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Panel on Process Production and Touring

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Panelists:

Ryan Tacata

Darren O' Donnell

Lisa Marie DiLiberto

Milton Lim

Patrick Blenkarn

Nassim Soleimanpour

Maiko Yamamoto

Note: This is a transcription of a conversation. We have slightly adapted it to make it easier to read.

Ryan [00:04:09] So we are joined together for a discussion on concept touring and alternative means of performance transmission as part of the PuSh 2022 industry series. This particular discussion brings together local, national, and international artists who have a practise in concept touring or performance projects where the final product is a process that tours. And we're joined by Darren O'Donnell, Lisa Marie DiLiberto, Maiko Yamamoto. Patrick Blenkarn, Milton Lim, and Nassim Soleimanpour. And I'm Ryan Tacata, an assistant professor of performance at the School for the Contemporary Arts in Vancouver, B.C.. And so I thought we'd start by introducing ourselves and maybe Darren, if you'd begin.

Darren [00:05:10] Sure. I'm Darren O'Donnell, I'm the artistic director of Mammalian Diving Reflex. And just in terms of concept art, I prefer to call it process touring because that's more accurate. But in terms of that, that is a sort of a necessity of my company because we always work with local performers and those are non artists. So necessarily, we've been doing this since 2006. That's something that has been a mother of necessity. Here has been the mother of invention, where we've had to develop processes that we can tour because we're always working with local performers. That's how we ended up here. And that's what we prefer now. And we have pretty complex ways of touring a process and processes that are pretty complex, that make relatively complex projects with scripts and stuff like that. So happy to talk about this.

Ryan [00:05:54] Awesome. Lisa.

Lisa [00:05:58] Thanks, Ryan. I'm Lisa Marie Diliberto, my pronouns are she/her, I'm calling in from Toronto, the traditional territories of the MississaugaWends of the Credit, Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, the Wendat people. I'm the artistic director of Theatre Direct Canada, which is a theatre company that creates and produces work for young audiences. I've been invited to come here today to speak about my work with the Tale of a Town Canada. The Tale of a Town Canada is a project that was produced and created by FIXT POINT Arts and Media company here in Toronto that still

continues. Led by my partner, Charles Catchable. Him and I created that project early in the year in 2008, and then we ended up touring it across the country between 2014 and 2016, collaborating with local, professional and community artists in every province and territory. We went all across Canada and to the North over three years and then created interviewing people about their memories of their main street in downtown. In a story mobile, so a little sound recording studio on wheels and then creating site-specific performances using the audio and the interviews gathered through those stories for the the local community. So yeah, I'm really excited to be here and to talk more about how we toured that. Eventually, it moved beyond just us, and we had teams of artists in different places across Canada touring this process.

Ryan [00:07:36] Awesome, thank you, Lisa. Maiko.

Maiko [00:07:41] Thanks, Ryan. Hi, everyone, I'm Maiko Yamamoto, I'm one of the co-artistic directors of a company here in Vancouver called Theatre Replacement. I'm a theatre performance maker and director. I do a lot of my work with the other co-artistic director of this company called James Long. And we have been lucky to tour our work nationally and internationally to many different festivals and places. And I would say our relationship to concept touring or process touring, as Darren likes to call it, is that we've been doing more projects that lean into processes and models that work with local participants in recent years. So I would say our interest in it is out of necessity too, like Darren, but also out of interest and making things like local participation into the overall concept has for us been really, you know, it added a lot of enjoyment to bringing works on the road because there's always something new to interact with, new people to meet and it changes the work and it keeps it moving forward. Thanks.

Ryan [00:08:55] Patrick.

Patrick [00:09:00] Hey, my name is Patrick Blenkarn, and I am a performance maker and visual artist and game designer / programmer. I'm here to talk about some of the works that myself and Milton, who will talk about himself soon have been making and those works are: asses.masses, which is a video game designed for the stage and culturecapital, which is a trading card game that uses public data, public funding, data and interviews with artists and other members of the arts ecology and a specific region to create stage based card games. And more broadly, though, my work has sort of interfaced with questions around automation or participation. I guess there's a fine line that I'm interested in; talking about the relationship between remote touring and process touring because they seem fundamentally very similar, but also qualifibly different. I'm curious to see how we can make a distinction between those types of works that we're making - who are on this call. Thanks very much.

Ryan [00:10:20] Thanks, Patrick. Milton.

Milton [00:10:23] Everyone, my name is Milton Lim, my pronouns, are he/him and like many of my esteemed colleagues here today, I am coming to you from Vancouver, B.C., the traditional ancestral and unceded territories of Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations. I am here today as a co-creator of quite a few projects with Patrick Blenkarn; culturecapital and asses.masses, as has been previously mentioned. I can say Patrick and I do a lot of watching of the different kinds of work coming out of Canada. Especially as the co-founders and the lead archivists of VideoKen, which is a project that is trying to collect video documentation of live performance - so dance, theatre and live art. Our work sits at an intersection of games, performance and participation. I think that there is a lot that comes out of not necessity, but a formal interest in trying to bring in different kinds of performance into the performance ecosystem, especially around different levels of engagement with

participants insofar as removing the trained performer. But maybe we'll leave that there for now and leave for the discussion. Thank you.

Ryan [00:11:36] . Thank you Milton. Nassim?

Nassim [00:11:42] Hello, Ryan. Hello, everyone. My name is Nassim Soleimanpour. If you're trying to visualise me, I'm wearing round glasses. I am not that tall, I have black hair. I am sitting in my study in Berlin. I'm an Iranian writer, theatre-maker based here since 2015, freezing in Germany. I'm mainly known for plays which do not demand rehearsals. These plays often cast new performers per show who have to read the play sight unseen in front of a live audience. The list includes White Rabbit Red Rabbit, Blank, Nassim the Play and a few more. Thank you.

Ryan [00:12:36] Awesome. Well thank you Nassim. I'll start with one question and then I'll let you all run with it. But let's go back to Darren. You made a distinction between concept touring and process touring. And I thought that maybe you could help us, who may be unfamiliar with this language, understand what we mean by process touring to break that down a bit and why process touring over more conventional models of touring and production.

Darren [00:13:08] I distinguish between concept versus process touring because I believe no matter what you're touring, as a theatre maker, you're always touring a concept, whether that concept is a team that's been on the project from the beginning and you're just travelling from city to city or you're developing the project anew each location. In both cases, that's the concept. A concept is touring. When I distinguish that between process touring, what I mean specifically is the second example there, which is you're making the work anew in each location. And what you're touring is a method of engaging people, which sometimes can be workshops that precede the actual work and you get people to do stuff and devise things. It sounds like Nassim does something a little bit different than that with what he's doing. I should mention I'm bald for those who are listening on the podcast here. And I'm in Melbourne and it's five a.m. So if I sound... So you're touring a series of things that you do with a group of people that then yield, hopefully, a relatively similar product that you've done in other cities with other people. And this has come about due to the fact that I'm often working with children, teens and seniors and refugees. So there's four sort of populations that I've worked with over the course of the last bunch of years and these are non-professionals. So we have to come up with a system to include them and then to produce something that is slick enough to be presented in a performing arts festival. The one that we have that's the most sophisticated is All the Sex I've Ever Had that produces a 90-minute script-based work that has six performers in it all over the age of 65. So, that's how we came about. And that's what I consider process. I consider the whole thing process production and touring. So the first question is: "How do you build a process that can be toured and that other people can plug into quite quickly and still contribute"? This is the most important part I think, still contribute their own stories, their own personalities, their own interests, that sort of thing. I think that's a really delicate balancing act, and All the Sex I've Ever Had is the one that really does it the best. They're tough to make. I've been trying to make one as good as All the Sex, since All the Sex and it's really, really tough to make something that's quite sophisticated, that has lines that people speak and that last a long period of time as opposed to just event-based stuff like, Haircuts by Children is very event-based and it's always the same everywhere. Just kids cutting hair is pretty basic. So, I think it's a real challenge to do this in a way that includes people with their own sort of stories and interests and can be slick and sophisticated and make an audience feel like they've seen a good theatre show. I think those are those things that are tough to do in a quick way because you have to be quick. You don't have much time in each town. No presenter wants you there for more than a few weeks.

Maiko [00:16:23] Can I maybe add on the idea of where the language around concept touring? Or where this might have come from? We seem to be in an interesting moment in time where people who have been making works like this forever, like Nassim and Darren and just called their work- their work and their processes - their processes. I think now we've hit a point. Nassim and I were both part of a cohort earlier this year that was initiated by the Lift Festival, Chris Nelson and the Lift Festival, which is a concept touring residency. And so after I heard that term there, it felt like that language sort of took wildfire and everybody was using it to describe these works that were really emerging out of necessity out of the pandemic. These were digital works that had mobility inside of a moment like this, but also took into consideration the climate emergency. I think that's a huge factor inside of, this question of touring, of putting people on planes, is it ethical to do this anymore? And so I think we're having this teeter-totter moment where there have been people doing this forever. But this language has emerged around it. And I just thought that was a fun thing to put in because I have spoken to Chris Nelson not too long ago, and he says people are now speaking concept touring back to him and he told me that that language actually originated from a conversation he had with Darren and saying Darren called it something else, but he couldn't remember what you called it. And you call it process touring.

Darren [00:18:05] Right, yeah.

Milton [00:18:08] Maybe to hop on that as well, Patrick and I were talking about how in many other kinds of arts disciplines, concept touring is just a given, around social practise and how you might move from one thing to the next. And I think that it especially lands, as you're saying, Maiko, in this current moment in time, but also in a very particular kind of community that uses that as an outlier of a kind of work. I see Nassim, nodding a little bit, because often that work has been historically seen as outside or on the margins of what people would normally deem as performance. And I think the terming of it as concept touring attributes that same sort of gesture.

Patrick [00:18:49] I was just going to add to that. We sort of joked at one point that we felt like board games were the original concept touring, they had all the things that you needed: they brought X number people together; there were instructions for people to participate in. It's touring without the actors. It's like no rehearsal required, or there's a bit of rehearsal because you want to play one round first. And so once you start to broaden that concept of what is permissible to be concept touring performance versus just a system that you can be plugged into and participate in and shape to a degree without actually changing the system completely. Yeah, there's a lot of things that we already engage with that have that feature. But what's different I think in some ways is this distinction that, maybe I don't want to sort of harp on too much, but it feels like there's a significant distinction between those who go somewhere or send someone somewhere to rehearse something versus something that arrives in town and we engage with on a first cold read like, Nassim, your work, White Rabbit, Red Rabbit, was pretty seminal I'd say for me, a number of years ago, as I understood, oh, how could you do that? It was a very first point reference point for my work - like a book that I'd made that's read by an audience called Soliloquy in English. It's a reference point that has always been in the room when we are building asses.masses. So thank you. But it felt like there's a very different conversation that that's having than something like what you're talking about, Darren, with All the Sex I've Ever Had or even The FiXT POiNT, the long term collection, which those works full disclosure, have been references for culturecapital, which Milton and I are building through long term residencies over a month. Talking to people and gathering information and then creating something with that information.

Darren [00:20:48] Nassim, could you just describe one of the works and what it is, just because I don't have a picture of it. I'm sorry. I don't know it.

Nassim [00:20:55] Yeah. Well, the one that Patrick was talking about is a play called White Rabbit Red Rabbit which is the first in this series, which I've written in 2010. When I was in Iran, I didn't have a passport. I couldn't travel because I didn't do military service and I was done with the structure of making theatre in Iran and the way it is supervised. So I convinced myself, forcefully, that my English is passable enough to try and write something in English. And I thought I could get different performers to show up. And then they received this envelope, which contains 40 pages sight unseen in front of a live audience. They open it. They're not allowed to google it. They're not allowed to watch it. If you perform in it once you cannot do it again. And then they just read it. And then through the text, somehow I direct the performer. Immediately it became like a phenomenon. We've performed it over, I think, 3000 times in 50, 60 countries; 40 languages; with celebrities. And they did it at schools. They are doing it at banks. And then it became like a saying that, you know that there's more into this game then... I bumped into Tim Crouch of course, later. And I've heard about An Oak Tree, which casts a new performer and made many good friends on the way, including Maiko, who performed in one of the shows as well. Yeah, that is the story.

Maiko [00:22:42] I've performed three of Nassim's plays now.

Nassim [00:22:45] There we go. Oh

Maiko [00:22:47] I've done White Rabbit, Red Rabbit, Blank and Nassim.

Nassim [00:22:51] So I think I can go and sleep. Whatever I can say, Maiko is better.

Maiko [00:22:55] No, I mean, this is something that I would say, you know, we're talking also in concept touring around the kind of transmission that the works have: Is it an artist to another artist transmission? What is the hosting relationship? Is it an artist to an audience? Is this an artist to another, you know, a presenter or a venue? So I feel like this one is a little bit artists, although there is an intermediary because usually a company will come on as a producer or a venue will come in as a producer. But to me, I felt like doing all those works was an artist to artist transmission because literally you get an envelope passed to you, that feels like it comes from the Nassim's hands to yours, and you just kind of have to go.

Nassim [00:23:47] Lisa, you had a thought.

Lisa [00:23:50] Well, yeah, just even building on that... Thinking about how often it's an artist to the community transmission. Or even circling back to think about the roots of this kind of work process or concept touring in community-engaged arts and that kind of history of work in Canada, which I'm most familiar with. But that's certainly influenced a lot of the work that I've done, really, that kind of work, working, collaborating with professional artists to create a container or a process in which artist within a community can find a way to express themselves or to fit in. It also has its roots if we think about it in protest theatre or political theatre. Theatre that was outside of the theatre. I think this is where this connects with site specific immersive theatre. A lot of this has that kind of flavour or feeling. And when I think about the work with FiXT POINT, the Tale of a Town work, it was really about "How can we take this work, a structure or a process into a community that has certain posts in place, certain markers in place over a period of time and then fill those in, fill in the content or the colours on those puzzle pieces with what we're gathering from the community in terms of the people that we're

interviewing? But also the artists in that place are a part of that and also the venue or the place?" In the case of FiXT POiNT it's site-specific work, so there are so many things that are involved in that. The pieces are like the stories and the shapes... The artists that are there...and how do we fit them together within that structure? And then out comes something that is its own piece, but it fits together within a bigger puzzle of that work or that body of work. So in the case of Tale of a Town, all these different pieces were created across the country but they all fit together in a way because the process or the container has some controls in there. So I think that's part of the artistry too is creating that, crafting that container where you can engage with the community and the community will change and shift that work. But in a way, all those pieces will still speak to the other pieces along the way.

Darren [00:26:25] Can I ask the question? Is the final product that's presented...if I were to see it in one location and then see it in another location, would it be relatively the exact same product? Would it look - I don't know the design elements - would I feel like. I'm seeing the same thing again and again? Or would it be very separate?

Lisa [00:26:42] You know, that's an interesting question because as we toured through the years and as we had to train other artists in the story gathering and creation process we started, there would be similar presentation elements. So at first it was just experimenting with how can you perform audio? How can you take actual audio and perform it? So there was different things that we developed along the way using audio with shadow, using audio with voice and no voice interspersing the audio with... but then eventually, to answer your question, we would train artists in a certain container. So we would send them off with a transmitter, an FM transmitter, and we knew that they were going to basically interview folks on specific topics. So we had a very clear hashtag sheet. This is so we could search things like demolition or unofficial mayor or general store - things that we saw common themes. And actually those are linked on an online story map. So you could look up stories about demolition across the country there.

Darren [00:27:59] So is this a live performance? These are live performers?

Lisa [00:28:03] Yeah, they were live, but in a way it would take the form... eventually, we would know who we need to hire. We'd hire someone who could record an interview. We would train them. We needed to hire someone who could design because what we would do is always take archives from the library, build a small main street. And so we had, you know, a live feed, those things. So they did have a particular style, but they were always different because they were in a different venue. They had different artists. They had different stories. But they were along the same theme so they could be put together. But they're definitely not the same until we created like one bigger show with many of those stories together. Hope that answers your question.

Milton [00:28:44] Can I ask a follow up question just about training? Because you mentioned it Lisa Marie. Just for those of us here, because there's such a wide range of skills required to maybe... what the access bar is for the different works that we've made. We get this sort of comment a lot about culturecapital because it's a card game, you have to learn how to play the rules and when we create a tournament for it, we sit at a table and we train people how to play for eight hours a day so that they can enter the tournament. For asses.masses, there's a PlayStation controller. Some people have never held that thing and some people are much more familiar with it so there is a threshold. Nassim, a lot of the times when White Rabbit Red Rabbit has toured it's often given the spotlight to celebrities or the best actors in the town. So there's an assumption that if they're the ones who maybe are the best fit to perform that text - even though I know you're shaking your head, it's like: "No, that's not the case" - but

that seems to happen quite often in the way that it's sort of marketed, at least in cities in Canada. Do you have a clause that says, "No, please don't do that. Anyone should do this"?

Nassim [00:29:52] I mean, I should say there is a history. Now when we opened White Rabbit Red Rabbit in Edinburgh in 2011 if I'm right, the play needs nine audience members, at least nine audience members because people count on top of the show. We see how many audience is in the room and then they get numbered, it's a trick. And then it starts calling "who is number five? You have to do this." And we have number nine as well. So we need at least nine people and we didn't. I remember the first show we had only eight audience members. So one of my dramaturgs, Ross Manson (he is actually Canadian), had to sit amongst the audience. I got lucky. Even then, you know. People like David Craig, who is now a dear friend, very known Scottish writer Tim Crouch, since we mentioned his name, to be amongst the first actors. But still, I don't think these guys would want to be considered as celebrities. I think that the turn is when we had the long New York run where it was picked up by some more commercial producers in New York in 2016 if I'm right. They decided to basically have it on once a week on Black Mondays in New York. I was really against it, to be honest. At the beginning it was just like, wait wait wait, I'm not a big fan of Che Guevara. I read a lot about him and I was like, so this guy basically fought and then died because he wanted to change a concept, and then he ended up being on t-shirts. I was not really sure if I wanted Rabbit to become that commercial. And to be honest, when I watched it the first time with an actor whom I knew through some TV series, I liked that show because I felt it is like a machine, because the whole cinema business works like: you have this person who is trained well, who is probably handsome. We have light, we have makeup, we have everything and we create this superhero, a human plus. And probably that could be one of the reasons that some of these celebrities separate from society, they get depressed and all those things. And this machine, of White Rabbit Red Rabbit works backwards because you have this person under no designed lights, often with no makeup, no rehearsal and no cool costumes or beautiful dress or whatsoever trying to find the balance. Losing, pardon me, their shit and in a way, the reunion with the audience. So even as we speak now, during the pandemic, White Rabbit Red Rabbit, it was performed in twenty-four hours in 120 places at the same time - Arad has smaller theatres, a school did it in Pakistan... And then of course, we had more known actors. So I would say it's being used, I guess.

Patrick [00:33:00] But I guess I was trying to equate celebrityism with well-trainedness and the refined ability to... because Darren, you have to teach children how to cut hair. You have to maybe, you know, teach people to project or there's a certain amount of like working with your participants or expectations of 'OK, there is this minimum bar' and how do you negotiate that in these different contexts? Maiko, I'm not sure how exactly the choir works, for example, in Town Choir, but you know, they got to be on key, presumably or ideally, they have experiences. What is your personal threshold for I need a really good choir or like Darren, you said, I really need a really good stage for All the Sex I've Ever Had. Right? There's these things, these technically refined and sophisticated, complex components that we take for granted as viewers. But they're necessary in order for the participants who are plugged into these things to really fly and feel supported.

Darren [00:34:02] I mean, two things toward that is... OK, one thing I just want to clear up is that I have this very strict rule is: we don't call them participants, we call them performers. They're performers in the show so that they feel that we care about them and they're colleagues with us. That's one rule, no matter how old they are. And then the other thing is: we do have a very specific set of rules that we give to the performers. For example in All the Sex, something as simple as when you're saying you're line, you can follow it along with your finger, with the last line, the last sentence in your line, you must look up at the audience, stare at the audience, say your line and keep on staring at the audience until the next person starts to speak. Like small things like that make a massive difference, and we've got a

handful of them that make the difference. And then the rest of it is free for all but the various things we have to lock it into place and those are not negotiable. And we're clear with the performers which ones are not negotiable and which ones they're free to mess around with, but we're very clear with that sort of thing.

Maiko [00:35:04] And just to jump on that with the choir, Patrick, it has to be a good choir. The better the choir, the better the show, because we don't have a lot of time. Essentially, Town Choirs and Mine operate on the idea that the performers that we recruit, the local performers, are experts at what they do. So the kids are experts at playing Minecraft, and the choirs are really, really good choirs. And that allows us to insert them into the structure in a way. And if we didn't have that... not all of our pieces that do the local participation are like that. But those two in particular, it's really contingent on that. And it kind of leads to the question I had because I was curious about process failure. Have you ever gone somewhere and it's just not worked? That happened for us with Choirs one time, and it was something that we really learned about. Like they didn't get a choir, they didn't care, and the piece is called Town Choir. So we suddenly were in a city trying to train a group of people to be a choir and that took up all of our time. And as such, the show didn't lift - it didn't have the soufflé that it needed. That made us really set a rule that if we don't find a choir, we're not going to tour the show there obviously. We're not going to try to make it work, which I think is us artists sometimes so often try to do. We're like: "We're going to bang this together, we're going to be able to do this". But yeah. I'd love to hear other process failure stories if anybody has one and what they took away from it.

Darren [00:36:39] Can I say one thing? Which is somehow related if you guys don't mind, is that I feel as much as I really adore and I enjoy that you want it to be really good, that doesn't really apply to how I look at things. I mean, I think of: What is the best metaphor? Like a jungle. So to genetically modify seeds as we human beings did, we were like: "OK, so these plants work better, so we try to consume them and use them. And these plants are weaker and we don't want to use them." Yeah, it helps us probably to cultivate more food. But for the whole sake of the jungle, it is not a good thing. So the way that I personally look at it is that it is very basic. I always say, if someone can read, they can do any of these plays. If you can't read, it's still on me. I wouldn't blame it on you. I should write a code read, which doesn't demand you being able to read. Give me some years and I'll figure it out. And then the rest of it, I think to me is a car that should be designed quite well so that it doesn't crash. And the way you drive is your choice. So we would guarantee as a production team that you start from here and you end there. You don't get lost. No one is going to die, artistically, of course. But if you want to go faster, if you want to go slower, if you need to listen to rock music or chat with your pals on the way, that is on you. Yeah.

Darren [00:38:17] Do you feel an ethical responsibility to the performers in it? Because I have that situation, I'm working with non-performers. They're sharing their lives. They're 70 years old, 80 years old at times, and I want them to look good so that they feel good about what they're doing. And I think for me, particularly in this piece, that's about ageing and sexuality, I want them to really look good and sexy up on the stage so there's other things going on there. But I do have an ethical responsibility to these non-professionals who are jumping into these projects. Do you have that pressure on you or that concern?

Nassim [00:38:49] Thanks for your question. I think it starts with me to be honest, and I'm being very honest. In a way, in a good way, I gave up on my own self, like I don't want to look good. I accepted that I don't look good. I don't want to, and I don't want to embarrass anyone that is for sure. Because I also am a producer, we all know this... You do it to one or two people, then people don't show up. The one thing that I keep reminding myself of when I write, even when I write more traditional plays (the

ones that have to be rehearsed) is that I am a servant. It is very kind of an actor to memorise your long monologue. We've all been physically on tour, though we're talking about concept touring or process touring, to go all the way to another continent to deliver what you wrote. So I always remind myself that this poor individual is going to do this for me, so I try to take care of them in that sense when I write it for them. But to look good, I think, especially with a cold read, people are there to root for the performer. They know this poor thing doesn't know what they do. If anything bad happens, I would be blamed for it. It's very natural.

Patrick [00:40:00] And I think in some ways... Maybe we can talk a bit about our failures or where it might be perceived as failure is that we're very adamant about not controlling time. And because we work so heavily with games, the show is going to end when the game is done and the games that we make can take as long as you want to play them, or as long as it takes for the game to be won. So that has meant that some finals of culturecapital are forty-five minutes and some of them are three and a half hours, and they will have the absolute worst dramatic arc that you could possibly construct. It might repeat a dramatic arc multiple times before it gets to a point. We've done them online, we've lost everyone and then everyone comes back, there are people who stick it all the way through. And part of that comes with this idea of the process or the product being separate from us in a way: relinquishing control, giving it over to someone else and letting them 'drive the car' to use Nassim's metaphor. But some people drive the car really slowly, and time is this commodity in a lot of our performing arts circuit, and it's a great concern to producers and programmers who are like: "Well, yeah, but the techs have to go home." So in all of our riders, we say be prepared - either put us earlier in the day or be prepared to pay overtime because no one is going to turn this game off. You can plough a field in asses.masses for as long as you want. It's up to that audience to collectively negotiate: "Hey, it's time to move on with the story, maybe." But failure becomes a perception thing by certain members of that audience based on the codes that we have for what we expect from live theatre performance.

Milton [00:41:55] Maybe to jump on that as well. I think in culturecapital, especially for the finals, because anyone can come in and participate in the tournament - they can bring their own deck of cards that they might have from another region of Canada, currently, it could be elsewhere as well. It's hard because we don't have any control over who is coming in. So sometimes someone can play the game really effectively and then other times they're terrible at strategy and they just got really lucky and in those times, sometimes we've had those people make it to the finals of the tournament. And that's exactly where there could be some intervention. We've done it in the past to varying success, which is: (similarly to Darren) we asked them to do very specific things. Not rules per se, but we ask different kinds of performative acts from them like: "OK, well, please read this." or "Make sure that you are speaking through the different ideas instead of just playing the card and just forgetting about the flavour text." and extracting the larger, emergent narrative of what's happening in the game. Again, that's not something that we have direct control over, so we're just trying to elevate the performance side of that and I think that's where it interfaces a little bit more with the theatrical landscape than it does with the game landscape because in the round-robin tournament side of things, anyone can come in - we have no control over that. We actually don't even oversee all the games. We rely on people to self-report what their scores were. But it is in those finals, putting it on the stage, tries to make it into that performance experience but as Patrick is saying, trying to break through the commodities of time and other sort of expectations around boredom, excitement and dramatic arcs.

Lisa [00:43:33] Just to add on that, too. That's interesting because I think when we're touring the concept or the process work, the failure is part of that, especially because there's an unknown. We're not touring with the final product. So when something goes wrong... what we would do in A Tale of a

Town is often embed that into the story, into the process, because it also is the story of the show, the story of the performance, the story of gathering; that you're, in our case, putting back on stage. For example, I remember once we were in a ship through Nunavut and we got in a dinghy and we went to Cape Dorset and we were supposed to find someone- this guy who started the Inuit artist co-op. And finally, we found him. So amazing, you know, almost like detectives. When we got to his door and we went in, he told us the history of the Inuit artist co-op for over an hour in his... and we had our zoom recorder. And of course, you know, just at the end we turned it off. Those of you who were on the call in the beginning, you know that I'm not a super technical person, but my partner, Charles is. But somehow, when we got back to the ship to play that recording, that story, we realised that the batteries had died halfway through. And because of that particular zoom, which we never used again, we lost the whole story, the whole thing, you know, we wouldn't be back there again. But that ended up being a huge part. When we ended up telling that story about our tour to Nunavut in our international show, what we realised in that moment is that sometimes that's the way that stories are passed along. We didn't actually need the recording, and in some cases it's not the recording, it's the telling of the story, the telling of the experience. So in a way, I think when we're touring a process or a concept, we're also opening ourselves up to touring, to seeing what, what changes, what's different, what fails, what succeeds? And that becomes... Same as: Who is in the room? What talents do they bring? Who do we collaborate with when we get to a place, what space do we have? All those things sometimes are going to shape the things that shape or fill that container, which are always going to be different depending on where we are and what we've got. So, that felt like a huge failure when it happened but later it ended up being a really beautiful point in our production. I think there is something about that, that it doesn't have to be perfect or we can't plan it ahead. Though it may be a failure, it's also something that brings us something else.

Maiko [00:46:30] And it feels like, in all these examples that the form kind of helps mediate failure in a way or make use of that kind of failure. Like Nassim, you're saying the cold read, there's an instant empathy for the person who's doing the cold read. The form of the game and the duration, there's a natural, winning and losing inside of gameplay that I think also incites empathy. And then I think for you, Lisa, that the idea of the show itself that you sort of flash enter a place and you gather as much material as you can and you tell these stories that in that, a missing piece, such a critical point, like that would be exactly, as you say, a beautiful part that you could weave into the actual telling of the story. So it feels like a lot of these works have it built-in, in a way. You've built in this idea that the process could be wobbly or have winning and losing or have shaky bits.

Darren [00:47:30] And that the structure itself has enough room for there to be sharing idiosyncrasies of each of the performers or each of the participants or what everyone and their mistakes can be beautiful. The container allows for those mistakes to shine in an interesting way I think. And there are plenty of mistakes in the projects that I do, but they don't look like mistakes. They look like charming people and being human.

Maiko [00:47:55] Mine sometimes look like mistakes.

Nassim [00:47:57] There's also one element that I'm really curious to know how you guys deal with, and that is language. I mean, when we speak about touring we often take it for granted that you go to a place and then you perform probably in English by a choir, you know, in another country or whatever. I mean, how do you guys deal with this one?

Maiko [00:48:17] We did one of the Town Criers pieces and it was in Icelandic. And that was really difficult. That was really difficult to mediate. It still worked, but there were really long gaps in between.

The pick-up wasn't as fast. We had to give time for us not speaking the language and basically guessing when the person had finished typing in their text. It's a piece where a writer transmits something to a crier - they're in two different locations. The writer is usually in their domestic space, very comfortably tucked away, and the crier is standing in public space and has a bell and is ringing it and shouting out these very mundane observations following a structure that we've given them. And when it was in Icelandic, it was very, very challenging and there were lots of moments where we had to... We learned from that one, too, that it would be really difficult. So the next time we went on the road and there was talk about using different languages, we could broach that with the presenters and we could also say we would need someone who is someone who speaks that language to actually take on our role a little bit more. So it is tricky. So many times I think I'd love to do this show somewhere where English isn't the dominant language. But it's so often doesn't happen because it requires more time and it requires more commitment from the presenters and from the team. It's tricky. But Darren, you should talk because *All the Sex* has been done in many different places, in many different languages.

Darren [00:50:01] Yeah, I mean, it was developed in German first, and I don't speak German. And with that, it's just a team of translators, you know, there's usually three translators on it when we're doing it in a linguistically foreign place from English for us. And with that, we have to make the translators really part of the team. In fact, I'm just developing a talk with one of the translators from Tokyo right now, who we then hired to co-direct in Korea. We make them part of the team and ask them for directorial input, they help us write the script. So there's aesthetic questions... We have to trust them to get the right feel for it. So it really means bringing them quite quickly into the team, which also the building of an ensemble quite quickly, particularly for *All the Sex* requires. One of the things that's in the budget that the presenter has to greenlight is we're going to dinner with everybody and we're taking them out to mini golf or karaoke or wherever. There's always those things built in at various moments during the course of the month, one month that we're there. So we're building this ensemble and getting to know the translators who are there at all times. We dance with them all the time in rehearsals. We're finding music that is going to be in the show so we bring that for the performers to listen to and then we make sure that the translators are there dancing with us and we get the seniors to dance. We have all of these systems for incorporating everybody, including the translators, so that everybody feels like they're in it and they're not just translating for us, but they're co artists in the process. And we're able to do that quite quickly and make people feel like we were interested in their opinion. And I think that's really important and we are interested in their opinion because without it, we're doomed.

Patrick [00:51:50] I think one other variation just to cover the spectrum of that is to thematize English, I speak to this as it's a longstanding interest of mine, and it's a subject of my own work. But you know, when sending something away to somewhere else in that very gesture, is there a way to draw attention to the fact that English operates the way it does in the contemporary global context? And how do we communicate? So that it isn't just sort of taking it for granted that it's like: "Oh yeah, I can go there because it's in English and people would be able to engage with it". It's something that we struggle with in *asses.masses* because as you can tell from the title, there's a lot of puns, maybe. Or you would deduce that the relationship between the donkey and labour politics is ostensibly the driving question as it sort of as it evolves. And we did the first show then we sent a file of that show to Buenos Aires to the Festival Internacional de Buenos Aires in March of 2021, and we translated it. That is something that is interesting about working with videogames because obviously, you could choose in its final form. You'd be able to just choose any language you want to have the show in by a click of a button at the beginning of the show, and it'll just translate the whole thing. And then the show can be played. It's all subtitled, so everything will operate that way. But for something like

culturecapital, where we're going to go other places... I am sort of an aspiring polyglot. So Milton and I've sort of made a pact. Like if it's going anywhere I like, I will learn enough of that language to be able to interface with whoever we're working with. But that's a huge amount of pre-work. And also to be able to have the jokes. I guess Milton, our work, it uses puns a lot, it's very wordplay heavy all the time. And we recognise that once we start to move into those other linguistic contexts it can't really just be our show anymore. Like you were saying Darren, that translator becomes someone part of your team. As culturecapital starts to move out into different contexts there are going to be other people who are part of our writing team, and they're going to need as much credit as us in the amazing flavour text that's on the cards.

Maiko [00:54:12] Because it's not just about language, it's cultural too right? There's all that stuff about... I don't know how... Nassim it would be interesting to know how you feel when your work goes to different places. Do you feel like it integrates into certain cultures better than others? Or does it translate always? Or how have you navigated that?

Nassim [00:54:39] I remember, I watched one of my plays over three nights in Kuala Lumpur in three languages, and it didn't feel like it is the same show. The same stage, same week, and it was totally different in Hokkien from Malay or from, I'd say, Malaysian English, because they have their own way of life, their own expressions. One of the things I think sometimes happens to us is that we sit, we create something, some of us without really considering that it's going to be performed in different languages or it's gonna go all around the globe. And then later, we're like: OK, carbon footprint, language, how can we figure it out? And while I honestly don't think this is the right way of doing this, I think a show which is supposed to tour at the very beginning... I remember when we were rehearsing on a show in London and I was just a writer for the show, and I kept talking about the way the suitcase should go on tour and people were like: "It's none of your business this would be either one suitcase or two suitcases, why do you care?" And I was like: "No, no, no. If we're going somewhere really remote, there would be a certain type of lights and even if we want to pay extra, we wouldn't be able to carry two suitcases." I mean, that has happened to me as an individual, on tour. And I'm a writer. So you're just like: let's discuss. I can just reduce this to that, maybe I don't need the monkey, maybe I could replace it with a doll. So, so yeah, I think it should be there from the very beginning.

Darren [00:56:29] Absolutely, when we make work now, for years, it's just been everything is designed to tour and it's designed to tour in that way in particular where it's just a director, a producer and we source everybody else locally as much as possible, for sure. That's the way to go. Super smart.

Milton [00:56:50] There's maybe also specificity around language that I know has come up in culturecapital, as we did the prototype decks for Montreal, Quebec, just looking at the use of English and French - because we are talking about different areas of the arts community. Patrick, with some help, translated a lot of the cards into French, but not into both English and French. That was a larger gesture on our side to speak to the gap between the Anglophone and the Francophone communities over there that don't actually speak to one another as much as maybe they would or should in any context. And so as they start to play, there is almost the necessity of reliance on each other like: "What is this card say?" If they don't speak both languages and that some things are really hard to translate. I think the specificity of puns and wordplay in that case, in that instance works out in our favour to speak very directly to that kind of community and the uniqueness of making the game for that area. I don't know if Patrick, there's anything else you'd like to add to that?

Patrick [00:57:58] Yeah, I guess it's an interesting question how you could say: "Well that's a very inaccessible gesture, Milton and Patrick, to print a card game that has half of its cards in a language

that maybe someone doesn't understand." But in doing so... because it's supposed to be a card game that elicits conversations between participants and reflects on the conditions under which art is being created, in some ways it involves the other more or more strongly than, for example, in other contexts where the card game is all in one language. Or it captures the atmosphere or the zeitgeist of what's going in Montreal still to this day after decades.

Lisa [00:58:42] Yeah, that is so interesting, just provoking those kinds of questions through just putting it in one language. I've been encountering that a lot lately, just being on different kinds of talks and panels and trying to... I relatively speak French and just getting into those conversations and realising that really, we're not talking to each other in this way. And that if you speak a different language, there's a different way that we're seeing the world through different idioms, through different images, through different languages. Even though, upon touring with Tale of a Town, it's across the country, there's so much nuance between the kinds of expressions and idioms and lilt and breath and recording those voices and conversations of playing something from Stephenville, Newfoundland and Labrador to someone from Prince George, B.C. or Thompson, Manitoba compared to Cape Dorset. It's all in English, in our case, what we gather. But the language is so different and we're communicating something different. We're saying almost the same thing in a different way. So that's an interesting point about touring because we're not always just touring the language. Were touring the culture from that place, one place to another or putting those things beside each other again to see: what's different, what's the same?

Patrick [01:00:21] I'm curious about... It just reminded me of some of the places that you've been to Lisa Marie, I imagine many of us on this call have not been to and some of these much smaller towns. And that first step to say, "Yeah, we're going to go and we're going to go and do that there. We're going to go and talk to them." I mean, from my own experience with culturecapital, at a stage when that project was not funded at all really, it was like: "All right, so I'm just going to fly to Calgary and Edmonton, and I'm going to email everyone and just ask them questions about this and tell them we're going to make this game about this place, and it's really a game for them." That cold decision of like: "Yeah, OK, we're just going to do that, I guess. We'll just put the money up and I'll like get the flight and I'll go." What was that first moment where you're like: "Yeah, OK, that's the place, Stephenville. Let's, yeah, let's go there of all the places?"

Lisa [01:01:12] That opens a really interesting conversation about concept touring or process touring. Because when we're pitching that to a presenter or partner, we're not sending them a recording of the piece that we're going to put on their stage. We're applying for funding. We're applying for a Canada Council Grant and they're asking for a script. And I spent, the whole decade doing that, saying, I don't have a script because I'm making the script when I get there. It's devised performances, devised collaboration based on the material that I'm going to gather where I am and create in collaboration with the community. So for us, we spent, with FiXT POiNT we spent six months of the year gathering partnerships and funders. And it was a hodgepodge of different partners and funders. For example, for Stevensville that was the art and culture centres of Newfoundland and Labrador. They had an arts and cultural centre in six places. However, we never asked... When we were touring the concept at first, later we went back and did a show in the theatres. But when we were touring the story gathering tour, we never asked if we could have their theatre. We asked if we could collaborate, if they could present us, if we could collaborate with their community. And we would ask the BIA, the Business Improvement Association, or we would ask the City or... Because there was no operating funding there. But we always had some kind of a funding, having to first convince the Arts Council funders that this concept was going to create a piece of artwork that was worth funding. And second of all, to the presenters and the partners. But it was the community collaboration they were looking for. So that

was what sold it. We're going to engage with this many people in your community. We're going to put on a piece. We're going to do in an empty storefront and we're going to find that storefront. What we need from you is a stage manager and we need names of all these local artists that we can bring in to audition or to contact to collaborate with. And can you connect us with the mayor, the store owners, the francophone group, the Indigenous group in this area. That was formulaic as well. But it was never... The first few things we did when we first did the Tale of a Town Queen West show, Theatre Passe Muraille was like: "OK, we won't give you any money, but we'll put you on our poster or we'll put you in the season." And so we did. And then eventually, though, we needed to somehow fund those projects. That's the thing, people have to buy into the concept. So that's a big thing. But somehow we managed to do that. And I can't tell you it was just a whole range of different... From now working at an operating company, Theatre Direct. That's a different privilege or feeling that, you know you have the funding to go to the next place. But when you're touring a concept and you're an independent company, this is something else. How do you...? And I try to buy into those things with Theatre Direct now too? I'm like: "You don't need to send me a script. What's the idea? I prefer that you're going to make something that's inspired by the people and the world and the environment around you, rather than you sitting at your computer writing something down." That's just taste. But to me, that's more exciting.

Ryan [01:04:56] Lisa, to follow up: we've been talking about these alternative methods and models of devising and creating theatre and touring. And I think that there's something in here around alternative models of support. I was wondering if we could open it up to the group, you know, words of advice for curious presenters, producers or granting organisations who might be interested in supporting process driven works. From your experience. What would you offer?

Lisa [01:05:29] Oh gee, I'm sure there's many. Everyone here can offer some interesting advice for that, but it is just, it's what the artists bring. So it's thinking about who you're going to collaborate with and what they're going to bring into the room, especially when you're devising. So it's all those experiences and that strong container that we talked about - that this is the process that we're going to undertake. We're going to fill it in here. But in terms of going to funders or partners or presenters, I think it's just really good documentation from past work, the people that you're going to collaborate with, a really clear process, not asking for anything that's... we never asked for too much from one person. We're just asking them to support a slice of it. And that's a ton of work, right? Because it would be great to be like: Can you just fund this whole thing? But if everyone believes in you just enough to give you a slice, then together you can put a circle around that and get there. I think, that's what I would say.

Darren [01:06:41] And one of my concerns, particularly in the Canadian sort of landscape or whatever is that these kinds of works are actually quite atypical aesthetically. Because what they're doing is a little bit different. I mean, we've only managed to perform All the Sex in Canada once, in Toronto, and our other projects a little bit in Canada, but there aren't a lot of venues that are open to these kinds of things. Generally it's festivals that are trying to expand. Like PuSh is a common place where this stuff has been presented. And for us, in the past and these kinds of works- High-Performance Rodeo was one FTA in Montreal, but there's not a lot of venues and there's certainly not a lot of the regional theatres - they're still doing, script-based plays that are rehearsed with their ensemble and I really feel that that's still a battle that needs to be - in Canada anyway - an aesthetic battle that needs to be fought still so that there's a little more acceptance of this kind of work because it's tough to get this kind of stuff around Canada. It's great that you've had the success you've had, Lisa, but we haven't.

Lisa [01:07:59] I mean, I don't think that success, comparably... for us as an independent, just to be able to get to the places and somehow get some funding to move around. I think it's also looking

outside of that box too. It's not just the arts funders - what about the city? The Business Improvement Association? The Main Street? It would be great if arts funders would take more risks and more opportunity on work that is going to be devised because that work is created in the moment. It's about something that's happening right then. If we're waiting for the script and the concept to be so solidified then sometimes the moment is passed where that work is super relevant. How do you do it, Maiko? You're always touring a concept. I mean, the pieces that you create.

Maiko [01:08:51] Yeah. I was just thinking about that negotiation that you have with presenters because concept touring and process touring works ask more from the presenters. They ask them to invest more. They ask you to enter into sometimes really lengthy process, right now through the pandemic, through postponements delays. I mean, I talked to one presenter in Australia more than I talk to my family right now. Yes, but they're long. They've become long extended relationships. And I don't know if Nassim, in the concept touring cohort, one of the conversations that I sort of left Chris with is that this project seems to want to demand more of the presenter. It wants them to have a serious relationship with me over several years to make this work happen and to hook me up and set me up with a bunch of things in order to be able to deliver the show and not to truncate that or to cut that off. So I think that's the negotiation. That's the troubling bit right now because I think we're very used to... When we're pitching shows to presenters: "All you have to do is say yes, it's very easy. We're just going to sweep into town and you don't have to do anything. Don't worry, it's going to be fine." But it's more like saying: "Be with me, have this relationship with me, stay." And we have had experiences. I mean, I'm sure, like a lot of you, you've had experiences with particular presenters, particular people over long periods of time, and those have always felt a bit more satisfying. They've always felt like you have a relationship with either the person that's hosting you or the town or the venue. But I think it's a tricky thing and I feel personally in my own practise and with the shows that are coming up, I'm standing a little bit on a risky precipice where people... I feel like what I might demand will force them to say "I just can't do that, you're asking way too much of me, lady." So that's my concern.

Darren [01:10:56] In my experience, there's a whole bunch of presenters who want that. Right? Who are actually looking for high quality synthetic work. Then that can bring them together with the community, particularly if you can be very specific about the kind of communities. If you're dealing with marginal communities: seniors, kids, people of colour, all of that kind of stuff, they're looking for that. And sometimes you have to work... In my experience, we've worked a lot with, it'll be a sort of a co-production between the main curatorial team and then there's a wing that is dedicated to either education or participation or outreach. And you bring those people together and they work together to realise it. And that can be an asset to the project if framed in the right way for the right presenter and not a liability.

Maiko [01:11:44] And that's related to the changing role of the curator and how that very relationship is changing right now. There's a different... I think because so many things got cancelled, there was a void of those presenter artist relationships in some ways and then there were these ones that got extended over time. It feels like there's a moment where that's flipping a little bit and it's changing. There's other models for curating that are not just about, maybe a gatekeeper. It's about how do I build relationships between artists and my audiences or artists in the community that I'm gathering together.

Darren [01:12:41] The one thing I wanted to also add, is just to share about one other interesting thing that we do in Mammalian that's evolved is that, we have these long term relationships with these young people that we start a project with and then continue to come back and work with the same young people and we design projects that actually make that happen. So we've been working with the

same kids in Germany since 2012, in Toronto since 2006, and they're in their mid 20s now. And now we have this sort of network of kids in Germany and in England, in Italy, in other places in Europe and Canada and now Asia, where we're starting to hire those kids as they get older to now lead the projects locally. So these kids are coming in and on each of the projects we make sure that we staff it with somebody who's done the project a lot amongst the team and also somebody who has never done the project before. So we're always training somebody up anew then we can then stand on the road and lead the project later on down the road. So we call those, in Mammalian we call everything Mammalian this or that. So we call them Mammalian droppings. So they're the, we leave these turds all over the place that are our colleagues that we can continue to develop relationships with. That allowed us... during the pandemic we didn't stop working because we are able to bring people local to each other. In Latvia, we were able to bring people really close by. Portugal, really close by. Milan, really close by. We had people that we could staff and none of us had to do any flying. We were just on trains, for the most part, a little bit of flying, but very small, short-haul flights. So that's something I mean, that's a hard thing to incorporate. But when you work with a place, thinking about how can I work with these same people again and do a subsequent project with those same people and then keep that in your mind at all times and always be looking for the next project with that locale, with those people? I find that really useful in terms of building this model.

Nassim [01:14:37] I was thinking, Darren, you could be labelled as a spy in Iran and then get arrested.

Darren [01:14:47] Haha. I'm not sure what you mean. Why would I be a spy? But I'm happy to take that. I'm listening.

Nassim [01:14:54] It was a joke. But yeah, because you were saying: "We work with kids and then later we're still connected. They grow up and then we hire them." It sounds really suspicious to our regime.

Darren [01:15:07] OK, OK.

Patrick [01:15:08] Ideologically shaping them from a young age too.

Darren [01:15:13] Our collaborators, we call them our operatives. We called them that for a while. It was on our website. We called them operatives.

Nassim [01:15:19] There we go. Operatives.

Patrick [01:15:23] I mean, that is something we think about. How with culturecapital we teach people how to play the game and then they have a deck and we say: "Hey, we'll play again one day." And the pandemic arrived shortly after the first inaugural tournament in Edmonton and there were scheduled plans to have weekend game nights as part of Edmonton has a pretty hoppin indie gaming scene. But still knowing that people who had competed in that tournament, we've called on later to say: "Hey, when you play this match against someone else?" And recognising that they entered into an experience, they learn something. It's like being part of a constructed language community where all of you speak Esperanto or Toki Pona and you're like: "OK, well, cool. Let's keep going because this community is going to grow as long as people keep learning the rules of the game." Milton and I and Laurel Green, another Canadian artist and the dramaturg on asses.masses, we co-created a game called FARCE, which is a role playing game that was part of CAPACOA conference in the fall. And similarly that borrows a lot from Dungeons and Dragons and the Quiet Year, but it's a game where like: Oh, OK, we know the rules. We've got six people who now can be game masters for this game, and when we do it again... One of us is in Buenos Aires, one of us is in Toronto, we'll be moving around.

But when we do it again, we have to do it in other languages. We'll have to train people in those languages. All of a sudden now there's 15 of us. So maybe taking a note from Darren about: How do you keep training people to be able to do the things and sharing the project that way. That's where the knowledge gets stored in the performing body.

Milton [01:17:17] Also, I would say, sustained in some ways? The exciting thing about Edmonton was that they had said they wanted to do those weekend game nights after we had left, which is when we started talking about the productness of culturecapital and the analogy of board games that Patrick was talking about at the top. In which it continues without us actually being there. So maybe to go back to the eventness of certain experiences that we're talking about, like whether or not say Haircuts by Children is about a specific event versus the stories that are told in the stories that continue and how it changes the culture around say approaching sexuality and age, for example, and how it might implant certain ideas and plant those seeds or leave some droppings for other people to pick up. I'm just curious then about aftercare and thinking about these kinds of works, especially as they inject themselves into a community. And then oftentimes it changes that community in some way or it has the possibility or the promise that it would.

Patrick [01:18:21] Can I also just add on that? Milton something I think that we've talked about is scale. What was weird for us about building culturecapital and asses.masses is that you can play them not on stage. I mean, they're games, they function, you could put them at a table, and that's a totally acceptable place to play them. But then we wanted to move to an event structure. The thing that remains is a fully functional experience in its own right. But what we do when we invite people into that process is often through this sort of heightened theatricalized, almost like e-sports context. But trying to build both at both scales. I guess I think about when someone says: "Oh, you know, a play text isn't really the play, you have to see it in performance." But we're trying to say: "Well, yeah, it's both. It is the real thing, and it's not the real thing." Our game is like: "Yeah play it around the dinner table, whatever." But what happens when we do that on stage? What does that extra thing that gets added by adding a kind of eventness to what otherwise might just be considered a product like a video game that is downloaded? There's a question there for us about navigating or transforming something that is perceived to be non-event into an event. The fact that that eventness is gone unless they want to stage their own on stage, which I guess anyone could do and they're like: "Yeah, come on over, let's set up the lights." Most technical directors are pretty enthusiastic about these games anyway, so they have full control over their lighting grids.

Lisa [01:20:05] That's interesting, just thinking about: What is performance? It brings us all the way back to that: What's performative? What constitutes an event? You could say, not to get semantic, but to people playing the game in their living room is an event, you know, so it's really a matter of really optics or semantics. With Tale of a Town, we think about the interview in the story mobile that itself is a micro performance that I'm engaging with and that, in a way, someone remembering for one moment about the community that was formed on their main street or that person that used to run that general store that brought so much to their life or, the place they shopped with their grandparents that's now been burned down. They're changed in a way because you've brought back this, this particular memory. And so when they exit onto that street, they're seeing that in a different way. So that micro performance has influenced them in some way. Whereas then when we bring all those stories together and we hear the collective community memory, all of the memories about that general store together, it then evokes your own memories about that place and that person. In our case it's, I digress, but following that story thread through and then... So the event of that thing happening, also for us, in that empty storefront amongst many empty storefronts. When someone goes back downtown to that main street the next day or the next week and goes by that place, there is an event

that has happened there. So their perspective of that, their experience of that main street is different. Where we do the performance, with whom, it really makes a big, big difference and hopefully, the work that we bring, the concepts, the process that we bring does leave a lasting impact, does change the way that we see something: see the seniors in our in our community or what we imagine is possible with a choir or all the different things, But really, an event could be anything and depending on the parameters it influences us, either in a smaller way or on a macro level.

Ryan [01:22:53] So we're in our last few minutes, and I thought maybe we could go around and just give one last...maybe a provocation for future questions and thoughts around process touring, a piece of advice, a threat, whatever you want, just to close us out.

Milton [01:23:18] I guess I can say, Patrick and I put together a very snazzy six circled Venn diagram, which is not by any means the ultimate or even correct perhaps, but it does set different ideas in place around whether or not something is performed by an artist or performed by not an artist. And if the content is provided by the artist or provided by the locals, some might say extracted from the locals in some way or developed with them. And then the other one, which is if there's no developments with the locals and it's just: Fly in and here's the show. Or it's a game that gets delivered or if there's development with locals and let's make this story thing together. So between those circles, we just mapped out a lot of the works that we've talked about today, as well as some other projects that are can be somewhat accepted or understood as a concept or process touring. This is a podcast. So it's audio. But if you ever want to get in touch with us and maybe we'll share it with you just because it was helpful for us to see the groupings and different schools of thought around what these kinds of shows could be or how they could be categorised... A previous email that Maiko sent... Like totally these categories could be separate or pulled apart. Or, they could be very different. But this is one particular afternoon thought on what process or concept touring could look like and how it can be understood in different arenas.

Patrick [01:24:48] Yep.

Ryan [01:24:53] Nassim, any final thoughts, questions, provocations for the future?

Nassim [01:25:01] I'd like to see if there is an emerging artist listening to this podcast. I hope you get inspired by all the beautiful things my colleagues have said. But I'd also like to add that it's sometimes a bit tricky when the intellectual discourse around art becomes bigger than the art pieces themselves. I tend to think that making art is very similar to making coffee. You demand a certain type of pressure. It should be distributed. Do you need good seed? Some experience, some patience, and then it very organically, effortlessly, and naturally will turn into something very delicious. So it's good to get inspired if you're an artist or if you're a producer but I am not a big fan of putting too much pressure on a product to basically get some coffee out of it. So all these discussions about concept touring seems to be more trendy now, which is very nice, but also it takes time. We shouldn't be like: "Let's go, do you know tons of these type of works" and change the art scene. Thank you.

Patrick [01:26:25] Maybe to follow up on my thought is that a lot of these works.. I like to think about my metaphor for art-making is not as much coffee, but telescopes. There's a number of lenses that get put together and the light gets to shine through and there's the clarity of what you see through those lenses and those lenses are, who you are, where you come from, where it's happening, who's working with you. And you can either have more or less clarity depending on the lenses that you have. And sometimes you're missing a lens. And so you need to find someone or something that could be material that is added into the telescope to be able to see something that we cannot see right now. I

feel like a lot of the works that this group makes, our works that have this process touring model they also have a very clear picture on something that's happening in the world. And the fact that they are transposeable is because that thing that's happening is able to be seen or needs to be seen in all these different places. Something like that. Darren, I think your social action puncture theories around what you're doing with All the Sex, similarly, the question of how sexuality and old age are not being talked about in these contexts, there's a lens that that show provides on and that provides us with. And Nassim maybe, at the beginning of White Rabbit Red Rabbit, your conditions under which you were operating as an artist in Iran, that is a very specific lens that that show was allowing us to see around how theatre can be made. And so I think about that. We've talked a bit about how we need to have a great concept for... Lisa, so you were saying for the funders but a lot of the times, at least in Canada, the funders, they're us, right? It's people like us who are sitting on the juries who are making those decisions. I think from my experience of being in those positions, it's those lenses about how. That's what I look for when I'm in those jury positions. "What are the lenses that are being brought together to have that conversation?" And so if it's touring and if it's going to go somewhere and it's just assuming that English is going to be what it's going to be in, there's a missed opportunity for a lens to be applied there so that we can see, well, how is English happening in that space? Do they want it to be happening there? Is it worth celebrating? Is it worth rejecting? Is it worth criticising? Is it more complex? And so I guess my penitent is to really fold together the elements that something can be mobile that could go somewhere with the themes itself. The fact that delegated labour is a big part of this kind of work for me means that I think the work I want to make uses this form will never not have some question about labour, always, because somewhat, I'm asking someone else to do something far away for me that necessarily is going to have a conversation for me about that subject matter, and I would like the work to speak to that. If it's in English, it's going to talk about that or it's going to grapple with the conditions under which it's happening. So that's all ways of saying that process touring and process production has themes and in and of itself that are maybe interesting to explore that as we start to do more of it will discover what conversations it can bring up that are unique unto itself. Thanks.

Ryan [01:30:10] Darren, Maiko, any last words?

Darren [01:30:14] I just want to take one final look under the hood in terms of very practical sort of questions, which is developing this kind of work. In my experience, the thing is that it takes a long, long time - four years - to develop the thing that then goes the process that goes on the road. And then once the process is heading out on the road, it only really comes into its own over after being presented for a couple of years to be honest with you. And presenters have to accept their early iterations may look very different than the iteration two years down the road and not to be freaked out a little bit by that. But it takes a long time, and it's a slow process. It's a slow process to develop a process that then can be moved from spot to spot because you learn. You have to learn things by doing it. It's not doing it in a new situation again and again. So I think that's sort of an important practical thing to note. And then the final thing I just want to say is that the Mammalian is developing a professional development workshop to share our skills in process production and touring. So if anybody's interested, just get in touch with me. I'm not sure when we're going to do it just yet, but once we get it and we'll do it in Zoom so that people can come from all over the place. So people who are interested, get in touch and we'll sort out a time that we can start to run this thing out. But thanks, it's been great talking to everybody and great meeting those that I didn't know.

Ryan [01:31:44] Maiko, Lisa?

Maiko [01:31:44] Yeah, as I was listening to these last bits, I was just reflecting on my own desperate need to share process with other places. I think especially in this moment where it's felt really, in a lot of ways this has been great, but people have felt really hyper-local or hyper locked into a place. I think the importance of... the desire to want to stay connected to international conversations or those opportunities to share process and work with other places so that it changes you. We were talking a lot about how a work can change a community or an audience. But also, I think the need for the artists themselves to embrace that change and keep throwing that into the cooker so that it comes out in different ways. I was just thinking about that. International conversations have really kept me afloat during this time. So I think the importance of that. Just reflecting on it inside of this conversation, and yes, it was really nice to talk to. Everybody thinks.

Ryan [01:32:59] And, Lisa, any last thoughts?

Lisa [01:33:02] Yeah, it was so amazing to be part of this and I think more about what we leave behind and just how much I miss theatre, how it feels like a conversation right now and not a thing and looking forward to it being a thing again and thinking about how important it is to create an experience. Really were touring ideas and were touring stories, but really were touring an experience. And to really focus on what's the experience of the artists? What's the experience of the audience? Of the participants? Of the performer? Of the community? Because it's the experience that we remember when we tour these concepts or these products. So I would say that's definitely something that I miss and that I look forward to experiencing again.

Ryan [01:34:05] Awesome. So making the work in anew in each location for the sake of the jungle, the car design, so it doesn't crash. Thank you so much to Darren O'Donnell: artistic and founding director of Mammalian Diving Reflex. Lisa Marie Diliberto: artistic director of Theatre District and founding artistic director of FiXT POiNT. Maiko Yamamoto: co-artistic director of Theatre replacement. Patrick Blinken: one half of guilty by association, co-creator of culturecapital and co-founder archivist for VIDEOKen. Milton Lim: co-artistic director of Hong Kong exiled, artistic associate with Theatre Conspiracy, co-creator of culturecapital and co-founder/ Archivist of VIDEOKen. And Nassim Soleimanpour: playwright and artistic director of Nassim Soleimanpour Productions. Thank you all so much for being with us today. Thanks.