**Creative approaches to incorporating access for outdoor work**

**Training session for 2019 Without Walls commissioned artists**

*Wednesday, February the 6th – 4:30 pm – 7:30pm, Bradbury Studios, London*

Speakers:

Helen Eastman, Nathan Geering, Philippa Cross

Chair: Daryl Beeton

Introduction – Daryl Beeton

Access is not a service we should offer, it is a creative tool we should all embrace.

The road to inclusion is a journey - It evolves, we are constantly learning.

Helen Eastman

At the beginning we didn’t have access embedded, as we were so focused on getting the show up…

At the premiere we realised we had made a mess of it in terms of not having the access embedded – it was powered by bikes and we realised the bikes weren’t accessible – there were lots of other ways to participate but I realised it was not fully accessible…

We called WW and then got some advice – we were concerned to not ask the right thing but we realised we should ask a lot of disability cycling charities to find out what we could do – I went and joined some cycle rides with disabled people and we had some very useful conversations.

We then went and got some bikes that would cater for more scenarios – so we had a sit-down racing bike, cycling with hands, recumbent bikes.

We used the charities to help us source the right bikes – we then had knock on effects of the bikes not fitting our stands and generators, so we had to make some adaptations, like needing a bigger van and more crew to install it.

The thing we didn’t do very well is tell people we had it there. So, the communication wasn’t great on our side to tell people that the bikes were accessible…

Discussion of other access – captioning – relaxed performances. How can we do that?

Phil Hargreaves: doing this for the Joss Arnott show will do a relaxed performance and meet the cast – they are trialling it for the show this year.

Helen Eastman: Had discussion of how to get people involved in exploring the set before the show – we had 20 mins before the show where people could come and try to set with a bubble machine – that was a really nice one on one interaction for the people. We tried to staff the set all the time so people could carry on exploring the performing space. Realised that in terms of relaxed performances there were things we could all do anyway.

Nathan Geering

Artistic Director and access innovator

Background in hip hop – was associate director at Yorkshire dance. Used to give scratch performances and get audience feedback – we got the audience to close their eyes and changed position – we just got them to take their sight away and then give it back.

They reflected that it was possible to become visually impaired any time – I got in touch with some partially sighted organisations and Andrew Loretto – I did research into visual impaired organisations. What do you need to be able to see the movement? Realised that breaking could do that – a lot of people visually impaired see better if they look down towards the floor.

Andrew Loretto put in touch with Kate O Reilly, who can only see in 2D – seeing our company she could see in 3 D. We really wanted to delve and take this seriously.

We worked on Gone in 20 mins exploring audio description; e.g. how about you use the names of dance moves to express the movement – give names to locks etc – then using skills of beat boxers. Audio description is linear, and it is hard to keep up. But using beat boxing you can go faster and express more.

Tried to level the playing field – let everyone try on specs to allow people different way of experiencing the show. But they could take the glasses off at any point.

They decided to try to create a language for visual impairment to communicate the movement – so had different noises for spin and jump for example – it is more like sound effects to enhance accessibility –

In terms of audio description, a lot of people with visual impairment find the conventional method a bit boring – they wanted to offer more choice.

Conventional AD is objective, it does not try to interpret, so it can take you out of the artistic experience. We work with companies from the inception of the production to work on the aesthetic – e.g. subjective, poetic, etc (we have many different styles), we give the artistic director a choice, but we put AD and access on their radar. So, the access is a creative process not just an add on. So, it may be that the dancers have to have a couple of extra beats in order to complete a bit of AD.

Special Olympics open ceremony 2017 choreographer - mixed group multiple disabled – I didn’t want the non-disabled companies to impose the choreography – make sure you always include disabled people in the process

Daryl: How do non-visual impaired audience react?

Nathan: They love it!

Maggie: Is it all through a headset? Or is it the sound track for everyone?

Nathan: It varies and depends on the Artistic Director’s choice.

Do you ever just use sound?

Nathan: It depends, we always test with the audiences.

Discussion on promotional material: Audio description trailers – other kinds of promotion – 5-minute intro before the show starts for example.

Daryl: in Bingo Lingo our characters are playful, so we have a joke that Beryl likes a good touch tour, and we also describe each other in the show, of course being funny.

Phillipa, Talking Birds

Difference Engine app: The system can do audio description and captions, you break the script on to capsules, touchscreen with raspberry pi. It works with batteries and router

Still developing the Audience Development side of it…

Then also it can have content – e.g. additional material about /related to the show – video clip

The have 15 kits and they hire them out

Elisabeth – used if for GDIF – for Beautiful Ting and for Great Northern Run/Star, it was seen as a great tool.

Question: Can you have the equipment working for multiple shows at the same time?

Answer: You would have a particular version but yes.

You can also influence the perception of the audience and incorporate creative possibilities: for example, you can make the audience decide to experience the show as a pessimist or optimist – be playful and make it a creative tool in the show.

What are the hardest challenges? For visual/physical work it is hard to make it accessible to visually impaired audiences.

Daryl – useful to have a table top version of the show, a little model that people can use to get a sense of the set and characters.

Dougie – carrying on from this, marketing is a key part of it. Doing audio described shows, I know we don’t reach the target audience…Stop gap has been going for 20 years and we haven’t reached those people. People expect us to champion these things and it has been tricky.

Darryl – it is a wider question and depends on each partner. For example at GDIF they have the team dedicated to this, and a commitment to working in this way …..but how many people here, ask a festival what their access provision is? Some do. Within Wild N Beets, we always ask festivals to provide this -it is shared responsibility and we need to work together.

Dougie – if a lot of companies are thinking about audio description then we can do some PR perhaps? I find that we don’t reach the audiences…

David – Without Walls can highlight the work that people are doing – in terms of the engagement with audiences the relationship with festivals is crucial, and we suggest that the companies have an access rider too.

Nathan – You can make visual files, which is good for marketing and not difficult to do.

Philippa - Captioned shows can be listed on stage text website

Daryl – nothing is 100% inclusive but we can try!