

What Next? Brighton & Hove Meeting 8th October 2020, via Zoom

Chair: Louise Blackwell (LB)

Minutes: Slavka Jovanović

National Update

1. Chairs Steering Group Meeting of National What Next took place. Laura McDermott attended on behalf of our chapter. The discussion was around what are the campaigning priorities of the group. What do they have to offer as a unique group that will serve the sector the best. These priorities will then roll out to the local chapters.

2. Decisions have been delayed for the Culture Recovery Plan. Coming through next week.

Local Update

1. The Children & Young People's What Next group will meet on Wednesday 14th October at 12 noon, then every other week at the same time. On 14th Oct the guest speaker will be Hugh Garling, PHSE lead at Longhill School. All welcome to attend these meetings.

The What Next Brighton – Education meetings run every fortnight with every other meeting featuring a guest contributor. With a break over half term, our next meeting will be a group meeting and we can spend some of that time talking about which areas you would like to focus on over the coming months. The next two meetings are planned for 12noon – 1pm on:-

- Wednesday 4th November – What Next Brighton – Education Group meeting
- Wednesday 18th November – Special Educational Needs focus. Guest contributor tbc

Contact janedickson@artswork.org.uk for more info

Informal discussion around Richi Sunak comment that musicians and other people in the arts sector “should retrain and find other jobs”

Sue MacLaine – our industry was never sustainable widely enough to support everyone. There are more people in the arts than it can sustain.

Cath James – been in dance for 40 years. Along the way you have key moments when you make decisions as to whether you can continue. Explosion of dance degrees lately. The market is flooded. The training institutions need to take responsibility. Many wonderful dancers but not enough jobs available.

Louise – ACE report being launched today from Centre for Economic and Business Research <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/news/faster-recovery-arts-and-culture>

Predicts that 1.75 billion will help the cultural industry to return to pre Covid state by 2022. Cultural industry was larger than fishing, agriculture and farming combined. The research paper message is that its all going to be fine...but what's the real picture?

Karen – The permanent jobs are not there anymore so everyone has to work freelance now, which puts an additional strain on the freelance sector. Everyone is thinking about transferable skills and making the case.

Sue – Perhaps we say “we will no longer be responding to this stuff”...”we want to write the agendas”. Her worry is that if you're busy doing something else how can you sustain your true identity.

Laura – need for us to think holistically. Think about the place of art and culture in society. It is important to us as human beings. This is not reflected in the messages that are being put across. The binary “IN or OUT” approach is not healthy. We all need to PAUSE, REFLECT, THINK, ANALYSE. This could be a really positive period for everyone but is very difficult when you are forced to defend your very existence.

Anne-Marie – A real fear is that they are talking about stopping arts funding and cutting jobs. The sector will end up with hobbyists and people who can *afford* to work in the industry or study. People with privilege and private income. The sector will lose people who can't afford to train/work in the arts. Also the Govt doesn't understand that most freelancers have 2nd or 3rd jobs already, to subsidise working in the arts.

Louise – we jump between the urgency of “we've got to sort this out!” to using the Brighton & Hove situation to demonstrate how we can sort things out. How can we rebrand as a city to collectively show what we are. It is exciting to present Brighton and Hove as a city that works on all levels. Everyone is more than one thing – carer, artist, cook, gardener...

Sue – It reminds her of the Thatcher era, but at least then there were other ways of subsidising yourself as an artist eg low cost housing plus Enterprise Allowance Scheme (£40 p/w). This enabled Sue to start her career in the arts. We need to get into conversation with Brighton Council re: housing provision to help the situation.

Good News Sharing!

What are the positives that have come out of lockdown

Michelle – CAST IRON have been commissioned twice to work with Reading Culture Live, to do a virtual tour around River Kennet plus a podcast walking tour (also can be viewed on video). Also working with the youth group at Reading museum to create a digital response to lockdown. In Brighton, IRON CLAD have launched an on-line community hub for creative people based in Brighton & Hove, for sharing skills and networking.

Louise – has been attending virtual tours of secondary schools as youngest daughter will be going next year. Louise was really impressed to see pupils that she had worked with through her company Lookout when they were in Year 5, now in secondary school - presenting and participating in the open day.

Karen – feels like this has been a way forward. Her bicycle ballet company uses ballet to get people more active. She has been liaising with Mobility Justice, which supports people who don't feel they have access to travel. They are passionate about access for all. This has been inspiring.

Also she has re-connected with a previous project she was involved in called NHS Stories. This happened through a chance encounter with Doctor Sarah. Karen is feeling like she would like to do something again to highlight the situation in the NHS at this point in time.

Michelle – has just started training at Compton to be a gardener. Being outside of theatre is where the inspiration comes from. Is reminded of the fact that she still tells stories.

Laura – she recently had a “walk and talk” with Sue Maclaine. Made her think why don't I do this all the time, and not just because of CV restrictions. She is cycling again, which she loves. Also she has felt more enabled as more things happen on Zoom. The world is more accessible. She has just started BSL 101 Introduction to Sign Language course.

Naomi – the last few months have been really positive. Brighton People's Theatre have managed to sustain everything on line. They have received a small commission from BDBF to create a short satirical panto with key workers from around the city, working weekly online. All being well will be show at Dome at Christmas.

Jess – working for Theatre Search she has mapped the effect of lockdown on venues

across the country. This project was launched publically in collaboration with Campaign for the Arts. There are over 1,000 venues listed on the website, which has been accessed by 21,000 people during the launch week. Now thinking about the future and how this data can be used to transform the industry. Jess has also been supporting artists to submit project grants to ACE. Finally, she is developing a workshop series to support parents with babies in the first year of their lives.

Cath – Finally got a bike and enjoying riding by the sea. She usually travels a lot for work but this year spent the summer on the allotment. Its centering and a joy to be there. She is part of the National Dance Artist Network, who normally meet 3 times a year for a whole day. During lockdown they have been meeting every 2 weeks by Zoom. This has made for a much closer relationship and they are developing more projects, which is very exciting. One of them will make a significant difference to a young persons life.

Slavka – lockdown has allowed her time to practice mindfulness and to connect more with nature, through sea swimming, cycling, walking and yoga. All activities, under normal circumstances, that are a struggle to undertake. She has really missed work and her colleagues at the Dome, but has used the time to return to her own practice as a visual artist, preparing work for a forthcoming “Out of Lockdown” exhibition.

Charlotte – has a small child who hates her being on phone and Zoom, so it has been a challenge to connect during lockdown. Plus she lives in a small caravan with poor internet. On the plus side, the reason for living in a caravan is that they are building their own house. Its all coming together and very exciting! As work as an artist/choreographer has been suspended, she has been able to get physically involved with the build. She is happy that her body and her spirit are in the house. She now has some funding secured for projects next year which she hopes will go ahead. She, personally, cannot figure out how her work will work online. Re Richi Sunak’s comments – our value system is completely different to that of traditional business world. How do we make a case for our way of working? She is wary of trying to adapt to “their” models.

Anne-Marie – she was out of work when Covid hit. She set up a Covid Support Group in Hollingdean, which has worked very well. For the first time ever (since she was 18!) she didn’t work on her birthday in May! Also had a wonderful summer holiday with the family, which is a rarity due to work. BOAT reopened and has been a great success. Now more things are opening up she is excited about new conversations, relationships and projects.

Final comment from Sue – We need to find structures to hold and support instability. In the Buddhist philosophy “there is no ground beneath our feet”

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 22nd October 10am, Zoom