

PuSh International Performing Arts Festival

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Panel on Process Curatorial Perspectives

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Panelists:

Martine Dennewald

Erin Boberg - Doughton

Quito Tembe

Fernando Zugno

Daniel Blanga Gubbay

Note: This is a transcription of a conversation. We have slightly adapted it to make it easier to read. There will likely be some errors.

Gabrielle [00:00:00] So welcome, listeners, thank you for joining us. My name is Gabrielle Martin and I'm the director of programming at the Push Festival, working as part of the collaborative leadership team. I'm here moderating this panel discussion today on new curatorial perspectives supporting artistic practice. And this panel brings together performance curators and presenters who are leading initiatives and supporting artistic practice and the development of new work. From establishing co-production networks to creating hubs of exchange; from hosting residencies and taking on production risk to sharing curation and more. I am absolutely honored to be here with a number of speakers who have agreed to join me today. Martine Dennewald from Festival Trans Amerique in Canada, Quito Tembe from the International Contemporary Dance Platform KINANI in Mozambique. Erin Boberg from the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art in the US. Daniel Blanga Gubbay from KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS in Belgium and Fernando Zugno from Porto Alegre em Cena in Brazil. So welcome everyone. Thank you so much for joining me. Just to get us started, I think it would be great to go around and if everyone can introduce yourselves and the festival or festivals you have worked within. You can take a few minutes to just give us a better idea of who you are before we jump into the conversation. I'll pass it to Martine to start and then you can pass it along.

Martine [00:01:29] Thank you so much for having me, Gabrielle. I'm delighted to be at PuSh with you. I'm in Kanienkehaka at the moment, a place also known as the colonial name of Montreal; the unceded territory of the Kahnawake nation. I work for Festival TransAmeriques or FTA. I'm the co-artistic director together with Jessie Mill. Before that, I spent six years running a festival in Germany called Festival Theaterformen.

Quito [00:02:01] Hello, my name is Quito Tembe, and I speak from Mozambique, Maputo specifically. I'm artistic director of the KINANI Festival. As you say, platform international contemporary dance focused on this line of the platform. And also in the moment I'm a jury member of Danse L'Afrique Dance. It's an African festival tournament in different countries and continents. Also now a curator of Tanzmesse in Germany. I'm very glad to be on this endorsed platform. But basically, I'm focused to develop the dance network and the circuits of the region. Talking about southern Africa specifically. Thank you so much.

Daniel [00:03:17] My name is Daniel Blanga Gubbay, and I work in Brussels, in Belgium, where I co-direct KUNSTENFESTIVALDESARTS. Together with Dries Douibi. We form the artistic direction. It's a yearly festival in Brussels that happens in the month of May. It's focused not only on creation, accompanying artists as well on premiering new works. Trying to establish a frame for new works to nurture and be shared with an audience.

Fernando [00:03:57] I am Fernando Zugno and I am so glad to be here sharing this time and this conversation with you. I am the general director of the Porto Alegre em Cena festival. An important, known festival, for 28 years it's been happening in the south of Brazil. Porto Alegre is the city exactly in the middle between Buenos Aires - which is the capital city of Argentina, a very important cultural city in South America - and São Paulo, also another very important city in South America, financially and culturally. The festival was created 28 years ago to develop the culture in this region and in this area, close to Uruguay and Argentina and to Brazil. And also to put the city on the way on the tour of important companies around the world and create an identity. I have been working for the festival for 16 years and I'm directing it for the past six years or so. There's a lot that we could change, the festival has to look into this relationship with South America generally and the whole history with the countries that we have been sharing important relationships with.

Erin [00:05:31] My name is Erin Boberg Doughton. I'm here on the land of the Chinook, Clackamas, Tualatin Kalapuya and many other indigenous people known as Portland, Oregon. I work for PICA, the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art, where we have the TBA Time Based Art festival in September. I'm one of three co-artistic directors. I work with Roya Amirsoleymani and Kristan Kennedy here in Portland, and our team has been together for about five years as co-artistic directors, but we all worked for the organization in different capacities, long before that. I'm very happy to be with all of you in this conversation.

Gabrielle [00:06:20] Thank you for those introductions. Just to get us started, the question I'm interested in starting us off with is: What do you see as your responsibilities as a curator or presenter? And I will just pass it to Daniel to start.

Daniel [00:06:37] To start, for me, it's always an interesting reflection. I was very happy to share with all you because there's so much knowledge here around the conversation we are having. Somehow, for me, it's always a reflection that doesn't happen as a kind of general reflection, but more that it is embedded in the project or the institution you work for. Or this is how I pursued it in my path. That somehow we are always at the service of the institutions that we can modify / evolve. How we also have specific missions. The act of creating a program doesn't have the void or an empty page, but more starting as well from what is this interesting tension between the heritage of the institution. Or sometimes the reason why we are creating something at the same time we're what do we want to change and how to move it forward? I like to remind all of this to myself because somehow it's neither to stick to what already exists, but nor to think that curating a response simply to your desire or taste. Which would also be a completely misperception of what the idea of curating might be because somehow we are serving a community or we are serving the institutions we are working for. So in the specific case of Kunstenfestivaldesarts if I take the example of an institution where I'm working at the moment. It was very clear for me that on the one side, it brings together these two poles of a complete freedom and at the same time, some limitations. Because on the one side, we are working in Brussels and we're a festival that is funded by the two main linguistic communities of the city. French speaking and Flemish, we are financed by two communities. We have to, for example, respect a certain balance between the local artists that we produce. We need to keep a kind of balance between the amount of French speaking and Flemish art that we, for example, support every year. I find that

this doesn't have to be a taboo in the system. We always create with limitations: Okay, how many international projects? How many local projects? What is our role in respect to the local community? What is the mission of the festival? The parameters that exist within an institution. It's something that's - for me - always interesting to keep in mind. But then at the same time, if we take Kunstenfestivaldesarts it is also an institution that gives a lot of freedom and pleasure to work with because somehow we have the possibility to invest in lots of new works. We do not have a venue but we collaborate with 20-25 different venues in the city. In terms of scale of the project, we have the possibility to have very big projects for very big venues, but also very intimate and smaller. And we have the possibility or the mission of the festival is also to support artists based in very many different regions in the world and to support these projects to be created and presented in Brussels as a premier. All these parameters, just to respond, that somehow for me, there is not one way of doing it, but the most interesting way has always been to understand: What are the parameters we have to respect. In order to understand, how can I shift forward as well, either in the institution or also the possibility of creating or to serve the field in a new way or in a different way that was not there yesterday, but never to start from scratch.

Martine [00:10:42] I really like what you said, Daniel, about shifting the parameters and using the history of the institution in order to move forwards in certain ways. And it let me think that - although we have all these responsibilities of serving audiences and artists and communities and so on - in a certain way, we also choose who we are accountable to and we can actively choose to bring in people we're accountable to that we haven't been accountable to before. In the history of FTA that would be indigenous artists, indigenous audiences. That is something that actively shifts the parameters of our work. At the beginning of my career, I'd go like: I'm responsible to the institution, I need to keep this institution running. I need to create an amazing event every summer. And I started to think that my responsibility is in fact, a lot more towards people. The moment you shift from the institution towards people, you shift from what it is you're doing to how you're doing it. How you're working, what kind of temporality you think is important in your work. Is it always about the one summer event or is it about something longer that you're constructing? Is it about co-directing rather than taking individual decisions and so on? So shifting parameters is a good point, I think.

Quito [00:12:12] For us, this is not a shift, parameters is to introduce new parameters because it degrades in Africa and specifically in our country. It's more thinking about different layers and different parts to fill out. It's not just what we think that's ideal for what we see as contemporary dance today, but we should think about who and what we serve. What we want to approach for the local institutes, for the government or for the event, for the dance community. What we want to approach. For us to make a curator, it's first: open the doors. What you want to open the doors to, the doors to give the younger generation, that dance community opportunities to be part of the network of the dance scene. Even the companies that we invite, it's also thinking about that: What international company can give us, not just a great performance, but a great door for an exchange program and the interaction program with the local dance community. It's more to introduce new, different ways to be in the arts scene because contemporary dance for us is a new expression. So for us, we have a new way to be professional in the arts, it's more to introduce and more to show the different layers and present arts that respond to that. Sometimes we bring a piece that is not personal. I can say that it's a nice piece, but we should address the local thinker to see: Look, we want to go to this level, but we are starting in that direction. We have two different layers to field. So that's why it's very intensive. This shift of parameters for us is more to introduce new parameters for the local scene.

Gabrielle [00:15:01] Right, and I guess an interesting point to make is about the context. My understanding is that Quito, you are the founder of Kinani, whereas I think everybody else here is

working within an institution not existing before they joined. Is that true for you, Erin? Were you a co-founder at Pica?

Erin [00:15:19] Can you hear me okay? Yeah. I wasn't a co-founder, but I was a volunteer very early in the founding of the organization, so I have been around, but I've grown into this role and I've worked with several artistic directors before coming into this role. So I do have a perspective of coming into the organization as a young artist and as a student. And who I see as one of our core audiences. I really responded to what you were saying Quito about as we invite national and international artists bringing them there for the purpose of connection and exchange with the local artists. Often when I'm thinking about all of the artists we could invite, I might even be thinking of just like a handful of local artists working in our community and what the impact will be on them getting to meet that visiting artist and vice versa as a really key reason for choosing that work.

Fernando [00:16:38] Yes. Well, for me, it was quite tricky. Also, the challenge was that I started working for a festival that had already a big impact in the city. And the good thing is that I started working in the festival, also with the former director that founded the festival. I could learn a lot with him and from him. How to do the program and how to connect with the City Hall, because it's important to say that the festival belongs to the city hall. So it's the municipal festival. Which in Brazil is also not so usual, it used to be much more, many public festivals have stopped because of financial and governmental support. And what we have now is very new and also important independent festivals. So my responsibility and challenge was actually to understand the importance of being in charge of this public festival and tried talking to communicate with the whole community of Porto Alegre. And trying to the artist and the audience that has started following the festival from the very beginning, and also to call the attention of new audiences. This was also a challenge, but also the difference of people that we have in a city populated with a million and five hundred thousand inhabitants. Most of the people live outside of the city center and couldn't afford to go buy a ticket to go to the city. Not even getting the public transportation to go to the city if you get them tickets for free. We also think about programs to bring to these communities - to the suburbs of the south of the city - shows. But also give them the opportunity to come to the city centers and to the public houses, the cultural centers to see the performance there. So to keep doing this work, but also be attached and look into new perspectives, newest tactics and feel the movement of the country itself and therefore try to think of an international program. But also a local program that could have a dialogue with this movement and the changes of the whole world, but especially from Brazil. That was one of our biggest, I guess, responsibilities and challenges. In the past five years, Brazil has been changing a lot and I took part in doing the program of the festival in this moment of change, we had our first woman president that was impeached through a very complicated (let's put it like that) movement by politicians. And then these men got in office again, and then we managed in the very complicated situation here to elect this far right president. Which has a very big impact on the whole culture of any artist production of the country. It couldn't not be disposed like an ethical matter for a voter to look into that and to these changes and understand the history and the culture of this country. This very rich and diverse community that we have here. To also think about this program with African artists that European artists and South American artists, but it was a very, very big challenge for us and always trying to look into this direction.

Gabrielle [00:21:04] It's interesting to hear what's on your minds in terms of how you're thinking about your responsibilities as curators and presenters. It starts to make me really want to know the how: How you're addressing those things. But first, I want to go back. Martine, you'd spoken about how over the course of your career, your work, you've shifted from seeing your responsibilities to the institution and more to the people, to the various audiences, looking at who those audiences are. I'm curious for

all of you, how your sense of your responsibilities have shifted over your careers as curators and presenters and or how your approach to your practice in this role has changed over the years.

Erin [00:21:52] Well, maybe I can respond. We have to think... the last two years were very different than any years before, so it's hard to differentiate what kinds of changes were already happening, you know, in our organization and our culture. Some of those things, I think, were really revealed by the pandemic. Some of those changes and some of those urgent needs to change maybe became more pressing or more transparent during that time. But one of the things we really thought about was our responsibility to support artists in their creation of the work through residencies, through development, through support for artists. Not just for the moment of presentation in a public way, but in a more ongoing way. What kind of resources do artists need? And I know that we're all coming from very different countries and contexts. But in our case, we do have a year-round program with the official exhibitions, residencies, performances year-round as well as the festival and in the two years when our ability to gather people was very limited, we really shifted to supporting the artists and the creation of the work, which is, I think, something they really needed anyway. Something that our organization has always done. But we were able to focus a little bit more. Even to support artists working in our community who may have no public facing outcome to the work but really just need that time together. Or even for artists and activists to use our resources and our facility to work on mutual aid projects, to work on activist projects. Turning our kitchen, our facility into really a hub site for those kinds of activities that are connected, you know, to our society and our community, but may not result in a performance on a stage. It's kind of hard to tell that story sometimes because those things may happen behind a closed door with a group of people. I really think the question of "Who is the work for?" has really become larger in our minds. I think maybe 10 years ago, we were concerned a lot more like: Are we selling tickets? Can we have a performance that's going to bring 400, 500, 800 people together in this theater? There were these metrics around Who is this for? It's for this ticket-buying-audience. We have really shifted, out of necessity, but also out of values, almost all of our shows now are free. We're sliding scale. We're thinking about... sometimes it's a work that's only for other black artists or only for an indigenous circle. And those programs are valuable, too, even if they don't have a visible outcome for a general public, it's something that is important for us to be supporting. Those are some of the things we've been shifting.

Daniel [00:25:54] For us, it was also working in a different direction on the one side. I completely agree with Erin on how the two last year are maybe exceptions within the time frame of our working for an institution. But indeed, I think for us... Very often I have an impression that we are working simultaneously on shaping a program and shaping the institution itself and what is the goal of the institution. And that these two words can no longer be completely separated. Somehow in the past it very often happens, at least the European context where I'm currently working, where a lot of institutions were working on the program. But at the same time, nothing was shifting on the level of the structure of the institution. When I'm speaking about the structure, I think for us it was a kind of crucial and fundamental question. The first one was: For who we are doing the festival? I think that this is a crucial question. And for an institution such as a Kunstenfestivaldesarts that is not only directed towards the audience, but also towards partnering institutions with whom we create some of the projects. It was also a question about who would we want to partner with in a city like Brussels. What is the very problematic hierarchy that exists within Brussels about contemporary art venues and other venues who are also producing culture but are not recognized to be part of this network? I think that one part was: "for whom" we are doing it, but even more than "for whom" which was "with whom". Not so much that you're not operating for someone, or that if you're operating for someone without involving someone, you are doing it against them and not for somehow. And somehow it was happening a lot in acknowledging the work that was already done by institutions in Brussels trying to partner, but also reflecting about who is part of the team. Kunstenfestivaldesarts is always a complex

reflection for some institutions. even the reflection or just a kind of ferocity between the audience of a festival and team of a festival that somehow the team has to represent the demography of the city that you want to reach, this connection. And in speaking specifically about the Western European context, where there are a lot of very progressive institutions that have, for example, an all white team who are working, trying to have a lot of audience engagement, et cetera. Speaking about diversity, speaking about a new perspective, et cetera. But at the same time, if you look at the core of hardware of the institution, there's a disconnection. This work was something that, for Dries and myself, was also an active reflection on the long term as well. To address that this could not be silenced, that somehow there would be a hypercritical attitude in working only towards the program without working on: How do we work together? With whom do we work? What is the image of the institution as well? This is one part, I'll intersect briefly on the second part, which is still on the mission of the festival, which is also to accompany artists in creating new works. I think we tried as well to understand how the festival - which as I was mentioning before, doesn't have its venue, so it's it's a lot about collaboration and it's a very flexible structure - how we try to always address the question: How can we make a difference in allowing artists to create projects that would not be possible otherwise? That would not be possible in a season, for example, a theater season, because of how they may have very unconventional formats. That are almost invisible or super long projects or gigantic and super small. I have the impression that this reflection about how to give the artists the possibility to think outside the format... usually, it's easier to present in the context of the performing art context, that was something that for Dries and myself was very interesting as a starting point for the conversations. How can we still play a role in not reducing everything to the existing format. How to still grant the artists the possibility to work in projects that are what we define as "undomesticated", that somehow exist outside the format that we already know.

Fernando [00:31:14] Can I jump in? This is actually tricky, this idea that we don't try to do a festival... Well, it is for the audience, especially this festival, the public festival, we do it for the audience of Porto Alegre and outside the city and many visitors that come to the city during the festival. But it's also trying to find and bring new discussions, perspectives and aesthetics to the city to create... to provoke the audience, to think and agree or disagree and therefore create a deeper discussion during the meeting, after the shows, before the show. And the best way... I still try to find the best programming that is ethical and at the same time shows the city that it can also bring an identity with our community, with Brazil, with the south of Brazil. To do this... is not actually bringing to Porto Alegre what I think people will like, but what I think is important for people to discuss. Of course, I'm always in touch with so many other curators and programmers and people that work with me, industry partners from different cities in Brazil trying to understand and to be sensitive to all this. Trying to make the best programs possible. We've been suffocated in South America, I think all over the world, but specifically - I think - in South America and Brazil with these political situations that I mentioned before. We've been struggling so much to continue doing the festivals, as I said, many public festivals are not happening anymore. Some independent festivals are also not happening anymore and then with the pandemic, it was even worse. We're struggling to do these festivals and somehow it doesn't fit anymore. Even if we had the money, it wouldn't fit anymore. To bring such big, huge companies and spend an enormous amount of money to bring one company to Porto Alegre, for example. Then the idea of these residencies has been so important and has been developing so many big and important works. Instead of bringing the whole company to the city, we are experimenting, bringing the creator, one director or two directors and artists from these companies to come to Porto Alegre and stay for a longer time, 10 days, two weeks to develop during this period the work with our local artists and create a new work that would speak more with the city. It's more sustainable in terms of what they leave in the city, as the artistic project. And experience that they have, that they developed with the local artists. And also in terms of traveling because we have been also discussing so much of this whole CO2 emissions. It also reduces all that, the amount of people traveling, and staying longer in

the city and leaving a deeper mark here. So this is something that we are doing that is very, very interesting. Nice and important creations are coming out of that.

Gabrielle [00:35:33] Thank you. Yeah, I'm hearing that responsibilities are shifting in the sense that you're all in positions of leadership. So depending on the political context or your work out in the world and your exposure to what's happening in the world and the responsibilities in your practice shift. It's an evolving thing. I'm interested in the how. How those responsibilities are realized or how you address those responsibilities in a concrete way through your work. I'm hearing you all start to speak to these things. It was interesting, Danielle, when you were talking about how - in response to the responsibility that you have to different communities within the city - diversifying the team within the institution itself is one way, one example of how you have been able to respond to that responsibility. I'm curious, with all of you, to hear a little bit more about the example. Maybe we can start with Quito. I'd love to hear you speak more specifically about how you're creating these opportunities for exchange between visiting artists and local artists, or if you'd like to go into another example.

Quito [00:37:05] Yeah, I would like to go a little bit in the back of our works. And also to complement what's being addressed by Daniel. I think it's very important when we ask these questions. We're doing this festival for who? And for us, our big challenge in the beginning, doing a festival in Maputo and our context: We're doing it for who? In the first editions, we had a real struggle to accept that we are doing a festival, but the festival actually is addressed to the international audience and we create such an elite of art thinkers or art appreciator of the country. So it is a big discussion for us: How we can shift this paradox? How we can make this festival address the local community? So to encourage that we create a deal. Deals with schools. All the schools they've got this big auditorium for kids to play gymnastic. And we have got a huge amount of our companies and dancers without a space for years. So we make this deal with those public schools to use these auditoriums after school periods: the condition to open one day per week to rehearse for this company is to talk with the kids of those schools. We have got around six compounds and different schools and all the week they go during the school times, to the open areas, they rehearse and the kids ask: What is that? What is this movement? Why do you act like a crazy? Why you use these songs? Why are you dressed like this? So even for those artists and for those, choreographers is be a challenge for them to speak about their work, to speak about why they do what they do. What it is contemporary dance? Those kind of simple questions that allow the young choreographers to speak about it and think about it before open the mouth. Think about how I can address to those kids what I'm doing. So we get the response of followers of those artists. So when we know, with the school, that we are doing the festival and this artist, who will be six months or four months in your school, is going to present on this date etc. For kids of this school, it's half off of the tickets, or for free. So we start our journey to build a really... a very, very brave local audience through this project. Also, to solve the problem of no studios for the local dancers. So it's two problems we address at the same time. Now we have a response for the artists that say: "OK, we want to present, but we don't have a space to rehearse and we don't have the conditions for rehearse." And also allow them to start to be owners of what they are doing. To challenge them: speak every week about their problems. So this is one of our great moments to start to build a platform. First of all, it belongs to the local scene, to the local audience. I'm proud to say that today we no longer discuss creating a new audience or creating the audience. It's more how we multiply this audience, how we can go a bit more out of our comfort zone to the local communities. With live performance, ways to introduce this new way to express the choreographic arts scene. And after we create this new generation who want to do dance and they dance and they do all the prep and they come to the festival, they present and then they go home waiting for the next edition to be presented themselves. And then we create another problem: What do they do after the festival? Where do they present after the festival? So we start to shift a little bit to start to internationalise the festival.

To start to talk, to address other festivals, other directors - like you guys - to say: Look, we've got young people trying to do things here on the continent and we put them together with one platform. And we're trying to give workshops of technical light designers, scenographers and stuff like that to put in a minimum condition that you guys can see and can think about something. So this is the way how we can go, with all this, create space and to start to open the markets for those young artists. So our work. it constantly shifts. From time to time. Sorry, I take longer.

Gabrielle [00:43:52] Thank you. It gives us a much better idea. It's great to hear a bit more about Kanani and how you actually... What the practice is. Martine, I'm curious if you would speak to one of the initiatives that you've taken that you've felt has had the greatest impact in supporting artistic practice or the development of new work.

Martine [00:44:15] I'm not sure I can tell myself what has had the greatest impact, so maybe we'll put that aside. What I can tell you is that with the current emergency, FTA has set up a system of small grants for artists. So that's not my invention and all. That's something that Martin Faucher, Jesse's and my predecessor put in place two years ago at the height of the pandemic. This is basically just an amount of money that otherwise would have gone into international travel for artists, which wasn't possible in Canada in the last two years. That was put into small grants- anything between 5000 and 12,000 dollars for artists to use for research, for rehearsals, for renting studio space, paying conservatories, paying themselves with no outcome attached. Although all these people are artists we're very much interested in and people whose work we follow, it's not attached to a public presentation or necessarily a presentation at the festival at all. This was called Respiration, and it's been going on for two years now. Another project that has also had a massive impact and that I can take no credit for at all because it's been in place before my time, is something called Clinique Dramaturgique. I don't know if everybody's familiar with this. I'll just describe it briefly because it's been quite successful in that it has been exported to different theaters and festivals. And it's an easy model really to replicate. Clinique Dramaturgique or Dramaturgy Clinics means that we bring together a team of five or six dramaturgs in the German sense of the word, so they're not playwrights, they are people who advise creators, advise choreographers or directors. They'll be at the festival and they offer consultations. And as a local artist...very often their international dramaturgs from different countries. And as a local artist, you can sign up and describe the problem that you have - scene three or act four of your play or with a particular movement that you're working on or character development or the conceptual framework of your play or your piece or your choreography and you can find help. The beautiful thing is that the conversations that start a Clinique Dramaturgique - which has been running since 2017 - these conversations go on and people stay in touch. There is a real network of clinicians, as we call them, and people who have been working with them that continues to spread and develop.

Erin [00:47:04] That's such an inspiring program. Thank you. I think, in looking back at the past two years, the activity that we've had in supporting artists, I think one thing that is really missing is the opportunity for them to connect with our national and international colleagues. I think a step I might want to take a little bit more is working on cultivating those relationships that are one-on-one or in really small groups. Not thinking about an audience of 500, but what is a group of - here we are six people. What's the conversation that we can have? And making that transparent through a podcast. Really valuing the small, I think, is something that has come out. When we have a big festival, I'm inspired to hear about your budget, that you were able to reallocate it to unrestricted grants for artists. To be honest, in our organization, we've really taken the budget that we would have spent on travel and housing and big productions and just used it to relieve ourselves of the expectation of earning ticket income. When we look at our budget for this year, it's like: Well, there is \$200,000 that we're not going to earn and there's \$200,000 that we're not going to spend. And there it is. I think our task now

is, as we're looking towards the future where we hope we can be getting back to something more like a normal festival. How are we going to keep the values of not relying so much on that earned income? And as Quito was saying, or maybe it was Fernando... The ecological impact of bringing so many flights... financial and ecological, as we grow back into maybe having larger groups how can we maintain that balance? I think it does have to do with the length of travel. If somebody is going to come here really making that deep connection and not so much a fly-in and fly-out. I'm getting lots of ideas and inspiration from the other folks on this panel. So thank you.

Daniel [00:49:57] So I think this for us...if you just like to start from it from a specific example. This is something that happened before the pandemic, but we try to see... And this is very much connected with what I've been saying before, of trying to support artists in other formats... The festival itself was so much focused on the projects, on stage projects, and we understood at a certain moment that for many artists... there was a shift happening in the field in considering the transmission of practice or transmission of knowledge as an artistic gesture in itself, as a practice. We've come from the pedagogical turn of just inventing schools, inventing projects and not to consider these as workshops that would exist at the margin of the artistic practice, but at the core of the artistic practice. At a certain moment we understood that it was important for us as a creation festival to listen as well to the needs that were coming from the field. Or part of it that we were reaching out. This is where we created a new part of the festival, which is called the preschool. We already had a conversation with Gabrielle about it. It was this experimental part where we wanted to produce not only projects, but practices that could be shared with the larger audience. Where artists were somehow opening up temporary schools where knowledge was shared via an artistic practice. This was really something that emerged from something that we felt was a need for the artistic field in recentering this shift from project to practice at the core of the idea of production. That somehow you do not always need to produce the project, but you can also produce an ongoing practice that happens in a different way than the usual way in which stage production works. And this is something that we started already in 2019, and then we went on somehow consistently in trying to understand, even during the pandemic, how we could support this idea of sharing knowledge as an artistic practice, as a festival. It has been for us one of the most exciting projects to create, mainly because it was existing before, it was really done in conversation with artists. So trying to understand how to design this in a way that would serve the field and at the same time would serve the audience that somehow would come to experience this. But in this case, I have to say that the major change was that it demanded as well [short audio failure] what we used to do before regular projects that happened on stage. So it was a very interesting exercise also with the team in understanding how our work has to be designed. Starting from the artistic projects that we are accompanying. How all the different elements of our work have to be at the service of a project that we can share with an audience. And then there was one other element that I wanted to share, responding as well to these super interesting elements that Martine and Erin were sharing. This is more specific to the pandemic where we, Gabrielle as you were saying, understood that the main problem with the pandemic for the local artists besides the whole economy - it was completely disrupted - not having the possibility to present, as it was a very strong feeling of isolation. If we take, for example, the context of Brussels. Brussels is very often described as a kind of equal system of artists working together, collaborating in an informal way, a lot of people establishing these networks. We understood that for many artists, this was very... was affecting a lot of practice, the fact that when theaters were open to rehearse, artists were very often alone or in small configuration or did not have the possibility to share this with other artists. And that - as we all know - one of the greatest and more exciting things in artistic creation is this feeling of being completely deterritorialized from what you are doing because you have conversations with other artists who are doing something completely different but then at the same time, this conversation opens up a completely new field in the works. And so we created the last frame of the festival. We created the kind of project which is titled The School of Contamination, and it was the idea of a

collective residency in the frame of the festival. One of the venues where usually we have the festival and it has several spaces, we decided not to present any projects there, but to dedicate the whole month to residencies. So there were five different artists working in different spaces, having communal moments of discussions that were not meant to collaborate firstly, but just for the pleasure of being a neighbor while working on artistic projects. Trying to also remind - we were in the middle of the pandemic - that while having to be super attentive to the risk of contamination, we also have to remember the positive value of contamination as something that is vital and crucial for an artistic field. That we cannot work in a bubble or knowing already what we know, what we want to achieve. But cross-pollination and contamination is an essential element of an artistic field.

Fernando [00:57:15] Well, I think there's so many nice and beautiful things that are being said here and what comes to my mind, to our perspective here, from Porto Alegre em Cena and these past five, six editions that we've done with all this political changes that happened, especially between 2015 and 2018/19. Of course, it's still vibrating, especially when the pandemic... As I said before, we wanted to understand more about our history, the Brazilian history, the Brazilian people and how we came to this point. Then I suddenly started looking more into programs and to artists that were thinking and researching from the African diasporas to Brazil and to South America, the whole colonization system and movement and of course, movements that were happening inside South America and especially the perspectives of our Indigenous peoples. And maybe this was one of the biggest impacts that we found out: to actually bring it, to put out first the call for the perspectives of black artists and Indigenous artists also. So to really have this shift of perspectives and having them talking about themselves occupying these spaces that have always been occupied by usually the elite, as audience elite and also the elite of artists. So to have these Indigenous artists, performing artists and black artists on these very important stages, bourgeois stages in the city was something that, to the audience of this festival, this is also a traditional festival in the Brazilian culture. So this was something very, very, very nice that we've been creating this movement and provoking the people, the audience, other artists, local artists. And this idea of the residencies, as I said before, I really think that the power of these deep meetings and relations about foreign artists and local artists to try to bring new ideas from different artists from all over the world to exchange with the local artists and try to... I think for both parts it is very, very important to leave these encounters with deeper experience and with better experience. We got in touch with Cease Wyss and Kamala Todd, two Indigenous artists from the region of Vancouver in Canada to try to connect. Because I met them and I had discussions with them, it was so beautiful to see their perspectives and so many connections that we could link to the perspectives of Indigenous people here in the south of Brazil. So they're completely different places, completely different climate, but also there is something there that we can find out. For them to connect, for both artists from the North Pacific and from the south of Brazil, and from Brazil generally would be very rich. But for the audience, people could see what would come out of these meetings with them, I think would be something that's very powerful. So this is something that we're always trying to do, to connect people. What I was going to also say: I think it was really, really beautiful that came with the pandemic. It was to try to do the festival anyways. To have the festival happening and to hire artists and productions, and to maintain this whole chain of the culture and artistic workers. We were talking also to many people to see what would be the best thing to do. So we started talking to many artists and they were developing works, site-specific works to do outside: in the streets, in parks and plazas, in many, many different places, with projections and important monuments and buildings in the city. This was something that last year in 2021 we did, and it was so, so beautiful to see. We had a little bit of the audience going to the theater again. It was the first time that people went back to the theater in Porto Alegre. But going outside and bringing art to the public spaces for those who would maybe never go to the theater and never go to a museum or a gallery, to bring this outside and put art in the streets and in these public monuments, it was something that was

also very... I think it dressed up the city with arts and colour and movement. I think it brought a little bit back of this atmosphere that festivals actually do with cities and that we are missing.

Gabrielle [01:03:30] Thank you. Yeah, it's inspiring to hear about. I know these are just a few of the things that all of you are doing within your respective festivals. I think something that came up, that Daniel and Fernando you spoke to, is creating the opportunity for creation and process and the presentation of work that is new, supporting the creation, which I'm sure more of you are doing as well. But that's not necessarily what is done across the board when it comes to festivals and presenters. A lot are presenting work that they've seen in its full product. I think that's interesting and well, that's really a lot of what this conversation is about. The ways in which you are engaged and in other stages of the process and stimulating that. My question is: As we start to come to the culmination of this conversation is: When it comes to stimulating opportunities for exchange and supporting artistic practice, what do you find is missing? What's next for you within your festivals? Or what are you thinking about in terms of next initiatives or furthering the current initiatives? And/or what are you questioning for yourselves in terms of how to respond to your responsibilities? And maybe Martine?

Martine [01:05:02] Where is support missing most? It's a difficult question to answer. One thing that we've realized, most recently here in Quebec, is that, well, the kind of support that's missing is not only financial support, but a kind of political will in that theaters were closed here very recently and they will reopen on the 7th of February. That was a really painful moment for the artistic communities here. Lots of people felt that it was not helpful or necessary, and that the lack of perspective, lack of knowledge as to when theaters would open again. All things considered, that was just a difficult moment to go through, and there was no sense of conversation or support or dialog from the political side. So that's a specific kind of support that I'd say is missing. Also, I've been here for six months, so I can't claim to have a perfect overview of what's happening. However, I see artists that we'd like to have at the festival, who produce interesting work in small scale theaters where I think: Why is this not already bigger? Why is this not already involving more people? Not everything has to be big, obviously, there is something to be said for intimate performances as well. But some artists have that potential. I'm starting to try and find out why? Why they're not growing in a certain way? Is that due to lack of venues? Lack of "diffusion" as we say here? Is it maybe funding that's missing for the creation of that kind of work? Is it a lack of stability in terms of company structure? So I'm not sure yet, but that's something I'd like to explore.

Erin [01:06:54] I think we've been relatively successful in hosting these really small, intentional exchanges between artists. We just hosted a residency with Taku Yamamoto, who's a local artist with three collaborators, one from Chicago, two from New York, and they were able to be in a pod and work together really closely, which is essential. But I think the thing that we are missing as we go into the future is the opportunity for strangers to meet each other, for us to be in a social space. You know, with our festival, our beer garden is a huge part of the festival. The party is a huge part of the festival. How do we have that sense of excitement? I know if I go to any of your festivals, I would be sitting in an audience of strangers, of like-minded, curious people, and just that experience is so important. Even if I don't know anybody there, I know it's so important to the social culture. I think that's a huge challenge for us to try to bring back. How do we repair or how do we start to be together again in a way that takes the risk of contamination, I think as Danielle said so thoughtfully, in a way that's positive? You know, what's worth taking the risk, we can't all live in a bubble forever. How do we make that gathering as safe as possible for everyone in our community? That may include having lots of precautions that our government does not require in the United States. You know, our restaurants are open. Everything is open. Masks, you're required to wear masks inside. But you know, really the kind of precautions that we're taking in terms of safety, we're really coming up with those rules ourselves.

And so what kind of group agreements do we have to be together? I think it's a huge question for the future.

Quito [01:09:16] It's for us a really big question, what are we doing with this new expression that we've provoked? And now we have emerged with a lot of artists combined work with filmmakers, work with video makers and stuff like that. So through this pandemic, we're trying to make those live things and trying to bring a new way to present the works, but the artists went so deep into discussing commerce with the eyes of the camera. So they emerge a lot. I don't know if I call it a video dance or dance video or something, but emerge something that is really powerful. And really, we can go into a film festival or an arts festival because it's a really powerful way that they went deeper to work with the different filmmakers. That emerged in these films. But in the meantime, personally, I'm not the kind of guy who accepts works easily over seeing the computer or seeing on the screen. I'm a really old school guy, according to the performing arts. But in the meantime, we have got this challenge that the performing artists have put on the table like really amazing films and really amazing products. So it's really: how we deal with the post pandemic and this new way to present their works. So this is our challenge. Let's say.

Fernando [01:11:30] Well, I agree with everything that has been said. Brazil for us, especially here, and I could speak for the whole country that we would need... It would be very important that we would go back to more investments. Financially speaking it is really, really important that we go back to where we were someday and of course, maybe have more. But it's been a very, very difficult situation in the past two years without support and support of the federal government. And also other governments and most of the institutions that abandoned, public institutions usually, that are also facing a hard time supporting the culture, the artists in Brazil. And it's important that we get to pay everyone well and invest in these artists and in this pro-growth process and programs that we have been talking about here. The financial situation for us right now is something very, very important. And of course, everything else, what Quito just said, it's very important to me, what Erin said about these new relationships and going back to meeting each other and attending to shows - different people going to the audience and to be able to get together, to discuss, to agree and disagree. All these big movements that I think festivals managed to provoke. There's one thing that I would like to talk about that Quito mentioned before. We have this project also to bring arts during the festival, the festival usually happens from three to two weeks in the year, usually September. And we have this project also to bring arts performances to the suburbs, outside the city center of Puerto Alegre to these communities that usually don't have access to the arts, but also bring them to the theaters to see how these public spaces, cultural spaces also belong to them and to see the productions with the right lights and sounds and everything. We have some works that we always try to develop with them that is educational - workshops, educating a little bit about the arts and performing arts and trying to bring this, usually young people living in these communities, a little bit of this perspective of being an artist and making a festival that they go to see shows but before they go to see the shows they also get to see the setup and meet the artists and have a small workshop with some artists and performers. But this happens during the festival. Every year we try to do this with different people. And one of the things that we've been discussing and trying to do this so we would have support from other institutions also to try to find an answer or more than an answer, an attitude to what Quito also asked and how do we continue with this? How can we make this go on and guarantee that these people would have more to continue with this education and having the knowledge that they can also become an artist and try to work?

Daniel [01:15:46] Yeah, it's super interesting to listen to what everybody is saying because there are many things that resonate as well into the context of many things as well as their specific context that are also different here. But I would say that for me, just one very concrete issue, which is always how

to go forward. For example, at Kunstenfestivaldesarts, as I was saying at the beginning, it's a bi-communitarian festival bringing together two linguistic communities in time where this is not evident at all. And the perspectives toward the future are not always bright. I think that is one part of our work, still be attentive to the relevance of the work that we are doing. Why we are doing this? Why this institution is there? For example, as I was saying at the beginning: For whom are we doing it? I think it's something that I feel is very present for us in the context of the festival because it emerged from a very unstable situation of bringing together two communities or being an institution that is funded by the two linguistic communities of the city. Then there's another issue that I would like to address that is more broad, which is for me, I'll try to adventure there... It's a complex issue: How can we address social issues as a festival? How can we address political issues as the festival? And somehow not disengage from the political debate? At the same time, acknowledging that we are an artistic institution. Somehow that our goal cannot always be to solve issues because otherwise we would also allow other actors in our society to disengage. Specifically, speaking about for example, the political class. The thing is that for us, this is a specific issue. On the one side, we try always to have a kind of attentive reflection of how can we address social issues. How can we be more inclusive? How can you do this kind of work that would as well solve some of the logics of exclusion that exist within our society? I think that this is crucial to do. But at the same time, I feel it is a kind of open question how to do it in a way where we do not somehow give the impression that we will carry this in the future and that we would be the one somehow social workers in our societies. How can we do it still from the perspective of recognizing and acknowledging that we also have to defend the right of artists to create artistic creations that do not always have to be instrumental, to solve social issues. That can address issues, but at the same time, results in the freedom for artists to do something that is completely different and that the pressure to do more political or social work is something that has to come from the desire of the artists and not because fundings are given to this, because somehow only the artistic institution is the one that has to address certain issues. And as I was saying at the beginning, it's a kind of complex topic that cannot be solved, maybe in a pitch of one minute, but it's something that I wanted to try to stick in our conversation because it's an unsolved issue for me because I don't have the clear perspective, but I see very often the importance and the danger of navigating this whole reflection.

Erin [01:20:10] Thank you so much. That's the note we're going to end on because we've been speaking for some time, but we could continue to speak because obviously there's so many... so much insight within your given work and practices and different approaches that we could go deeper into. But also these questions, and I'm sure it's a good point of departure for the next conversation. So this is just the tip of the iceberg or a moment to take stock of where we're at now. Thank you so much for your generosity and sharing your insights and your attention in this time where everybody is spending so much time on Zoom calls. Thank you very much, and I hope that we can meet in person at PuSh 2023.

Daniel [01:21:01] Or in May 2022 in Brussel.

Gabrielle [01:21:08] Thank you so much. I look forward to continuing this conversation.