



## HOME World Theatre Day live Q&A: Transcript

*Fri 27 Mar 2020*

**Host: Kevin Jamieson, Head of Programme, HOME**

**Speakers: Dave Moutrey, Director & CEO, HOME; Jude Christian, Associate Director, HOME**

**Kevin Jamieson:** Hello, I'm hoping this is coming through. Hello welcome to HOME's World Theatre Day 'Zoomcast', is that a thing now? Well it is now!

I'm Kevin Jamieson, I'm the Head of Programme at HOME, and I'm going to host this session today with Jude Christian and Dave Moutrey from HOME.

So I'm currently in a virtual theatre one at the moment, so you can remember what this great space looks like. As we go along for this session, hopefully everyone can see a Q&A, question/answer box at the bottom bar. So if people want to ask questions as we go along, use the question and answer box at the moment and I will be able to collate them and ask them to Jude and Dave as we go along.

I would also put out a general plea for patience with us because Zoom was something I'd never heard of a week ago, and now I've never stopped using it. So, we'll see how we go along and we should be here for around an hour. We are recording this, so this will be available online so if you want to shoot off or if you missed any bits of this.

So, as I said this is World Theatre Day, possibly one of the strangest World Theatre Days we've ever had because just about every theatre is closed around the world. With theatre makers self-isolating or staying in in their own homes. But hopefully, for this session we can also celebrate why all love theatre in its many forms, and why we're all very excited that we can hopefully re-open very soon and all the venues around the world can re-open and welcome audiences back to see plays, musicals, productions and everything else that theatre has in store.

So, before we really kinda really kick off into chatting around things, I thought I'd just let Jude and Dave introduce themselves.

We have Dave Moutrey here, who is the Chief Executive and Director of HOME and Jude Christian, our Associate Director of HOME.

So I'll throw over to them to just to explain a bit about their roles and who they are.

**Dave Moutrey:** Hello, good afternoon! I've got a virtual HOME office in the back here, this is the image of the HOME office, when we left it on Tuesday afternoon.

My name is Dave Moutrey, as Kevin said, I'm the Director and Chief Executive of HOME and my job is overall responsibility, well, for everything actually! But I've got a great team of people who do lots of stuff but generally I focus on the overall shape of the programme, and making sure that what we do with that programme meets our charitable objectives and aims, as an organisation.

The last week or so, it's only....a week last Tuesday that we actually closed the building to the public, and Tuesday this week that we emptied the building and went on to mothball the whole facility. That has been quite a big exercise, both in terms of securing the building and making... it's a big building, it's a complicated building. You can't just flick a switch and everything's off, you've got to go round and power things down. So that was quite a big job and the team did that brilliantly.

So everyone is now working remotely, online, like the rest of the country.

But also, we've got a lot of work to do around refunding people for tickets and that sort of thing. One of the.... interesting...outcomes from the fact that we've closed down is the fantastic response of the team at HOME, to the challenge that's been presented to them, which none of us have faced before.

So that's been amazing.

....the response of our stakeholders; that's the Arts Council, the British Film Industry, umm Institute, I should say, and Manchester City Council and Greater Manchester Combined Authority, have all been astonishingly helpful.

But the thing that has been truly wonderful is the response from our audiences and broader attenders and participants.

There's been so much love shown to our organisation, it's been truly humbling, and has been really important fuel for us, making sure that we get the building open as soon as possibly can, to repay all that love that everybody's given us.

So, that's me and the things that have been in the last couple of days. Jude!

**Jude Christian:** Hello everyone! My name is Jude Christian, I'm the Associate Director at HOME. Technology, clearly not my thing! Um I'm actually zooming in from my actual home office which um...as you'll see, you can see my sort of desk in HOME's office, in Dave's background. The two are similarly, haphazardly cluttered, which is how I live my life!

Um so yeh, I'm the Associate Director at HOME, I sit mainly in the theatre team but obviously as an organisation we work across art forms...and look for ways of collaborating as much as possible. So it's really exciting working in such a sort of multi-faceted and varied organisation. My role is being a part of programming conversations that we have a HOME and supporting projects, right through from the commissioning stage to appearing on our stages and beyond. I make a little bit of

work as a Director and I sort of offer dramaturgical and artistic support to things that are happening in and around the building.

And one of the things that I've been asked to speak about today is *Homemakers*, which you guys might have seen some information about online. It's a project which we have launched quite quickly in the last week as a direct response to what's going on around the world at the moment. Obviously, it's...it's a really challenging moment for theatres and art institutions generally and for theatre makers, whether they're part of organisations and companies or whether they work independently. And in amongst taking stock of the big picture and thinking about what are the sustained levels of support, and what is the long-term thinking that we need to be doing. We wanted to come up with something that felt quite direct and quite active. It felt like an interesting opportunity to work with some of the artists that we love, either from the North West or from elsewhere in the country who bring their work to our stages. Who think really innovatively about form and ways of connecting with an audience. And obviously, we're in such a specific situation at the moment. We didn't want to stop making art, we didn't want to stop bringing our artists to our audiences and so we've given an open brief to a set of brilliant artists saying that they, inviting them to create something in their own homes, that will then be shared through our website on a pay-what-you-decide basis, for an audience who are in their own homes. So, watch this space and we'll let you know how that goes. But we're really excited to see what they come up with!

**KJ:** Jude, do you want to take everybody through who the artists are?

**JC:** Yeh! So we've got Yusra Warsama and Chris Thorpe working together on a project, we have Bryony Kimmings, Javaad Alipoor, Plaster Cast Theatre and Ad Infinitum. It's hard talking on Zoom Kevin, very stressful.

**KJ:** Too stressful! Thanks for that. Um just again, another kind of shout out to all the people watching this, if you've got any questions for Jude and Dave, do use the Q&A box at the bottom bar. So you can be thinking around what you might want to ask Dave and Jude.

I'm going to kick us off really to roll of the back of the *Homemakers* project Jude really.

I mean there's been a lot of responses of debate from theatres and theatre makers last week, around what does theatre look like and mean in a 'lockdown' kind of scenario? And also 'live' vs 'digital'.

We've had a question from Rosie Adams via email, she's asked to both of you:

"Do you think that virtual theatre will bring live theatre to the masses during the corona virus outbreak but also in the future to anyone unable to attend a live performance for whatever reason?"

So, what do you both think around that sort of provocation?

**JC:** I yeh, I think for me theatre is such a multi-faceted thing and it's really interesting to see the absolute breadth of responses to the very strange and unique situation

that we find ourselves in. And obviously everyone's got very different and sometimes very strong opinions on live theatre, on online streaming, on different ways that people can engage with work but I think that what feels really exciting and really positive, as you say in this question, is that this is an opportunity to bridge one of the things that is brilliant about theatre but that is also really challenging – which is that by and large it is predicated on the idea that people will gather in the same room as one and other. And for reasons of geography or finance or access or people's own living situations often there are people who, for whom that is much more difficult for them to do than others. And so I think there is something, there is something really beautiful and really exciting in this particular moment about the fact that a lot of work will be created and a lot of work will be put on offer that is accessible to people who, for whom this situation is not unusual through not being able to travel to a theatre building to spend time with other people, is not unusual.

For me, I have a real passion for theatre being a live art form, and one which absolutely connects kinetically with its audiences. Um, but I do think, as well as the artistic challenge of playing with form here and playing with different platforms and ways of speaking to people, I think there's a real positive outcome from this, which I hope will continue going forward whatever the new landscape is, which is thinking really innovatively and really holistically about connecting with people who can't come to the theatre.

Dave you're muted now. This is your technology fail moment.

**DM:** My technology, Dave Moutrey technology fail. I think it will bring a form of theatre to people, and it's enabling people to engage with the important stories that artists have got to tell, or have been telling.

The technology's been with us for a while, we can do, the thing that's been holding everything back hasn't been the technology, it's been more to do with the licensing of the rights for various things, and also how do we pay the artists for their work effectively like this because at the moment a lot of stuff is being streamed free on the basis that this is a very difficult set of circumstances, but actually there's a whole rights issue thing that's quite complicated there.

For me personally I think without wishing to get too sort of spaced out and hippy, I think being in a place with people telling stories is a sacred thing, and theatre falls into that for me, going music gigs like that and actually being in the same place watching a film is also a really important thing and that human connection is vital, people will value that even more when we come out the other end of this. It's important that it gets people to see those stories who might not be able to get to it, but I don't think it'll ever completely replace it.

**KJ:** We've just had a question come in which kind of connects into this as well I think, "will work in the future commissioned by HOME be centred around video and immersive experiences, what are your thoughts about artists not making work in this way, should they adapt?"

**JC:** For me, personally I think no, don't adapt. I think, the joy of theatre is that there are so many different ways that it can be made, and I think that the joy of being an artist is that you use what tools there are at your disposal. If you discover something

that allows you to create a picture on-stage that you couldn't do without it, or something that allows you to speak to an audience in a way that you couldn't do without it then brilliant, utilise that, but I don't think there's ever any one way to do it, and I think that definitely we as an organisation aren't, in relation to what Dave said, we definitely don't have a vested interest in going 'we want to move solely to a place of video or digital content or online streaming or even, you know, the use of film technology and work'. I think we have always created a really varied programme, we've always looked for artistry and innovation in all forms of making work and I don't think that's going to change as a result of this situation.

**DM:** I think conceptually, the organisation has always been – if you think about the name HOME, the building was designed to be a front room for the city, where people come and hangout together and that collective relationship between the audience and artist is so in-built into what we are as an institution. We might do more of that sort of online work but I would agree completely with Jude, that's amazing isn't it, we're both on the same page? I completely agree with Jude, don't change your practice, do what you do.

**KJ:** And just one follow up around Covid-19 and coronavirus – “Do we envisage the programme at HOME changing post Covid-19?”

**DM:** I think it's inevitable really, we already know that, we've got a season planned for next year, from September onwards, and there's a lot of things that have been changed because companies, particularly theatre companies have had to change their plans because it takes a certain amount of time to rehearse and make a piece of theatre.

And if your artists are from other parts of the world, getting those artists in the same place takes a bit of time as well, so that's changed, both in terms of, as far as the programme, I think, as well as the team at HOME are starting to think, that we're going to be in a different world, whenever the buildings re-open.

People are going to want different things, people are going to ask about different things and our programme is about the contemporary, it's about issues that we're dealing with. So we'll be starting a series of conversations internally next week, about what that looks like, what that means in terms of our theatre programme. So, it won't be the same, but I can't tell you what it's going to be yet.

**JC:** I think as well that everything that Dave has said is true, as I say that artists are always innovators and because we have a particular focus on contemporary work, rather than a classic repertoire at HOME, I think that we'll continue to see artists responding really directly to the world that they live in.

I think that one thing that is going to change fundamentally is less what the work is because the work is always varied and new and responsive, but I think the structures within which we make work will change, and I think that in amongst the confusion of the moment that we're currently living in, I think the really important thing that arts institutions can lead on, and can have really close dialogue with the freelance and independent work sector in theatre about, what are the opportunities here? To address systemic problems, or systemic challenges, in the way that theatre is made across this country and around the world.

And I think that, as I say, in amongst the many negatives of the situation we're living in there are some real opportunities here for positive change if we work collaboratively and if we think daringly about what the future could be.

**DM:** I think, you touched on some important points there Jude, and the key one for me is that the economic model that theatre has worked on in the UK for the last 10-15 years, hasn't worked. It's been teetering along on a knife edge, and this crisis has exposed the level of sweat equity that goes into making theatre and the amount to which it's a low margin high turnover industry. And I think the first thing is recovering from that is going to take some sort of monumental investment and it's going to be a huge job – I'm talking about nationwide, worldwide actually but also fundamentally the ethical basis of what we do and how we do that and the way we do it is going to be seriously under question I think.

**KJ:** Thanks Dave. There's also been another question around will there be any other open call outs for artistic responses to the current climate in addition to the selected commissioned artists that we've mentioned?

**JC:** I can say very specifically with relation to *Homemakers* obviously the moment that we're living in means that we're, like everyone else, working under really limited financial resources, but what we're looking to do with the project is expand it in several different ways looking for collaborators in other places who might be able to come and work with us on it. Having an open call is definitely one of the hopes and plans as part of that. I think it's a really important way of engaging with artists.

Obviously all companies have artists who they – particularly in the current moment – feel a real sense of responsibility to as well as a feeling a general love and admiration for. But we're very aware that open calls are a brilliant, brilliant way for organisations to engage with all different people, even people that they know and to give those artists space to step forward, so we're going to do everything that we can and I think absolutely in our longer term planning that will continue to be a part of what we do. Yeah.

**KJ:** Right so with it being World Theatre Day I thought I would ask both of you where is the wildest most far flung, unexpected or unusual place that you've ever watched theatre?

**DM:** Shall I go first? I'm assuming the silence is a yes. The wildest place that I've ever seen theatre is the Minack which is a theatre that's hewn out of the cliff face in Cornwall overlooking the – I'm not quite sure if it's the Atlantic or the Irish sea – I think it's the Atlantic - and when the sun's setting it's absolutely glorious but if the weather's not so good you've got to be really hardy to watch things there but it's an amazing amazing setting and it's even worth visiting if you're not actually seeing a show just seeing the thing itself. The other thing I was going to mention is I once saw National Theatre Wales do an amazing version of, I think it was Richard III, in a huge disused aircraft hanger just outside of Cardiff which was both very challenging technically but also incredibly exciting artistically.

**JC:** I think I really struggled with this question. I think one of the most surprising places I've seen a piece of theatre – I wouldn't say it was particularly wild – but it struck me in a really unexpected way. I was working in Portland in Oregon a couple of years

ago and was invited to an event as a theatre as part of Martin Luther King Day and there'd just been an open invitation to anyone in the community who wanted to gather and they'd printed out the entirety of the Martin Luther King's 'I Have A Dream' speech and everyone who wanted to take part was given one sentence from it and they just stood in a circle in the middle of this big room and read out the speech line by line, which was sort of an incredible simple idea but it felt so poignant and surprising and there was just this really beautiful sense of the purpose of theatre and this sort of communal desire from that community to come together and celebrate those words and to affirm their commitment to them because obviously everyone is speaking it in the first person and it was really beautiful just to hear it come out of that variety of mouths.

**KJ:** Wow sounds amazing. There's so many amazing places to see theatre in the world! And there will be again very soon.

We've had another question from Alison Criddle which is asking about how can theatres, producers and artists collaborate to embed environmental sustainability and carbon emission reductions into their work? Which I know is something HOME has high on their agenda and Jude you've been doing some work around this for the season ahead?

**JC:** Yeah I have and I think generally the key is in the wording of that question. I think we have to collaborate, I think everything is so interlocked in our industry and particularly as organisations we're really responsible for the way that freelancers move between our buildings or between companies. We have the ability to make it possible for them to make work in a way that accepts that we're in a climate emergency as well as everything else and that problem isn't going to go away. So I think there are certain practical steps that we are taking at HOME that we're looking at exploring in our new season.

I think one of the key things that we're doing is creating a framework where we can trial different approaches to working. So creating structures where, for example, we can work with local organisations who might be able to provide existing resources that can be fed into the design process so that a designer and a director and the creative team can start to think about creating their pieces of theatre out of the world that already exists around them.

And that requires legwork from us as an organisation, it requires us to support those artists differently to do their jobs but crucially I think it requires us to commit to a period of exploration and to really trial that through and to really work on a dialogue with artists and audiences about that rather than – I think there's definitely a time for action – but taking those steps in our next season felt potentially more useful in the long term than instantly imposing a brand new framework. I think these things take time and I think it takes – you have to do things in order to figure out how they're going to work.

So I think that again with the opportunities that we have to just take stock of how we work and to make the necessary shift going forward. I think again there are opportunities there for us to be quite radical in the way that we approach the making of theatre going forward.

**DM:** What Jude said. And also I think – the climate crisis is not going to go away but I think also we learn a lot about our lifestyles in this lockdown period and the difference that makes to our lives, so I think that is going to influence the way we think about how we do our jobs as well but I think one of the biggest things we've got to do as a theatre sector is understand the things that actually make a difference and to do that we've got to be able to measure things like our carbon footprint accurately, we've got to measure what really makes a difference so banning plastic cups from our venue and plastic water bottles is a good thing to do but does that really make the sort of difference that a systemic change that we need in order to reduce our carbon footprint? And I don't really know the answer to that but we need to know the answer to that. It's not just about the things that seem obvious and simple.

My guess is the biggest part of all of this is around travel – about business travel and moving stuff around and audience travel and really we've got to get things like public transport sorted if we're going to make a difference to that and that's a longer term job but we have to have our data behind our arguments in order to make those arguments particularly affective.

**KJ:** Thanks. And someone's commented on the Q&As about The Handlebards – they take everything on a bike to everything they do and they're doing some fantastic work in terms of reducing carbon footprint on productions. We've got a couple of questions in which are kind of similar one – I'll start with this one but I think the second one is a slight change to it. Do either of you have a dream project that you've been dying to get on the stages at HOME but haven't quite managed it yet?

**DM:** I daren't say what it is cos it'll jinx it or if I say it won't happen. There's loads of them but I am a bit superstitious like that. If I start talking about them – there's one I'm working on at the moment with Abbey from Dublin who are a great theatre company. As Kevin knows I've been banging on about this for ages. But dare I say? No I can't, it'll jinx it, I'm sorry I can't. I'm too superstitious, sorry! Find some salt to throw over my shoulder.

**JC:** Yeah I mean I've got loads obviously. I think I'm similarly superstitious to Dave or just the practical thing of going it would be so heartbreaking if that didn't happen but yeah absolutely.

I mean I've been working at HOME since July of last year and it's actually the first time in my career that I've been part of an organisation like this. I've previously worked freelance so what's really exciting is not only being able to have conversation about things I would like to make and things I think would suit our audiences at HOME and that we could be really supportive to and [would be] supported by the building, but what is a brand new dreamy part of my working life is being able to go to artists who I think are incredible and say come and talk about making something with us because it's something I've never been able to do before and it's really pleasing to speak to people whose work I really admire or to meet people who I think are brilliant and say 'I want to try and make this project happen', and doesn't require me to be directly involved in any way whatsoever but, yeah, so there's lots and lots of dream projects. And hopefully we'll just make them all – we'll just do that.



**DM:** Let's do that.

**KJ:** Stick it on the list. We've got some questions in around independent artists and independent companies so I'll run through some of them and try and group them where I can. Someone's asking do you think that we should be investing in developing artists in localities rather than relying on artists from the large metropolitan centres.

**DM:** I think – well I think we do. I think the last count was 2,500 hours of free rehearsal space we gave away last year? And the work we do in the PUSH Festival etc. I think we do a lot of work with locally based artists – we try to balance that with bringing artists not only from not only metropolitan places but also from around the world. We want to enrich the artist ideas pool for everybody's benefit, so that's an important part of our work.

Whether we need to do more of that in the future I think it's going to be quite likely actually 'cos of the fallout from where we are now with the Covid virus and the lockdown means that we're probably going to have to do more work in this area. What this looks like yet we don't know but I certainly think we got a good track record in investing in local artists.

**JC:** I think, yeah, I agree and I think also it's really important to think about people's geographical location I guess, in amongst conversations that we have about diversity because I think aside from the fact that there should be equal access and opportunities for people in the kind of world we want to live in, I think when you bring people in who have a different world view and a different experience and a different way of living they realign your expectations and your horizons and I think one of the things we don't think about is the difference between living in a big city and living outside one of those places.

I grew up in a very small village outside quite a small town near a not-so-very-big city, so it was like several steps away from feeling like you're in the heart of those metropolitan spaces where there is more access to the art, particularly if it's something you are thinking about as a career. And so I think again it's something we need to keep in our minds as we evaluate in this moment what our working structures are and again there's an opportunity here for learning, about going when physical access to buildings on a regular basis is a challenge because of where people live, what are the structures we can put in place that again never strays from that belief that live theatre... but that looks of ways of connecting people who don't live bang in the city centre or thereabouts.

**KJ:** That's great. And someone's asking what is the value of independent theatre companies and smaller theatre companies. I'm kind of making a leap in that they mean in relation to HOME or venues.

Yeah, what is the value of independent theatre companies.

**DM:** Whoops – hold on a second.

**JC:** Dave's getting up his spreadsheet of the values.

**DM:** No, I was trying to make sure I was on the right- I've muted the thing – I will get used to this – eventually I'll be really slick.

Independent companies are important to HOME because they're bringing different artistic viewpoints, different cultural viewpoints, different sets of political ideas so all of those things are important to what we discuss and debate as institutions through our programme. They are important places for artists, I think, to change the way that theatre is made. I think most of the changes in theatre across the world start in smaller companies because you can actually be more flexible and be more fleet of foot. Bigger companies tend to be big machines and it's harder to make change. I see them as being legitimate in their own right, independent companies, particularly smaller ones but they also have a really important function to play as the R&D engine for the theatre world that we work in.

**JC:** Yeah and I think as a space they fill a really particular function because I think art can be made in artistic sensibility and relationships can be developed really, really quickly, you know, you can meet a group of people and within an hour you can just sort of jump something on its feet and will connect with each other and that's great but there's also a slow burn long game, and I think having independent companies to create in that as a single artistic thing, moving from organisation to organisation, I think [what] is really valuable about that slow cooker is that it just gives you space to develop confidence in your ideas, to get good and then to get bored and I think it allows for a really holistic development of people's individuals and their voices and as Dave says, the counterpoints and challenges and new directions –

**KJ:** Jude are you still there? Jude may have just temporarily dropped out. Oh you're back, you're back.

**JC:** Yeah sorry, I just said something incredibly beautiful and eloquent, now I'm being told by zoom my internet connection is unstable, maybe you would've heard it, sorry it was great, change the face of theatre on this World Theatre Day.

**KJ:** what advice – this is a question that's come in – what advice would you give to a young theatremaker or actor just starting out in their career? Jude, do you want to go to you first?

**JC:** Yeah, erm, so much advice, I think the two – the three key things probably I would say is, build your community, build yourself a network of people who you can trust and I think earn their trust and demand that they are trustworthy to you and share things really generously with your people, with your friends and your collaborators. Be excited for other people as their careers develop in different directions and tell them when you need support, because it's a brilliant way to work but it can be quite exhausting and quite bruising and just make sure that you've amassed your peeps.

I think don't be afraid of making practical decisions when you need to, I think don't ever feel like your artistic soul is being sullied by the fact that you need to do a job because you need some money or you need to connect with an organisation or you just want to learn how to do something, you just want to be going out there and working. So, I think don't feel the need to protect your artistic identity, just trust that you can be varied and you can still know who you are. And I had a third point and I

can't remember what it was because I talked too long about the first two. Which I'm really sorry about. But if I remember it then I'll come back to you.

**DM:** Shall I jump in in the meantime? I would say, I'm always astonished by the number of people who want to work in theatre and don't actually go and see any.

Take as much advantage of seeing theatre as you possibly can afford. If you haven't got a lot of money find the cheap seat options and go and see stuff. And even seeing bad theatre is worth doing, because at least you know why it's bad.

Read. Read lots of playscripts, read about directors' ideas around theatre, again you need to be informed. The theatre industry, I think Sir Isaac Newton said 'we're all standing on the shoulders of giants', if you learn from that that's really important.

And the other thing which is a minor point - don't whinge. There are plenty of people out there who will moan about stuff, and moaning, it's a waste of energy, it's energy that you could be putting into building connections, finding people to work with, making work. It's about channelling energy in a positive way, rather than in a way that's either negative or just neutral.

**KJ:** Thanks for that. Just on a sort of similar thing around training, someone's asked 'do we feel that it's maybe important for theatre technicians to learn more non-traditional theatre technologies such as platforms like Zoom, to allow for creative work to be supported from here on in?' Dave do you want to start on that?

**DM:** Yeah happy to. I think that we are increasingly seeing the rise of the multi-skilled technician in the theatre making space. People who are more than ambidextrous, multidextrous whatever that is, who can do lots of things. You do need specialists in specific areas, but more and more technicians need to be well trained across a range of disciplines, because artists are blurring the boundaries between things so much now that you really need to be able to work with the grain of that if you're a technician. Jude, any...?

**JC:** I've remembered my third point which is sort of applicable to this [laughs]. Which was – ask people for what you need, which is don't be afraid to get in touch with people but try as much as possible to articulate what it is you need, whether that's a general need or a very specific thing. And I think that absolutely applies to this question about evolving technologies. I think it's not about feeling like you have to have a comprehensive knowledge of literally everything in advance of every job and every conversation, but the more we all talk to each other, and for example if there's a particular form of technology that's required within a project, if it's about technicians or designers or makers needing to get to grips with it, just have those practical conversations. Don't be afraid to identify what's missing in the room, whether that's knowledge or a really really highly trained particular skill set, and then to figure out the best way to go and get that thing. Whether it's somebody going and finding a form of training or looking for more people to expand the team.

**KJ:** Right, thanks both. Someone's asked, 'what was the turning point in both your careers?' When you look back over your careers to date, what was that turning point that you thought 'that's what changed it all.'

**DM:** And thanks Kevin for not mentioning that I've been doing this for over 35 years. The turning point for me was tied in with punk rock and the punk thing. I was around when that was all happening, and there was somebody who I knew, a theatremaker in Leeds when I was a student there. I was involved in a conversation about wanting to do something, and he pointed out to me in no uncertain terms, there were some expletives in the sentence which I won't repeat here, 'you actually don't need permission to make art.' And there are always ways of making - the whole punk ethos was just do it. And I think that's the thing that lead me down the path that I've been on ever since. Yeah, I think it was being told that you don't need permission to make art. It's an obvious thing, but it just took someone to slap me round the face with it really.

**JC:** Yeah I think for me it's probably quite a similar thing. I can think of two key conversations which happened maybe 5 or 6 years apart. One was actually, I was at drama school, I went there because I wanted to learn how to be a director, because I hadn't known that that existed as a job until I was in my early twenties, and when I found out it was a thing you could do I was really intimidated and thought I needed to go somewhere in order to learn how to do that thing. And I had a really brilliant teacher there called Alex Clifton who is actually now the artistic director at Storyhouse, and is an awesome human being. And I was just sort of having a bit of a meltdown at him because I felt like having fallen in love with theatre from quite a young age but not really knowing about how it works as a profession, I felt like I had picked a job but maybe it would stop me from doing anything else. That I'd chosen to be a director and I'd never then be able to be a writer, or an actor or any of the other things that I had fallen in love with theatre through. And he just sort of, gently but firmly, just kind of said like 'if you want to create things then you will just find the means to do it, do what's in front of you right now, but no one's pigeon holing you except yourself and you will find ways to make things'.

And then a few years later I was sort of teetering on the edge of making a show in the sense of writing it and performing it, and I was working with a really incredible theatremaker called Lucy Ellinson and I'd asked her to come and do an R&D with me, where I was trying to get her to be me and make the show, and again with great gentleness and great firmness she just sort of said to me 'I think that the main reason you're asking me to do this is because you're just a bit scared to do it yourself, when that is the more obvious thing for this particular project.' And so it was a nice little nudge over the cliff edge into a slightly more satisfying turning point of saying OK, I want to call myself slightly different thing at different times, and I want to work in slightly different forms for different projects.

**KJ:** Right so, from looking back, we've got a question about looking forward. So, someone's asking 'how do you see the cultural landscape in Manchester evolving over the next 5 years?'

**DM:** If you'd asked me that two weeks ago I might have had a different answer to the question. Now – I don't know. I mean obviously we've got The Factory, which I think the builders are still working on it, I don't now whether the building site has been closed down or not, but that's going to open in, end of '21 I believe, that's going to have an impact on the landscape. But really I don't - it really depends on how we get out of this thing that we're in now, and I think there'll be a lot of conversations about what should we really be engaging with now and how do we

look after each other better following the thing that we've just been through? So, I think it's a bit hard to map out to be honest.

Hopefully we see Contact open in the Autumn, which was when they were due to open, they're an important organisation, we want to support them opening and working in the brilliant way they do with young people. I mean I think with them it'll be a matter of when not if, it's just the timing of that. I don't now, I'm rambling here because I really don't know, I think that we need a little bit more time to understand and analyse where we are now before we can get a real handle on that.

**JC:** Yeah I think I'd just add to that as Dave says it's a complete unknown. I think I haven't lived in this city for very long, I moved here about three years ago and the thing that's really really struck me is there's such a sense of communality in this city, institutions, companies, artists all speak to each other and know each other and there's a real demand of ownership of how art is made and who it's made for, by the city and the wider area as a whole, so I think we'll see that develop – but does it feel more unknown now than maybe it did 2 weeks ago, which is a very strange way to be living.

**DM:** Whoops! Sorry, I didn't mean to flip over there. The one thing I think will have made a big impact – this was going to happen anyway – is that the response to climate change will be a bit more, a lot stronger in the way that we make and present work than perhaps it's been. We'll be gradually developing new techniques on top of all those other things we're going to find out about the way our society works now.

**JC:** Erm, I just need to excuse myself for 30 seconds to get a plug to plug my laptop in, sorry bear with me.

**KJ:** Technology! Dave, I'll fire this one at you to begin with then we can, Jude can come up to speed. Someone has asked: they came to see the Manchester Open in the gallery and thought that it was a brilliant use of public space and public art, that obviously attracted large audiences – do you think that a premise like the Manchester Open for visual arts could work for theatre and film at HOME? So I guess the Manchester Open theatre and film edition, could that work?

**DM:** We already do quite a lot of work with local filmmakers, it's the Filmed Up programme, if you have a look at our website there's details about it there, so we do screen a lot of locally made work and in addition we work with 2 universities and screen regular student short films there and so I think we've sort of covered that one.

From a theatre point of view, I'm going to bat that one over to Jude in a second but we are in a city that hosts the Bruntwood Playwriting Prize, so the Royal Exchange have got a big part of that covered. And to some extent the PUSH festival in January is a bit like the Manchester Open, it happens at the same time. We commission work for that as well as present work, so I sort of think we've - I can't imagine what more we might do in that area, but I might be missing a trick or an idea. Jude, any thoughts?

**JC:** I think, yeah I think there's not necessarily a direct transposition – I would hesitate to think that just because things are made in very different ways. There's the obvious fact that, particularly with visual art you can make something and then it can be

available to our audiences all of our opening hours for a 3 month period, which was one of the glorious things about the Manchester Open. Whereas I think if we were to lock 500 theatremakers in T1 for 3 months and just sort of make them perform on demand all day everyday – I'd be quite up for that actually, but I'd suspect that lots of other people wouldn't. But I think as Dave said, there's a lot of stuff that we do, I think we're always looking for new ways either to develop particular projects or to develop particular pieces of work, as I say that play with form and play with how things are made and how they're put in front of audiences, so I would say as well, for Manchester based artists – keep talking to us. Because we're always excited to have conversations with people about what else we can do to connect with people and what else we can bring into our building or take out of our building and into the wider community.

**DM:** I mean in a sense Kevin we should sort of push that one back to you a little bit because you're the person who's really shaped the PUSH festival, from a theatre point of view you've taken that on from the very first one and shaped it, is there, what do you think we could do more of on that front?

**KJ:** Dave I'm here to ask the questions not answer them! Yeah, I think the PUSH festival is, I guess the core of the PUSH festival, which happens every January, the core of that I suppose does run along the lines of the Manchester Open I guess. The point is we try and pack two and a half weeks full of the most of Greater Manchester/North West artists that we can find to really showcase. We go and see a lot of work all over the region in various scales and various places to absolutely make sure that we're showcasing as much as we possibly can. And a lot of them artists have gone on to really kind of kick-on with their careers – not that that's necessarily what it's about but we want to kind of feel that we're a helburn(?), a cog for them artists, for audiences to see their work.

We obviously attract a large amount of audiences, but yeah I suppose as Jude says it's done in a very different way because it's a 7 o'clock for an hour and then we put another show on rather than it running all day everyday like the Edinburgh Festival, so I would just back up exactly what Jude's said – our details are on the website, if you're companies, you're artists you know you want to get in touch, let us know, we'll come see your work we'll have a coffee with you, we'll buy the coffee, we might even buy your cake, you know, like come talk to us. We want to get involved and see who's out there.

We're a fairly small team, we see as much as we can but there's always more to see and more to hear about, so let us know and send us work. But yeah, the PUSH festival really does that, and then also how we try to then commit to those artists and try and thread that through our year anyway, and artists that are coming back, whether that be in other festival moments like Incoming Festival or Orbit Festival, but just through our year anyway really, we're really committed to the locale that we're in and not least because we're called HOME.

I'm going to pivot onto another question, quite quickly – Someone has asked about, obviously the coronavirus has highlighted the vital importance of those self-employed artists who work in a building like HOME, how else do you think that self-employed artists should be celebrated on a day like World Theatre Day?

**JC:** My sort of gut instinct with these things is a bit in line with, for example the really really beautiful celebration last night of NHS workers around the country which was quite rightly backed up by lots of people saying to Government institutions that's brilliant and please continue to support us by *funding us*. And I think, one of the, of course what we want to do in this moment is celebrate and give love to the many self-employed, not just artists but people in every form of work who are the life-blood of the theatre work-force. But my sort of primary concern is find ways to keep employing them, and find ways as organisations to ensure that we've got the capacity to keep on doing that, that to me feel like the most urgent thing, but that's because I'm sort of quite a brutally practical person and maybe not very good at sentiment. I mean I obviously think that all self-employed people are completely wonderful and should be celebrated and should also celebrate themselves and take care of themselves in this particular moment, but I want them to continue to be the employed bit of self-employed, that's the dream.

**DM:** We need to celebrate all artists and definitely the self-employed ones, but I think we should be looking to find longer term solutions and for me one of the things that this crisis has highlighted is perhaps, I'm just going to put it out there, the need for universal basic income, perhaps, and a way in which people can build their lives around that maybe a greater investment in the creative sector so we can actually employ more people on longer term contracts and different ways of working. So, I think it's about, we acknowledge and celebrate the wonderful work that artists are doing, the freelancers the technicians out there, but I think we should be looking at what the future holds and really, how our society values those people, more.

**KJ:** Thanks Dave. Just to say to everyone that's still with us we've got about another 5 minutes, there's still time for a few more questions, quickly, to get in. Just coming back to supporting artists, someone's asking 'how are we supporting artists with disabilities'?

**JC:** My inclination is to throw this over to Marisa who is our Head of Engagement because I automatically assume that she's on-hand, not to throw this away at her but just to talk as eloquently as she does about the brilliant work of her team and of the organisations that we work with. I think it's - there are so many incredible disabled artists and artists with disabilities who make work at HOME and who we are actively looking to continue working with or to start new relationships with in the future. I think again, it comes back to practical terms, it's about thinking about structure, it's thinking about what we know our barriers to people joining the workforce and to people being engaged by organisations like ours, it's actively listening and looking and searching for barriers that we're not aware of and it's having really clear practical conversations with organisations about how we work to remove those barriers and to celebrate the artists who are out there and to make sure that we're fostering new artists as we are with everyone.

**DM:** Well the main thing is by commissioning disabled artists and making sure that we have disabled artists within the various teams that we put together wherever we can recruit people. We aim to- oh sorry, the other thing is we also work and support the, there's a local network of disabled artists in Manchester which is an organization which we support as well.

The building is probably one of the most accessible arts buildings certainly in the city at the moment. It was designed to a standard called - I've forgotten the name of

the standard, but it's a standard above the disability discrimination act minimum standard for buildings, so it's actually quite a good building for disabled artists to work in and across all of our artforms we commission disabled artists and we set ourselves targets each year in order to do that.

**KJ:** Right well I think we seem to have, there's been no more questions, there is one which is non-theatre related which is actually, people are intrigued by your poster Jude behind you on the wall. Do you want to give any context to your poster?

**JC:** \*laughs\* No, I'll turn the camera so people can see it in its entirety but I think I'm just going to leave it as a beautiful mystery.

**KJ:** Lovely stuff, I like that answer.

**JC:** If you can guess which show it's from you get 10 points. Just 10 points, no cash value attached.

**KJ:** Well I think that rounds up, it seems to be that's all the questions that we've had through, thank you to everybody that's contributed either by watching or posting questions, thanks Dave, thanks Jude, for taking the time out, I that's a great way to celebrate World theatre, if anyone's got any more kind of questions they want to ask do keep in touch with HOME, through all the social media channels and tweet us at @HOME\_mcr and we'll try our best to get back to you. I hope that everyone out there is staying safe, stays home, and see you on the other side. Thank you all.

**DM:** Cheers, bye now.

**JC:** Bye.