an important moment. So yeah.

Freddie

And actually, just to go back because of the steps that just before that was when John Ashford at The Place invited me to enter the Robin Howard commission. And that was another step where I thought, all right then, because this conversation about Freddie making specific type of work, I really subconsciously, I think now I'm more conscious of it now. I made a decision I was going to have a multiplicity of works. Actually, there's The Place Prize piece came back again because the Robin Howard commission was for new work specifically. And I went, No, I'm not just going to do that. I'm going to have a mixed bill. So I had The Place Prize work come back. I did a duet with Jorge Crecis, a Spanish, UK based artist, actually, who I worked with when I was in Candoco, we made a duet, and then I brought back, actually, a piece that I made with a youth dance, Youth Dance England. So actually it was a combination of East London Dance's youth dance company and The Place's youth company. I made a piece on them, and then the Robin Howard commission, because I really wanted to give a multiplicity of my lived experiences without necessarily, once again, Freddie making a specific work. So that idea actually had already started coming into play, because I was really quite... Yeah, as you said, I was conscious that I cannot tell everyone's story or Black and global majority story in my own work. I mean...

Delia

Can you not?

Freddie

East London born. Parents took me back to Ghana, Ghanaian heritage. What from four till 10. Come back to East London. It's not as if I moved another part of London. Lived in East London, which is very diverse, but also as a space as well. So yeah, no, I couldn't. It was one of those, and I felt, I mean, I really did. Now I'm realising I did feel that pressure, that I had that that I really, I did not want to be like, No, there's other artists making work that speaks to the multiplicity. So this is the range of what I do. Is not just one thing. I mean, I even worked with a wood sculptor, which people were like, what's this about? Because actually, that was my living experience. Yeah. I mean, to be honest, that the wood

hand sculptures are still more famous than my prancing and dancing, yes, but it was one of those things where people were really questioning, actually, from my lived experience. And actually, this comes back to that topic. There was a rocking stool which represents the golden stool in Ghana. But the way it's designed is a bit abstract. So all those subtleties or deconstructing the form was not necessarily, it wasn't that obvious. It wasn't like folk or, yeah, what's it? Or what is it? Exotic in that way. So that was like, oh, what's Freddie doing again? And that thing has always been kind of just going on in my head continuously. Even when I see work, when I was in work, when I was curating work, I was really aware of that. I mean, not that I have all the answers to it, but it's really important that, I think that really kicked off, especially the conversations we had as well.

Delia

Yeah, because I think it's something we you we've had many conversations, but it's like, it's something that I think particularly like in the way that both of our careers have developed and where we where we are at now, you know, I'm very aware of how we were exposed to work. Like, you know, what my journey in was, was through contemporary. My... it wasn't in in whatever the box of Black dance was, it was through contemporary. So my taste was formed that way, right? So I'm really aware now, like, how we've carried you talk about that, but about multiplicity, the multiplicity of, I don't know, lenses that we bring into the way we do our jobs now, right? So, even, so, even, even the question around sort of curatorial leadership, everything that we've experienced in that journey to get to to get to today informs, I feel like some of the conversation that still sits in the back of my head about why is that work in this festival? Why is that artist being centred in this way? Our venue at Brixton House, why are we doing this work? What we trying to say? And I just so, I think it's really interesting that we've had both had... so I was, remember, I sent you earlier about coming into the sector as a Black dance manager, and so actually, and then being really confused about what, what the Black, what what the Black? What was the importance of the word Black? Was it me as an individual? Was it the art form? And having to take about two years to unpick what that meant, because my expertise wasn't in Black dance, and I think that... but the assumption that that is going to be your frame of reference first and foremost, which is, again, some of the stuff that we know come through, some of the conversations that we've had.

Freddie

But also speaking to that your lived experience can actually have different perspectives of what you're seeing. And I think that was something I really noticed earlier on as soon because I went to train at The Place – London Contemporary Dance School, and, well, partially dyslexic, I'm not sure which spectrum I'm on, so that one of the best subjects I really enjoyed was dance history. And because having lived in

Ghana, also from four till six and coming back and just going contemporary dance, what is it? People in bare feet. Folk dance is bare feet. People decide to take their shoes off. I mean, it's not that simplistic, but understanding... actually, one work that I saw are still one of my favourite works was Laurie Booth and Russell Maliphant's duet. Which was using Capoeira forms. And I was like, Oh, this is contemporary? But it's Capoeira? Which was transatlantic, kind of a movement language that went into South America, Brazil, El Salvador, so all those, yeah, and the ritualistic and so all those things, I'm thinking... So this is contemporary, but how come when an artist does it that is not within from the global north, does it, its not contemporary. But when someone does it in the globe North it's contemporary. So all those things I was really, like, stuck with when I was training three years at The Place, and actually just speaking to that as well. I mean, there was a big push from a group of us at The Place. I mean, I'm gonna say because things have shifted a lot nowadays as well, which is great. Like we wanted Capoeira as a class, like this was 99 we wanted it as a formal foundation. I know now they've got some hip hop and street languages. They've got other forms, which is great, because it's the training, it's the basis. As I've always said, technique... I went to, like, London Contemporary Dance School, not to learn how to dance, was to learn how to do the things I wanted to do without getting injured. Like to be able to get up again if I drop onto the floor without dropping floor once again. Oops. That's my career over. Because I think that's what techniques should also support. I mean, obviously I had to learn other techniques and skill. So it's really important, like, dance history. I was really going, what? Who's contemporary, who's not? And, like, even, like, the history of art, sorry, yeah, no, no.

Delia

But I was just... sorry to interrupt you, but I was gonna say, it's just that, but that's, again, it's like, somebody, somebody took that, somebody put that on, somebody took that, that duet, and said, This is contemporary dance, right? And so then that's where I would have engaged with it, and said, Okay, that's, so, that's contemporary dance. And at no point thinking about, well, actually, what's the root form, and what's the, what's the, maybe the, the authentic root of that, what was, what's the lens that was ever seen in? And I think that's part of, you know, Oh, I wonder if it's part of, like, what, in terms of Dance Umbrella and sort of the way you've gone into this piece of it, like this inquiry, whether, whether, just from programming work over the years, there's like, an awareness that grows about, actually, what are we putting out there that's saying? And this, I'm not necessarily saying this is you, but just like, because Dance Umbrella's been around forever, whether that that slow taking of the blue pill or the red pill, and I know which one is, right. Has kind of like, has kind of made us all go, actually, how are we presenting work, and who's presenting the work? How are we framing it, and how are we allowing people to come to it? So if we were going to programme, anyone's going to programme that kind that duet again now, whether there'd be a different conversation around why. Or... do you know

what I mean? Like, whether there'd be a different conversation around, you know, have we just mined it, or have we, you know, without knowing... we're not talking about them and their work.

Freddie

No, it's not because, I mean, I think it's a contemporary, I think compositional, and I think that's what Dance Umbrella has been about, then even push further forward. It's not necessarily about movement languages. It's about the choreographic curiosity or different ways of bringing different practices together in a different gaze, is not the... I always say we're not looking for the classical version or the folk version of it. It's what conversations you're having in the contemporary times. And actually, I would be interested, give me an idea, actually, for curating something where we would have that duet, and actually another duet, I forgot his name, Colin Poole and Rachel Krische did a stunning piece to Britney Spears.

Delia

Yeah, yeah.

Freddie

I mean, it was literally, because Rachel Krische is like five foot and or what's it, and five foot two or something, and then Colin Poole's like six foot something. I thought I was six foot until I saw him, but he's much taller. And actually, the duet, it was just because some, some of the moves was, you could feel the essence of salsa, samba in there. So actually, would that those two work together? Would we interrogate it a bit more now.

Delia

Exactly

Freddie

Because, I mean, it was them was also one of the things putting those two things together. I would hope that there's a wider curiosity about, oh, what is it we're trying to say about contemporary you know? Now, yeah, I think that that's, I mean, to be honest, that's the kind of, I mean, this conversation we're having about diversifying curatorial stewardship is about others that have that lived experience to be able to ask that question. I remember, I mean, one of the most beautiful things that came out at The Place Prize, and yeah, it was a competition we didn't win. But one of the most amazing things, and I've always kept with me, is Femi Adewale, she came up to me after and went Freddie, I saw what you're doing with Adowa, which is a traditional Ashanti kingdom, the Ghana and Ghanaian Ashanti

kingdom. It's a traditional folk dance, but not unless you know it, like from the roots of it. You would not see like the way with the and actually, that's what I could see in Colin Poole, Rachel Krische's form. That's what I could see in Laurie Booth and Russell Maliphant's work as well. To kind of see how they're playing with those languages and really de codifying it, you would say, or so, don't I mean, that's always been a curiosity, I think, as a curator, and what I'm bringing, hopefully, to Dance Umbrella currently.

Delia

We've been working on this conversation for, I don't know, since February? But you actually didn't like... Dance Umbrella, didn't need to do this, right? You could, you could have just carried on as a festival and just been like, you know, for me, a little bit of an elephant in the room is that it is, it's incredible that you are Artistic Director and CEO of this, right? Because especially the lineage of the organisation, right? And that it is, it was such, and still is such an important part of what anybody internally in the country or internationally knows about what dance is in the UK, right? So actually, there's no reason that Dance Umbrella has to go, you know, actually, what's going on with stewardship, right? Who's curating in the world, whose voices are...? There's actually no need for you to do that, because you could have actually just carried on doing what you're doing, right? And knowing you, as I know you, and I'm just wondering, like, how much of it is, and Tania and the team like... and also that the legacy, the legacy of the whole thing... not trying to do the do away with it, the whole journey of Dance Umbrella to now, it's kind of met you at a point of, met you and what you represent, because you do represent something, which is probably, I don't want to just say it, it's like there was never a point in my career that I thought I would see you or me taste making dance for the UK. Like you really are doing that, right? Not because of your ability to do or not or anything. For me, it's an evolution of the system that you and I have grown up in, right? So I lost the train... just wondering, like, if you've met, if everything has collided to this moment, you could have and Dance Umbrella and your team, you could have all got just gone. Let's just do what we're doing well, because actually you're actually, your actions are speaking loud anyway, right? I never actually asked you why, why you lot decided to even go down this route? You know what I mean? Because you could've, you could have just carried on like.

Freddie

It's not... I mean, the history of Dance Umbrella, what founded in 1978 and bringing, I mean, I think it's been, well, no, I don't think I know. It's been a trailblazer in introducing different forms. I mean, one of the first Black dance companies, UK mass movers, Greta Mendez, was what 1978 I was looking at the, what's it, the archive of the festival print from then onwards, and this is just a few of the people who

have been in the festival: Bill T Jones, Rennie Harris, so different forms as well, and practices, you know? And I'm saying this, and I also know, especially currently, there's a big, big need for supporting artists that are not in a conversation in his wider sense, whether their Black and global majority or not, they need to be in a conversation of their work being presented in the mainstream to wide audiences. But I'm also aware, Dance Umbrella can't just be an international festival anymore. It has to really shift with the next phase of what is it for those who are making choices of taste, how they're framing it... the gaze..

Delia

... yeah...

Freddie

...because there's some works that I sit...

Delia

...the gaze...

Freddie

There's some work that I watch...

Delia

Do you not feel your body react when you say that?

Freddie

Yeah. I mean, honestly, there's some work and I'm watching, and actually, London, I mean specifically, and I think, well, London are not perfect, but as a global city, I think there's more nuances in diverse... about diversity and the multiplicity of diversity. I think there's definitely more nuance in London, in the UK, more than other parts of the world, where I go and see work, and the audiences watching the work. So I think for us, for Dance Umbrella, I feel within the other part of our work, as well as the work that we've done is supporting producers, like the role of producers being really integral to the work. Artists that are from far, global south, global north, for work that we're not seeing. I think this is the next phase, as well as all the other things we're doing, which is about resource as well, and trying to do all those things efficiently. And actually with, with care, with care, which we're going to pick up on is that I have had that journey of being supported. Opportunities and someone spotting me to kind of go alright Freddie. I'm going to invite you as a guest programmer, which was from 2016 to 2019 to curate

a part of this big international festival which is about the multiplicity of contemporary voices, not just in a little box in the side corner of a... Oh Freddie, let's get you to come and work and over here and do that. It was a part of a bigger festival. So for me, we're doing that work, that work, but I don't think we have a... the conversation is wide enough, and the multiplicity of voices is still not there in the rooms that I'm in on both sides now.

Delia

You still go, I mean, it's incredible. I still feel like, even, even like, you know, I consider myself senior in the sector, senior in the sector, I still feel it, while I'm going into so many rooms where I'm still one of the very, very, very minority. And it's really, it's really challenging, because, you know, we know so much about how crucial it is to be that, like, I come back to that thing about the lens, you know, we know it's so important about the context within which work is being presented. And then we're walking to the room, and we are like the only ones of Blackness or Black or Brown in a room, in in a conversation that is about Black and Brown artists or Black and work that's coming from, I don't know, is it global south, north, wherever right

Freddie

Global conversation, even from conversations.

Delia

And it's so frustrating because you have to bring a whole different you have to bring a whole thing with you that goes, and I am going to speak up about this. And sometimes it's tiring to do that, right? So sometimes, so it always makes me wonder, though, what if I'm not in the room, or what if Freddie's not in the room, or that person's not in the room? And it's not that there is a kind of big conspiracy to show work in a way that's not, it's not just not what I mean, but there is a thing where you say, where sometimes you have to say, how does it play out if we present this work in this way, and what are we saying about it? And even if we can't solve that conversation, I'm just not sure that those conversations happen. And it's a lot of heavy lifting when you're the only person in the room, and we've been doing it for a long time. Imagine there are people, artists or whatever, coming through, the curators coming through. They haven't had the length of time in the business to develop the armour a little bit and then to develop the language and develop the... but you know what I mean like to get to be fluent enough to make a case about why something should, yeah to challenge it.

Freddie

I mean, one of my colleagues says who agitates that conversation? Yeah, and I think that's something that we really and actually working on the consultation that we've done to date with the three groups, which we're going to go into as well, and we're working on, what's it Dawn Estefan, observing the room as well? The, what is it, the non verbal language that you when you're sitting these spaces, when you're going... really?!

Delia

Remember that I went to see Slave Play the other day, and I sat in the audience, and I was really freaking out for 20 minutes because I was thinking I couldn't hold the tension. I couldn't hold the tension, and I was worried about what everybody was thinking, about what they were seeing. And you know, who put this on this? And my mind was going to because I didn't have the information before I went in, so my mind was going to three things: who programmed this, who put this, who put this play on? Who wrote it? Why don't I know more about it, and why was I not prepared walking into it, and what? And does everybody else have that context walking into it? Into a packed theatre? Like, have they come in to see this with context, or they just gone, I'm going to go and see Slave Play, which you need to see. That's what I'm going to say, is you need to see, yeah, you need to see it.

Freddie

But also speaking to that is in those rooms when you are literally singled out as the one that should speak for Black and global majority. It's not even that pressure is more going Wow, do I have to do your work for you, because actually, most of these conversations have isn't internationalism. I mean, it's in the plurality of international programming.

Delia

Yeah.

Freddie

So it really makes me question whether we are speaking to those who are converted, you know, and then who's converted, and what, what kind of work do they do to be converted? You know, it's just really to know, what are the steps, yeah, the course. What course did you take? And is it the course you took? Was it about speaking to someone who looks like, who is the chair of the converted? Me explicitly in those spaces. So I really, I'm really aware that sometimes I just sit quietly, and actually the space where I'm a bit more active is when we're having a conversation about, what is that framework, what is the context? How are we opening up this space? And this is why this diversifying curatorial stewardship is really important, because actually it's about those artists with a lived experience who

really want to have that multiplicity of conversation, whether it is, what is that play called slave? Slave Play, whether is that work or not? What is the context, you know, give context to it? How is it framed? How are people approaching it? What is the work that people might want to do after they see that play? Go and sit in the corner have a conversation about it? I think that might be happening anyway. But all those things where, you know, when you have that lived experience, you can kind of have, you should also create space for that as well. No, oh, sold out, that's a hit. And if it didn't sell out, it's a risk...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...you know. So there's also...

Delia

...and we talked about that, you know, I think we could, because I think one of the beauty about the conversations we had, there were three. Gonna have to remind me now, the three we did. The first one was...

Freddie

Tastes?

Delia

No, no, the first one, we had three groups, didn't we?

Freddie

Oh, yeah. So the first groups were the artists and producers, curators, who, kind of, they have a practice already. I think there's a thing as well. They're doing it just like, just like I was doing it. But it's just looking for that opportunity to be in another conversation. The second group, where our international festival partners from across the globe, Europe, Global South, and really, really widespread of international colleagues, and not just partners that we work with. And then a third group were the venue partners that we work with in London and nationwide, and actually who, a few of them, who weren't able to be there, who we're going to actually pick up the conversation with, literally after this.

Delia

One of the things, there were so many things that came out of it. Going back through my notes as well, I was like, Oh yeah, there was, there were so many things that came out of it. But I think one of the things that that we talked about was that sort of, I guess, your role and sort of vicariously, then Dance Umbrella as as an entity, your role as leaders. Because I think what's really amazing for me and why I'm really happy to be working on it with you, with you always this, it's a real leadership thing. It's like continuing that thing of, if you like, I'm going to make up Dance Umbrella's, you know, raison d'etre here. But that thing about actually trying to bring the contemporary conversation then. If it's not just about contemporary dance, bringing the contemporary conversation, I think this is a really contemporary conversation, because we do have to with the context of the world, and the world has massively changed. And then you put 2020, on top of it, the way in which work of Black and Brown people is seen and spoken about, it's so contemporary now that I think it's, for me, it's amazing that you're doing this piece of work and looking at within that, specifically within that diversifying who is in the room, who is curating the work, who is setting the context and setting up that lens, is also in that looking at and what is the role of Black and Brown women in that. Because there was a very specific piece in that, of female identifying Black and Brown people who there's a very specific piece in there as well. And so for me, you know, it's just been a, it's just lovely piece of work.

Freddie

And speaking to that, I mean, it's been, it's been a real honour to have you work with us as well. And once, no, but it's one of those things where people can see, oh, yeah. There's a Black male and there's a Black female in this space as well, but actually, for me, this is the other conversation as well about the multiplicity of lived experience and expertise that is just beyond our exterior and our external look. And so I think that's really important to mention in this space as well, because those artists, there is a lack of those Black and Brown female women in those spaces, and it's not because we're bringing them to come and do the three T's, as I say, tick box, tokenistic and just being tolerated. No, they have a wide knowledge of lived experiences like yourself, like the journey we just talked about from The Place, ENB, Company Wayne McGregor, Studio Wayne McGregor, as well as IRIE, all these other organisations you're what you've worked with as well. And so, yeah, it's not, let's bring in kind of programme this...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...you know, it's about, no, they also have the breadth of knowledge and sometimes more, because we've had to navigate...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...all these spaces to kind of...

Delia

...get it all...

Freddie

...yeah, to get it yeah, we've not had a choice whether we can pick and choose. It's literally there because it's easily available, accessible, that knowledge. But the other knowledge is not which we have to bring.

Delia

Which we have to bring. How on earth did we... I was going to say, how did we get because those conversations were so, so wide ranging, and so we got so much from those. I think for all the people that took part in the conversation were really generous, but we got quite a lot of... I know there's some key themes that were coming through around various bits. Taste is a massive one. Taste was the really big one I think. Well, I think we asked a lot of questions about first, first of all, even just the word curation, for me, because it's even the word curation, people think I say, people say think museum, or they think, they think visual, visual arts, right? So I think even just elevating, or equalizing, as I call it equalizing, that what we do in dance, and what we do in pulling work together and putting it in a package, and saying to people, here you go, is curation, and having people in our sector who are doing this, or in our sector that have a view of this, or are trying to develop a route into this also see themselves as being curators, and validly so, I think was one of the things that came, A from you saying that you didn't even recognise that you you were a curator until somebody said it to you.

Freddie

And actually, and just quickly, just to interject, actually, that moment, which I said earlier on, was when I was invited by The Place to do the Robin Howard commission, and I had that multiplicity of work. So I remember, the duet, The Place Prize piece. And actually Betsy Gregory, the second Artistic Director

and Chief Executive of Dance Umbrella, was in the audience. It's hilarious. I agree with her viewpoint now, but she's like, Freddie. I wasn't sure about the Robin Howard work, because it was still very early in the premiere as well, very critically, with a critical feedback. And she's like, but I enjoyed the curation of the whole evening. I literally took that with me, and this was, what, 2009 2010 so I didn't before that. I didn't think about curation.

Delia

If somebody doesn't tell you that's what you're doing. You don't even know. So I love the fact that what we're talking about is curators, right, not programmers, because I think it allows people to put particularly dance in a box. Anyone can programme me, just put a brief in.

Freddie

Yeah...

Delia

...do you know what I mean? And it devalues a skill that comes to it.

Freddie

Sorry, even programmers have a curiosity of curation. Sometimes you can't do both. But I think the privilege, it is a privilege. I mean, I know the visual arts curation is like, you know, yeah, literally, you are. You are the curator. I mean...

Delia

...you are and you are the people that are put in. You are the creators of taste, right? And so, you know, if you think about what we're all trying to do, which is, like, get people in as audiences to see it, so someone's got to, someone's got to say, remember I said to you like, I'm like, the worst person. Nobody wants to see my taste on stage, because I'd lose my job straight away, right? I really would. I really would. My secret, my what are they call secret pleasures, nobody needs to know.

Freddie

But, but, but, honestly, just to interrogate as well. But you're interrogated that, sorry, um, the lived experiences around that means that the way the framing, the gaze, is not even about the content or what's on stage or whatever space it's in. It's about the conscious

Delia

bringing, yeah, it's what you're bringing to it. And I think we and I think that's why I like the fact that this is about curation and diversifying curation and diversifying who's being allowed. And we'll be strict, listen, you know who's being who's being allowed to do that? Do you know what I mean? So one, I know, one of the things that came up was around whose responsibility is it to diversify it? Right? Like, who? Do you know what I mean? Like, who? Because we know those, those con... in those conversations we had that I would say the people we spoke to that were artists or creatives feel it's the responsibility of the institutions to do that.

Freddie

Yeah...

Delia

I agree. But do you know what I mean, that that really came through quite strongly, right?

Freddie

Yeah, and, but it's also, I mean, once again, the opportunity to be able to have that conversation with the venue, because this was in the we're going to talk about it, the word, but the word that came up was that there's no such thing as safe space, but to be able to be in a room, to have that conversation with those people, with those programmers or venue ADs. A big risk for those artists, because that, I mean, and actually me and a colleague had this conversation that there's usually the artist that's spoken about, oh, yeah, they're very difficult to work with. They're not easy to work with. And I was always asked, I mean, there might be, but I just asked that question, what is it that they did or said that was that made them difficult to work with? Because they probably want to make that statement that you venues decide what the taste are, which is true, but you can't say that. And actually that means, as an independent artist as well, most of these artists, sorry, are freelancers as well. So that's the job gone.

Delia

Yeah. So that's what came through. People were saying, actually, don't they don't want to challenge the curators, because otherwise they'll never get programmed, right? Or...

Freddie

Venue programmers, Oh, yeah. ADs, yeah...

Delia

...or, and they don't get to and then they don't get to progress through, right? So then, even if they're moving, I know we talked before about that movement from being creative choreographer into a more curatorial space. If you've already set your reputation as asking the difficult questions about why things are being presented in the way they are, this is not us saying now this is what came through, right? Saying that if you've already flagged yourself as being... challenging is not the right word, but asking certain questions about why certain work is being programmed by certain festivals in certain contexts, you will already kind of mark your card when you're trying to move navigate through how you might shift your practice from being on stage to being a curator.

Freddie

There isn't a pathway. I mean, that's another thing that we talked about. Yeah, there isn't a pathway. And ADs, and I'm gonna say her name is Emma Gladstone, who I don't know how that moment came about. She came to see that platform, serendipitous, whatever that was, that moment, if those opportunities, and I think this is where we talk about, what is it? Is it Do we still use affirmative action anymore? Making a standpoint that if it wasn't for that One Dance UK and ADAD giving me that opportunity within this framework, let's say, it wasn't necessarily in the framework of a whole dance ecology, contemporary dance ecology. It was in that framework that Emma came to see that and then brought me into that conversation. How often do we have those opportunities to be able to be seen, to even be considered, to be in those conversation, to become a guest programmer? There isn't, there isn't a line. I mean, I'm totally aware, and I'll probably talk myself out my next job, but it's all right, I'm going to start prancing again. But as the artistic director, co CEO of Dance Umbrella, now I would also, and I was talking about this actually, last weekend of European festivals, network meeting, I might want to go back to dancing again. I need to go back into the studio and, like, work a bit. So maybe, maybe I don't want to go in this round AD from AD, different taste making positions to a different taste making position. But I really don't see the progression of pathways for my peers, those choreographers like that. They could also have that opportunity. And it's not even about those who are making work. It's about those who are working and creative learning spaces. It's just like the different type of taste. And actually we talk about it in our team at Dance Umbrella, like those making work for young audiences. It's a specific demographic of people who are making work. And actually we can see it as Dance Umbrella, because we programme that type of work. So who else are we bringing into that conversation that can shift that forward. Because, I mean, I kind of lied a bit. I'm not that young anymore, no. But it's really important, because there is no pathways or the spaces to be able to support that, support that conversation, or, yeah, to support to hold that conversation. I know that word safe space is something we're going to talk about to hold that conversation. There isn't spaces for that. It's not unless the venue goes, I'm gonna choose you. You're gonna come and work with us. I was

given that opportunity, and I think it's the next stage is to take that next step forward about making it a part of the conversation continuously, not tick box in and out.

Delia

Well, I mean, and it's gonna randomly bring me to one of the other things that came out around internationalism, because, when we were talking about pathways for artists to... pathways for people to kind of, so I'm going to call it like, to develop their curation muscle, right? Because they because, and the whole skill base around that, right? One of the big things that came out for people, both the festivals and was, how do you get the international context, where, and it's really, I think it's really challenging. What they were talking about was around, because, you know, we're in a place in terms of environmental sustainability where we're trying to decrease travel. But there is something about understanding work in context that you can't get from a video and you can't get from a live stream. You kind of need to be there and feel what's going on and feel how it's landing, and feel the kind of political context of the works being made in or whatever, right, and then feel your reaction to it as the person programming it, or considering to bring it right. So they talked about how challenging it would be, it is now to even because that comes down to it comes down to the, I guess the we don't want to travel too much, because when we get the reasons for that right, but the affordability for them to be able to go to places where we've been lucky, I'd say we've had the time in roles and the people around us to be able to, you know, to go to IETM all the time. I didn't know half of what I was seeing IETM, but being there means that you're in a place where you're absorbing everything, and you're more importantly, having those conversations with the people who might be able to give you that opportunity that says, oh, Freddie, come and do this. Or, actually, I know somebody Delia come and do that. So a lot of the artists we spoke to, so they're not even in a position to be in the right countries, you know, I mean, or in the right at the right festivals, or at any festival, and that is really challenging for them to get that international context right.

Freddie

No, totally, yeah...

Delia

...yeah, yeah, go on...

Freddie

Sorry. And actually speaking to that, I was just thinking, as we were transitioning the pandemic, there was a few European based artists that were talking about, oh, we're not going to travel anymore

internationally. I'm like, good for you. You've had, you've been a privileged position to be able to do that. And actually now I get even more the narrative, and I travel a lot. We're trying to manage mitigate our footprint and travel as well. We're doing a carbon literacy on that as well. But you have to go to that place to see the work, because the lived. I mean, there's one work that we're bringing to the festival this year, Mamela Nyamza, I saw that work in Mozambique, different context to seeing it in Amsterdam, different contexts we're going to see in London, and also having a conversation with a venue about audiences lived experience that will change the temperature of the room. If I did not go and see that work live, we won't be having that conversation. And I think something it might be controversial, I'm going to say there are people who've been these roles for very long time. They've travelled before the pandemic or before the globe, was it? Carbon literacy became a real thing in the Global North, which now they're not traveling. It's very privileged position to be in as well. And those who are a bit younger and don't have that experience, they need to travel to have that lived experience. And actually, I think that would also help carbon literacy, because you know why most of the places where they've suffered from this environmental thing is the global South, or the places where, actually most of the was it, the damage is not necessarily coming from them, yeah, as well. So, so actually, that could also bring another converse... you could shift the conversation forward. I'm not saying it's perfect over there as well, but that will move the conversation forward, not just about art, culture, dance, but it's about how we actually all work together to mitigate all these things. So it's just so I think it's a bigger piece of work that I keep on thinking about, because there's a few of us that as part of a European festivals network that are new in our roles, and I can see us traveling a lot more than some of our other peers...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...because we just don't have that context.

Delia

And I think that, and that's what really came through. I remember them, you know, particular individuals, saying, I can't, I can't get to these places. So then I can't, I can't be seen to be developing my international context, or I can't be seen to be developing the tools that I need to be able to even so when those jobs do come up, or those opportunities do come up, there isn't a route, there isn't a route in and then subsequently, the festivals were saying, it's almost easier to go where you know right? To speak to who you know. So so we can see, directly coming out of this, that there is a an issue between

you need to have the international context, and you need to also understand the international conversation.

Freddie

Political conversations happen. Yeah...

Delia

But you can't do it if you got, if you're not being supported, to get there. And you know, that's part of so that's why we feel that. That's one of the things I think was coming through about why it isn't as diverse as it should be.

Freddie

Yeah, and actually, something that also came up with those international partners was that they also had remember, what was it about how someone spotted them and when you I am going to support you to develop. I mean, that's very exclusive as well. I mean, hopefully with the work we're trying to we're trying to open up that conversation to a wider pool of artists as well, but not unless you have that. I mean, like I did as well. And actually one trip that Emma could not go to was in Australia to go and see a Melbourne Dance Massive. And I had that opportunity to go to Dance Massive, but it was just that one direction. I was guest programming as well. But with this work, we're trying to open up to a wider pool of artists as well, that we can, yeah, that can have that experience as well, bringing their lived experience, but also in different contexts as well, which is really important. Actually, maybe it's not them even going to experience. They will get something out the festival, or they might not. I mean, sometimes you go with an agenda. I need to find a work. I need to bring a work. But I know me being in a space most of the time when it's pretty much myself, whether it's global north or global south. People go, how is he in the room? That will agitate something, you know, in the room.

Delia

Just being in the room.

Freddie

I mean, it's not enough. That's not enough. But, yeah...

Delia

I think it's really hard for us not to talk about the safe space thing, because you can't, because you can't have this conversation without talking about because there is what we know really came through quite

strongly in this, in these conversations, particularly from the create, what I'm going to call the artists, the creatives' conversation was about safety, right? It was about well being. It was about it was about their how to articulate their lived experience in the space. It was about agitating, about bucking the norm, all of that, right? And you and others spoke really, really clearly about how much energy that takes, and how you have to deploy it in certain ways, and how some people have more practice at it than others, and actually that it's a it's a real thing, and where is that? That it feels like a conversation that's happening outside of the rooms that you're the one person in, because you can't keep bringing that into... but you're, you can't keep bringing that into the room. But just being the presence in the room has other people, you know, you and I know, and other people know that when we go internationally, people think it's a very British thing, that we're so great at diversity that, of course, we expect to see a Black woman or a Black man or a disabled dance company, you know, we, you know, we expect to see those things being featured, all those things being centered, because UK is the greatest on diversity, right? But A, we know that's not true. B, it's just it kind of absolves everyone else from having to...

Freddie

...do the work...

Delia

...do the work, right? It's just, it's just an annoying thing. So this thing about safe space that we were talking about before is that there is no such thing as a safe space, right? Those because you and I could be in the space, and it's not safe because you and I are in the space.

Freddie

Yeah. Because actually, though the question that's been asked is like, Oh, what is it that they... Actually no, the question is, there's two of them, one, one...

Delia

...there's never two of us...

Freddie

...exactly. So that that already is a conversation that was like, oh, there's two of them. How did that happen? One is like, oh yeah, we know about that one. You know, the one narrative is like, Oh yeah, there's one in a room. We have to have one in a room. And actually, something I'm aware of, and I'm I'm starting to find a way to not do that and stake back. Is that usually a great what's the name?

Oprah? Yeah, that Oprah. The one and only Oprah. There's this thing that she talks about, so there's this thing that she has about opening up the heart space. So normally that's me about softening the space a bit. I mean, Freddie's got some rubbish dad jokes that usually is about softening the space and then going in with the lighter something, just to shift the temperature in the space, because otherwise it becomes really the tension. And I know my body that well, even though it's not moving as much as I know, when I start to go, I feel tense. And you come out going, God, that that was heavy, let alone even begin the work to talk about trying to get dance on, you know, to get dance as an art form further down the line, to even do that work. It just feels, it just feels really heavy that that work has been done. So actually, for me, there is, and I do agree with you, and I've always struggled another word, I mean safe space, those two words, and resilience. I'm like, No, I don't want to be resilient. I mean, I'm persevering, but I don't want to be resilient. Honestly, I don't want to be resilient.

Delia

I mean, what really came through, right was that there is, there's a whole lot of work that goes on for artists to be able to speak about either the way work is being represented, the way that they you know, who's making decisions. So I know that what you know, without naming any of the individuals or any of the stories that we heard, there was a real theme about being invited into environments and then no care being taken when they get there, right? And so the box has been ticked, the conversations being had, and the invitation has been extended, but that's that's it, and then they are associated with risk. And remember, we had the conversation about, how can we flip the narrative around? If you diversify the voices in the room, it's about opportunity, not risk. And and I know the venues, when we took that into the venue conversation, they were very much talking about, yes, but there is, we've got a financial imperative. I know I'm there, right? We have a financial imperative. And so we can't take too much risk, because we have to make the bottom line work. And so if we diversify, if we don't get the people that we know our programming is safe with, it's fine. I can say, Go on, off. You go Delia, you programme this you curate this season, but it might not sell. And so that association with diversifying and risk is so great that it's almost blocking the system. Do you know what I mean?

Freddie

And I think that's part of the international... I think, once again, as you pointed out, the UK is kind of seen as this mecca of holding this conversation. There's still a lot of work to be done, but I think the one thing that I always sit with is, how do we make the space open enough for those artists to be able to thrive and to bring to create opportunities? Because I think if you invite an artist to curate or bring that multiplicity of voices, is not a risk, it's a long term kind of vision as well. I mean, the work, there's an example actually, I was part of an many of the artists actually would have been a situation as well

that we spoke to. I was a part of a residential programme, which was mainly for choreographers. And this was, what, 2009 so last week, I sat in a group of artistic directors, choreographers, head of communication from our European partners Festival, and was one of us. Sylvia Garibaldi, a wonderful artists who's based in Italy. We were one of the two people, including other artists. We're both in completely different roles, doing amazing things, both of us, but that was from that no one expected that those two scenarios would happen, that narrative would happen. So I think you also have to give room for what is possible in your future. You know, not just you come and do this job, and if this goes, pardon my French, tits up, you're out. You know, it's not, it's not that simple, because the residue of what the work that's been done will lead into other areas of the work, whether it's in the leadership team, the governance, all those things which we talk about, having diversity in board is not just that. It is about who's in the space to also look at what kind of diversity is on boards as well. You know, it's vice versa.

Delia

But the venues and the partners that, the kind of programming partners, if you like, they they, they were really clear about how and they're under pressure, right? So that not feeling that they're, you know, the luxury of being, I don't even know how I'm sort of jumping around. But when we were talking before, we were talking about, actually, we felt like we had time... longer, maybe longer than we wanted or needed, but we had time to develop into the people, the great, amazing people that we are now in the sector, right? We had time to get there. You know what I mean? I'm taking my flowers. We had time to get there. Whereas, whereas, because of so many macro things that are going on, venues and the people sitting in power, and we have to come to the power piece right, the people in power positions that are making decisions about who makes decisions making decisions about who's in the room. They are also under a pressure. That means that they feel that this equation of diversification, this risk that they may take by allowing this income generation piece of activity to sit in the hands of somebody who doesn't have all the skill, or doesn't have the pedigree that they recognise. That we were just talking about before, about, you know, they've seen them at this festival. They know that they've done this. They've seen them popping up, they haven't got that track record that they can look at and go, Yeah, Freddie, because, because, in some ways, Emma had track record. She had she could see your track record. She could see your development. And I don't think what, well, what the venues were saying, or what some of the partners were saying, is that it's difficult to with all the best will and the best allyship in the world, it was difficult for them to go and so we're going to take a risk here and do it here. It was really difficult for them, and I think that is we have to recognise that in this conversation.

Freddie

Yeah. And I just also would hope, and this is hope, because I know financially it's challenging times for everyone, but that the artists and their lived experience knowledge means that, I mean freelancers are the most nimble people to make the best out of any kind of situation, just like the sector does. So it's one of those things. Even when I was invited as a guest programmer, I was invited to create a part or to have a curation within the festival, but the resource for what I wanted to do was not enough, and I was quickly, like caught on to that. The first year, we weren't able to do that. The second year, we started systems lab, which was supporting artists, multiple of artists that were not necessarily going to be programmed in festival to have a residency. So we do choreographic residency, which actually was hosted. One of them was hosted by Studio Wayne McGregor working with an international practitioner on real time choreography, which actually was not about choreography. It's about putting things together in a certain way. So artists are that we can help to solve those kind of or interrogate those risk mitigation or to have that conversation. I don't think there's enough trust in artists. I mean, I always have this thing about freelancers. Oh yeah, the Freelancers being artists, a bit whimsical. They're a bit fluffy. No, we are. I mean, when, when I would say, when I was a freelancer for over 20 something years, I was never free, because in between that time I was free, I was literally trying to work out, what are the next things. Like strategic. It is strategic thinking as well. And I think artists are very nimble. This is where we need to find the room to hold that conversation to go, you know what this is... And me and Emma did have this conversation. Freddie, literally, we had it outside The Place. I remember down the stairs by the bar. If you know The Place really well, come around that corner. Yeah? Freddie, um, great. Let's, let's try it for a year, if it doesn't work out, what? No. Danny, was a gentleman's agreement, but now we call it a person's agreement, yeah. And I was issues like, Yeah, let's see how it goes for one year. If it doesn't work out, we just, we just have a conversation about it, and it's very clear, but it was a three year plan, you know that? So that's the kind of thing where it was, we can there's holding space for that conversation to happen. Not, I'm not going to tell you you're a risk, but let's see how you're kind of really preparing. What is the term to fail something...

Delia

...yeah, there is, there's already. And I think that came through as well. Didn't, because that was part of the safe space...

Freddie

Yeah, the artists talked about that a lot, actually, that already they're setting up, they're setting things out to fail. Yep, that came up a lot. And that's something I just I think artists were... the sector we're in charity sector, which is we're already aware that where the money's coming from, so we're very

precious about how we use that money. Independent artists now, and as difficult as it is for them, they're still finding ways to make that five pound, 20 pounds into 20 pounds work. You know, we all are within the sector, so I don't know why we underestimate that from the artists. Whether they'll be from a specific demographic or geographical or heritage or background that their risk, because we're in that risk together, to be honest.

Delia

We're going to talk about power though.

Freddie

Yes.

Delia

I have a big thing about the power piece, because I think it's probably more important than people realise. I think in the con in this conversation, I think what came through really clearly is. Particularly when we were talking about people's whether it's psychological safety or other in the space of these in these conversations, and in these places where or the environments where they are trying to speak their truths, or trying to speak their lived experience, and bring that in as an expertise into the conversation. Because we talked about people not really having, not valuing lived experience as an expertise. That there is a power thing. We touched on it a bit before, when we talked about them, them being worried about if they say the wrong thing to the wrong person, then that interrupts what they may want to do later on. There is a power thing about people holding on to it. And they talked a lot about people holding on to almost the validation of being the taste maker, and therefore, if I diversify it, it's going to either expose me as the taste maker, as a curator, or it's going to make me redundant.

Freddie

Yeah. Which is what I pretty much meant as well. Which...

Delia

...which is what? You did what?

Freddie

Which is what I said. Sorry earlier on as well, about that idea of talking myself out of a job. It's one of those things, it creates more opportunities, actually. So it's not even talking yourself out of a job it's to

make a bit more of an impact and open up more spaces for those conversations, because it's not limited. So, yeah, that's something that I sit...

Delia

but that's probably why people are sitting in that place of not diversifying who's in the curatorial conversation, right?

Freddie

Yeah, because they're the person, they're the go to person...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...yeah, but, but I think the conversation about Black and global majority, or any type of conversation, is not singular. It's not, yeah, it's not as multiple angles...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...that feed into it. So, and this is where, I think, as a work for the sector and beyond. I mean, not saying, DU are going to solve all that problems. It's really important that we start to have that multiplicity of conversations in a room. But I don't know who... or the question I keep on asking myself is, when did I start to feel confident I can say the things I wanted to share in a way where I thought Freddie's not going to be like outed, or that one is a trouble one.

Delia

When can you believe in your power, right? When can you be really confident in your own because, because we both have power, right? We both have power. We both have power Freddie, right? We have power depending on which room we're in. We have power...

Freddie

...yeah, depending on rooms, you have rooms, yeah, depends on temperature shifts in different rooms.

Delia

Yeah, we have power. We have power even just being in a room, because, like, the agitation piece...

Freddie

...it's true...

Delia

...it changes it right, in the same way that other people have power to invite us into a room because they want the space to be agitated. Some people do it with a purpose. So I would say...

Freddie

Nice.

Delia

...Emma did it with a purpose. Right? Emma used her power with a purpose to say, I'm going to bring him into the conversation, into the room, into the into the virtual space of well, what do you think should we should be looking at, right? I think some people have the power to use their power in a good way. We have the power to be in this room having this conversation in a way that other artists wouldn't have it because they haven't had the opportunity to talk about it, and what they would need is a safe space to do it right? But for me, at my age, I know I'm older than you, right? I'm not worried about losing my power anymore, personally, because I've grown into it. So I'm not frightened of being in a room and losing my power. What I'm frightened is, is my safety in a space. Do you see what I mean? And I think for other artists, for other people, I just called myself an artist, for other people that haven't had the time to practice that it's hard to be in the space and say, Actually, I disagree with the decision you're making here, or disagree with the way you're talking about this piece of work or this artist, or I disagree that that is the best example of, you know, whatever the work might be. It's really hard if you've not had the practice. Equally, it's really hard if you've not had the practice hearing it. So I think there are people who will always remain nameless, but we will know who we're talking about in general, who are in those positions of power, who don't want to have that challenged, because it will make them redundant. The fear is that it will make them redundant. So the power holding is like, well, I'll programme. I will decide, and I'll decide who can come and sit in this circle and advise me.

Freddie

Yeah. And just thinking about that, the power piece of work is that usually those artists, and I'm using the group of artists and curators, programmers, slash, slash, slashes. Now, whatever the term they use

nowadays, I think the power or building that confidence is that they are not in conversations with other artists and peers. Because one thing I realise, I mean, there are some spaces I walk into and I see something, and sometimes there might be someone else in room that has that lived experience, and I can go, did you see what I'm seeing? And then I second guess myself. So actually, that kind of, the thing you mentioned about, what is it about? And tell me if I'm wrong, because I'm not saying verbatim about you're not worried about losing your power, it's about your safety. Yeah, that thing is something I haven't like, Did I see that wrong because that I'm like, Did I see that wrong? I'm not worried about what I'm not worried about saying what I want to say. It's just, I just want to make sure that I'm not going cuckoo in my head before I say it.

Delia

Yeah.

Freddie

And sometimes, or most of the time, some of these artists don't have that peer to peer, and I think that's something that with the work that hopefully want to investigate or we're looking at with the work that I've had opportunities as well as that, I was able to share ideas soundboard with Emma or others that I've kind of like yourself, just to see in a conversation that we've had in the past, as well. I was able to do that. So actually, when I walked the question asked about, when do you feel you feel empowered? Let's say for a better word, that I felt confident enough to be able to ask that question, or had peers that I can rely on. And I think most these artists don't have that. So the idea of power becomes even harder because you got to galvanise a few people. It's not... I don't think that would ever change, to be honest, the power thing, the rooms will change but it's about who you have in your team or your corner to kind of bounce ideas, ideas of, yeah, your notebook. Because actually, even audit ADs, or whoever they are in those power positions. Once in a while, they would send their friend a whatsapp to kind of go, I'm not sure about this, you know. So it's not so there's different type of, yes, it's about, once again, we talk about the network being able to travel, to be able to have peers, you can rely on soundboard...

Delia

Or just be able to have people that's that can trust your opinion, because they know you've got the goods to back it up.

Freddie

You've done a journey.

Delia

You've done a journey, and I think there is, yeah, you know, when I think about what people bring into the room in terms of diversity, you know, I've always said you can look at me and another Black woman, and we have completely polar opposite experiences, right? So there's already diversity in our experience in the room. I just don't want there to be fear that when I open my mouth, it means that my... that what I bring is negative to you. What I bring is a bonus to the conversation that we're having. And I think we haven't quite got to that stage yet around programming and curation, that people can see that two and two can actually make five...

Freddie

...yeah...

Delia

...can actually make five...

Freddie

...coexist?

Delia

Yeah...

Freddie

...we can. I mean, we can coexist, and not better phrase. And I can't think of a better phrase. It's not about divide and conquer...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...it's about actually, multiplicity is make will, will move things forward, which is no brainer. But in anyway...

Delia

So, so. If you can you just fix it all? Dance Umbrella...

Freddie

I mean, that's the plan...

Delia

...if you can, just like, you know, wave a magic wand.

Freddie

Yeah...

Delia

...make it, make it all, make it all go away. No, I think it's important. It's everybody's responsibility, right? Like we, I think we've got these kinds of conversations are good. What I'd love to do is have this kind of conversation with some other people.

Freddie

Yes, yes, and it's not... I mean, another conversation that's come up recently is about the people who are we speaking to... Are they converted? Like, yeah, what is the saying? What is the saying?

Delia

Preaching to the converted, yeah, or preaching to the choir depends on who you are, yeah?

Freddie

And actually, I sit there and I go, No, actually, because we're still, I mean, I have the lived experience of going this journey as a guest programmer, and we have some modelling that seems to be working currently, but there's also other work that we're doing like this work to try and interrogate this more so we can bring a wider conversation for a multiplicity of artists and even go further across sectors. But we're not. We can't do all the work.

Delia

No

Freddie

Dance Umbrella cannot do all the work. This is what we've done. And it's the things we're working on that's working so far. But we should also, I don't usually do this but we should pat on ourselves for th

work we've done well so far, the interrogation that we still want to do going forward as well. So those are the things that I think is really important.

Delia

I mean, I think it's brilliant that there is a conversation about what might happen, you know, where this work could go, because I think it is. It does have to become a bit more of a mainstream conversation, you know, I've been talking to, you know, now I'm kind of dabbling, moonlighting in the theatre world, as I call it, right? You know, some of the conversations that people are having around what's, you know, where diversity is trying to happen behind camera, off screen, right? And the importance that is for that part of our sector, for me, it's, it's the same thing. It's the importance is sort of, what's the you know, what does diversity look like for us in terms of who's making the choices about what we see? Because I come back to that taste making piece, right? Who, who's telling me what, what I should be excited about? And why are they telling me I should be excited about it? You know?

Freddie

Yeah.

Delia

So, yeah.

Freddie

Yeah, I'm smiling because there's an equivalent. I'm not sure if there's an analogy or just a comparison. We have a panel in this year's festival about movement direction in theatre, and one of the conversation I've been really observing is about choreography for intimate scenes. And that's, that's a skill like, that's really in previous time has not been talked about. Anyone can just do it. I mean, not that people brought different sensibility to as well, but now there's a skill, because the conversation has moved forward about body politics like how and who would have lived experience should be...

Delia

...yeah...

Freddie

...making those decisions. And probably this play that you mentioned, I'm going to see, probably might have some of that. But that interrogation is not necessarily... It's also not just for the movement direction sector. It's a real work for cross sector. So it's not like choreographing intimate scenes. And

actually, I've heard. I mean, I've famous film stars. I'm not down with the young people and them, but I've heard that a lot about, like, it's a specific skill. And actually, oh, yeah, go and take it off. Let's get on bed. No, it's not that actually. How do you How'd you make that? How'd you hold space for that? Like, the safe space for it, exactly. And I think this is what this work is really wanting to address, like, the multiplicity of those who can be the kind of, um, I dunno, agitators that there's a conversation that needs to be had about directing intimate scenes, you know, if that's the energy,

Delia

I think this is called diversifying...

Freddie

...yeah, but...

Delia

...for but, yeah...

Freddie

I'm just seeing because as a model, I can really see in practice, but this is what we're working towards. I'm not saying that we don't have the answers yet, but yet, but that's how do you create a space?

Delia

Yeah...

Freddie

...that you really yeah, there's a multiplicity of voices in that space that you're not just dependent on one person to solve the solve it all.

Delia

When you have this conversation 10 years time, because I'm going to be on a beach right when you have this conversation, no, you still got...

Freddie

I'm doing research in Barbados.

Delia

...you've got at least 10 years left! I'm going on the beach, mate. I'll be, I'll be listening

Freddie

I'll stop the lie. I'm not 21 No, but I think, yeah...

Delia

...I think we're descending.

Freddie

Yes, we're on a beach already!