

CS LAB

# LEADERSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS



ARTCENA

ARTCENA is the National Centre for Circus, Street and Theatre Arts, created by the French Ministry of Culture. It coordinates Circostrada and has a permanent seat on its Steering Committee. It works closely with sector professionals and offers them publications and multimedia resources through its digital platform. It develops mentoring, training, tools and services to help them in their daily practices. It provides support to contemporary creation through national programmes and encourages international development of these three sectors.

 Co-funded by the  
Creative Europe Programme  
of the European Union

This publication  
was edited  
by Circostrada

  
European Network  
Circus and Street ArtS

Since 2003, Circostrada Network has been working to develop and structure the fields of circus and street arts in Europe and beyond. With more than 120 members from over 35 countries, it helps building a sustainable future for these sectors by empowering cultural players through activities in observation and research, professional exchanges, advocacy, capacity-building and information.

## FOREWORD

**In June 2020, Circostrada joined forces with XTRAX to deliver CS LAB#5, one of the main activities of the network which looks at creating a dedicated space to foster new thinking and encourage participants to re-consider their working practices at all levels. Originally designed to be a three-day residential laboratory, the event was rapidly reformatted to respond to disruptions caused by Covid-19, leading to a re-shaping both in format and content.**

The Covid-19 pandemic led to the closure of most cultural institutions and the cancellation of festivals across the globe, and still nowadays presents an uncertain landscape for those working in the arts across the world. In that context, we felt it was necessary to pause, reflect on key international issues for the Street Arts and Circus sectors while at the same time providing inspiration for its cultural leaders. The recent resurgence of the global Black Lives Matter movement reminds us of another pressing crisis for our sector. Just as the pandemic is not hitting all communities equally, Black Lives Matter reminds us that the Street Arts and Circus sectors need to act to address the under representation of people of colour – as artists, producers, festival directors and more widely. Our investigation of Leadership, Equality and Advocacy is a start – but it is urgent that we work together to ensure that this can be followed up with tangible and impactful actions.

Combining a range of inspirational talks and practical discussions, CS LAB#5 presented an e-learning and information sharing experience addressing the topics of leadership, equality and advocacy in the Street Arts and Circus sectors. These are crucial themes not only in the UK but also across European and international organisations, and by identifying ways forward we hoped to provide a springboard for reflection which would inform how we reshape our sector to make it as strong, representative and forward-thinking as possible.

We saw this as an opportunity for our sector to question how, as cultural leaders, we can support our teams in times of crisis; how we can ensure equality, diversity and inclusion are embedded in decision making now and in the future; and how we can advocate to sustain our organisations in the aftermath of this crisis.

The new online format allowed the network to open up the Keynote sessions to a wider audience and saw over 150 industry professionals from 25 countries tune in to hear inspirational speeches from Hilary Carty (Director of the Clore Leadership Programme), Vicki Amedume (Artistic Director and founder of Upswing), Bettina Linstrum (Coach and Creative Consultant) and Michael Hoar (Independent Consultant).

The sessions tackled crucial topics encouraging us to look at our own ways of working and embedding best practice and ideals in our own organisations. Speakers explored concepts such as the importance of leading with purpose, making allies and strong collaborations across the sector and beyond, the infrastructures needed to give space to more diverse artists and leaders, and how to communicate and advocate for the sector and for our organisations simply and effectively.

This publication aims to leave a written trace from this experience and share the learning with the wider international creative community. It includes feature articles from the speakers of the Lab delving further into the topics of Leadership, Equality and Advocacy in the Street Arts and Circus sectors.

These are complemented by reflection pieces from internationally renowned UK companies Mimbire and Company Chameleon, as well as a list of useful resources and articles documenting the topics of the Lab further.

We hope that this publication will help render the learning from this experience, feed sector-wide thinking and contribute to building a more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive sector.

**XTRAX & Circostrada teams**

## ABOUT US

### Circostrada

#### **Circostrada is the European Network for Circus and Street Arts.**

Created in 2003 with the core mission of furthering the development, empowerment and recognition of these fields at European and international levels, over the years the network has become an important anchoring point for its members and a key interlocutor in the dialogue with cultural policy makers across Europe. Circostrada is coordinated by ARTCENA – French National Centre for Circus Arts, Street Arts and Theatre – and is based in Paris (France).

In a few words, Circostrada is:

- A community of circus and street arts professionals linked together by common values and aspirations, who advocate for greater recognition and more structured cultural policies.
- The voice and reference network of circus and street arts in Europe.
- A group of passionate and committed individuals who meet several times a year at the network's events.
- A network dedicated to its members, engaged in facilitating the exchange of experiences, knowledge, and good practices at European and international levels.
- A digital resource platform that provides thematic publications, observation tools and news on circus and street arts, available to all free of charge in English and French.

🌐 [www.circostrada.org](http://www.circostrada.org)

### XTRAX

#### **XTRAX is one of the UK's leading specialists in Outdoor Arts and Circus.**

With a multi-lingual team and a vast network of industry contacts across the UK and internationally, XTRAX has vast experience in the strategic development and promotion of Outdoor Arts internationally.

Our current portfolio includes:

- Management of Without Walls, a consortium of over 30 festivals and organisations dedicated to raising the profile of the UK outdoor arts sector, promoting artistic excellence and supporting the development and creation of innovative new outdoor work.
- Delivery of Platform4:UK, a strategic programme designed to support the international promotion of UK outdoor artists and to develop collaborations with strategic partners overseas.
- Producer Services for Wired Aerial Theatre's internationally acclaimed largescale show *As The World Tipped* which we has toured to Europe, Australia, South Korea and South America.
- Delivery of Industry Showcase events in partnership with UK and International festivals, as well as training opportunities, seminars, talks and networking opportunities designed to support outdoor artists and festivals in developing their practice and networks.
- XTRAX has been an active member of Circostrada since 2009 and Irene Segura (International Relations and Artist Development at XTRAX) sits on the Circostrada Steering Committee.

🌐 [www.xtrax.org.uk](http://www.xtrax.org.uk)

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### Graphic design

Frédéric Schaffar

August 2020

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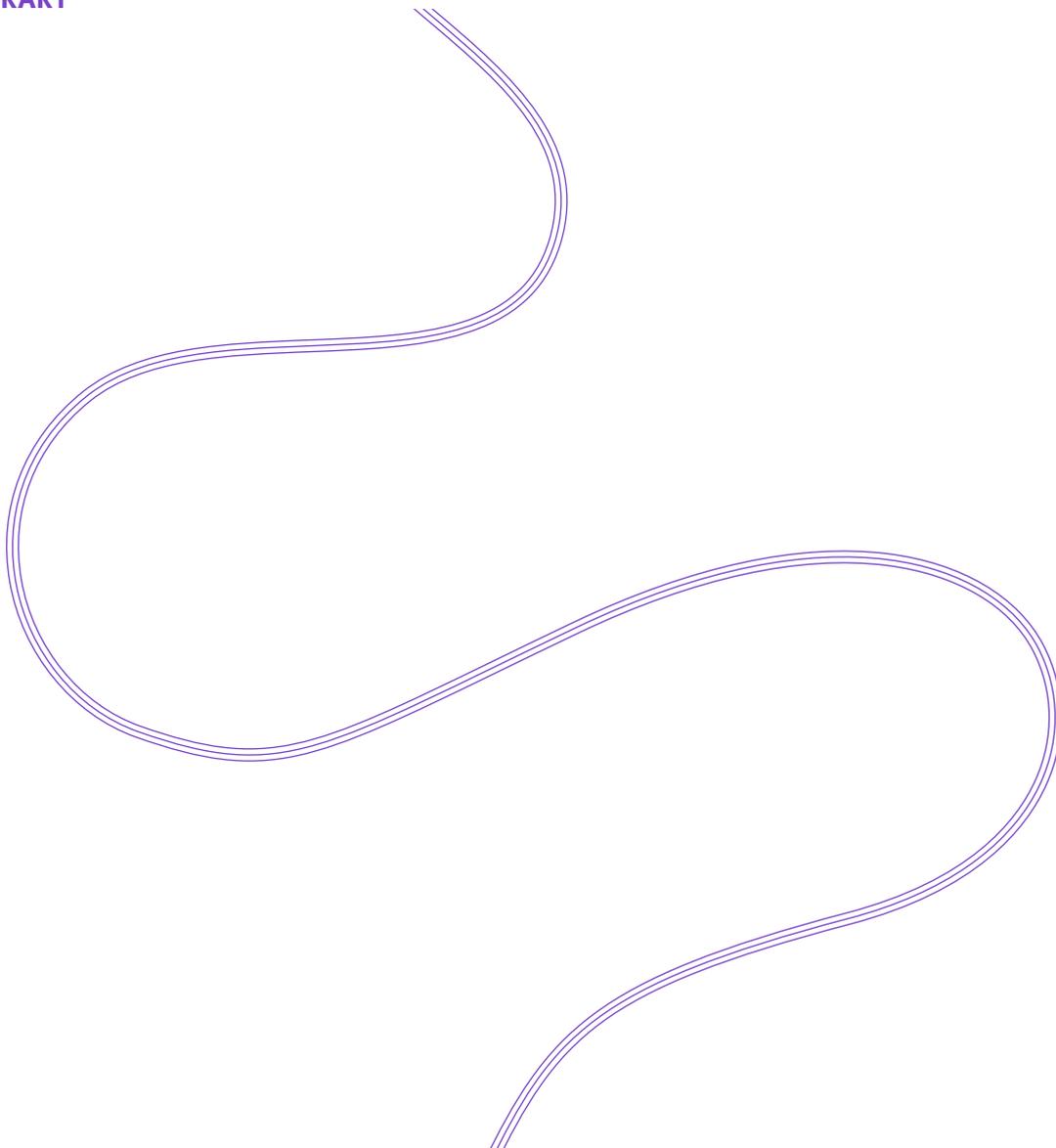
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## LABRARY

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## WHAT DO WE NEED FROM CULTURAL LEADERS IN TIMES OF CRISIS?

By Hilary Carty



Hilary Carty is the Executive Director of the Clore Leadership, a role she took up after six years as a consultant, facilitator and coach specialising in leadership development, management and organisational change. Hilary's earlier roles include Director of the Cultural Leadership Programme; Director, London (Arts) at Arts Council England; Director, Culture and Education at London 2012; Director of Dance for Arts Council England; Visiting Professor on leadership (Austria); and HLF London Committee

Member. In recognition of her contribution to the arts, culture and heritage, Hilary has been awarded three Honorary Doctorates and three Fellowships from UK Universities. Hilary is a member of the Learning and Participation Committee of the Royal Opera House.

It is truly hard to think of a month like the last. Across continents and contexts, issues that are at once personal and universal have resulted in shared experiences and created common cause. Whether it is the climate emergency, Covid-19 or the issues of racial injustice stirred by the death of George Floyd in the USA, diverse peoples have connected in awareness, determined their viewpoints, and borne witness to the impact of this era on their lives and perspectives. I guess it is exactly that visceral synthesis of the individual and the collective experience that causes these events to resonate – to conflate and compete, rather ominously, for airspace. And the truly concerning fact is that they are all critical. They all demand our attention and our action. They each demand leadership.

Tipping the scales at this moment in time is Covid-19 - a global pandemic, surreal, and all-consuming, dramatically shifting the way we work and engage with culture and heritage.

To date we have experienced three phases of the phenomenon - the **Lockdown**, the **Learn** and the **Lead** phases.

Back in March, the shock of the pandemic brought us into **Lockdown**. Beyond the government-imposed edict to stay in our homes - this was a lockdown of culture and cultural expression - a dampening of the cultural engagement that we wrap into our lives and the lives of our participants and audiences.

Good governance kicked in - annual accounts, that had hitherto seemed something of an academic exercise, took on the import of a doctor's prognosis, as organisations scrutinised restricted and unrestricted reserves and initiated conversations to try to secure their business as a 'going concern'. We locked down our businesses, our assets and our resources to protect our organisations as much as possible for the future.

For the many independent and freelance workers in our sector, lockdown meant cancellations. Contracts that had been months in the making fell apart in days; opportunities that were previously open-ended closed shut in an instant. We saw our livelihoods and the things that nourish us

squashed onto screens and reduced to fit inside two dimensions. But our artforms are multi-dimensional and multi-sensational - so we have been challenged to our core. And it has not been easy.

As drivers of culture and engagement we moved, impressively and quickly, from Lockdown into the **Learning** phase - where we learnt that we *can* act differently, we can learn new ways. Something about the expediency of the moment demanded an inventive and imaginative response, and now (almost) everything is taking place online - we are operating with speed and learning new skills, particularly digital ones.

At Clore Leadership we faced the challenge of recalibrating our highly valued residential programmes and moved to re-cast our knowledge and experience towards new short-form offers. A podcast series, *Leading from a Distance*, shares tips, tools, advice and approaches - as we do within our programmes - now made available to the sector at large. We convened webinars with respected leaders and thinkers to debate the imminent issues challenging cultural



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professionals, be that *Furloughing*, *Building Resilience*, or *Prioritising the Future-thinking Role of the Board*.

Like many, we have taken the core of what Clore Leadership has historically provided in person and translated it to the virtual space. We have facilitated small and large-group conversations; matched peer-to-peer buddies and mentors with mentees;

and created new resources on crisis management. Covid-19 has required adaptive, innovative, and resourceful leadership.

And, despite the challenge, it has been great to learn that we really can innovate and create, at pace. We have learnt to create new joys from our living rooms. We have sung and danced, and created brilliant and funny new art. It is not a substitute for

the live experience that brings most of us joy. It does not hold the same options for collaboration and connection with other creative people. And it does not give us that rewarding moment of applause that confirms a success. But culture has not stood still and some of the adaptations made out of this crisis, can genuinely stimulate and entertain us in the new time ahead.

The **Lead** phase of Covid-19 has, perhaps, some of the most treacherous pitfalls, because it includes those medium and long-term decisions. No longer are we simply responding and reacting in a crisis, but facing the challenge of leading our sector, our organisations and ourselves out of the crisis and into a new normal. And that's scary because the decisions we make now will stay with us for the time ahead.

Each individual organisation and sector will need to juggle their own list of priorities and determine the factors that are most critical for their situation. I suggest three themes for consideration:

- Leading with Purpose
- Diversity & Inclusion
- Getting Comfortable with Uncertainty

## Leading with Purpose

As we move gradually out of this period of severity, we must learn how to weave creativity and cultural engagement within a new contract with our audiences and communities. Covid-19 has changed our audiences' experience and expectations of culture. Some now know what they have missed. And others will not see a rationale for culture when life is so hard and their resources are reduced.

As cultural providers, we need to face up to that truly tough question – are we still needed? What is our Mission or Purpose **now**? And **how**, after the experience of Covid-19, can that Mission or Purpose best be achieved? These are fundamental questions – taking us right to the core of why we exist as cultural

providers and organisations. But the road ahead will be truly hard. We cannot expect that the rich and nuanced blends of creativity and entertainment we were part of just months ago will return immediately – the economics tell us that things need to be different. We will not just resume from where we left off...

Looking ahead, is it not inevitable that some cultural and heritage organisations will fold? What may have seemed a robust business model pre-Covid-19 has now been lethally stress-tested. Those that survive will have made many radical operational shifts that must become permanent. What emerges from this pandemic will be a

re-modelled cultural landscape, embracing new modes of engagement and delivery. So, a hard review of our Mission or Purpose is really important as we prepare for the challenging road to recovery.

## Diversity and Inclusion

As leaders, we have to live through our values, as individuals and organisations, against the persistent trauma of systemic inequalities, racial injustice, structural privilege and deep-seated prejudice.

**Black Lives Matter.** For me, there is no room for equivocation. And yet, I am sure I am not alone in having both despair and hope swirling around in my head. It has been such an emotional time when, I think, we have all had to reflect quite deeply about the sort of society we have, the one we want to have and how we might get there.

Why, after all the statements, policies, approaches and actions of the past, are we still challenged by the racism Martin Luther King talked about and Naseem Khan wrote about, in her seminal publication of 1976 – *The Arts That Britain Ignores*. The lack of change, the macro evidence of different treatment; the micro-aggressions, the lack of progression into senior roles for BAME professionals...All show that racism is still highly prevalent in our UK institutions and progress is either negligible or slow.

Or is that the despair speaking? Should I focus more on the hopeful part of me that acknowledges wider diversity in many institutions, and is genuinely bolstered by the number of organisations who were proactive in declaring their allegiances on their websites and on social media?

Cultural institutions have affirmed that #BlackLivesMatter...it most certainly is an important statement, a welcome acknowledgement. But then what...? Who holds to account the changes we do or do not make? How do we shift the responsibility for change from the activist to the institution? From the excluded to the entitled? How to ensure that #AllActionsMatter, #AllOutcomesMatter and #WordsAre-NotEnough?

Of course, All Lives Matter – that is also true. But let us not be afraid to be clear about the essential challenges facing discrete groups of people at **this** time. And let us not beco-



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me confused and reticent because we don't want to get things wrong or to cause offence. Rather than staying confused or conflicted, I think our duty, as leaders, is to learn, to absorb, to reflect, to debate – an array of actions to educate ourselves so that we *can* be thoughtful and considerate, but also clear.

Institutions are collectives of people working together. So who but ourselves should take action for change? It requires every one of us, both individually and collectively to look at what we are doing and to ask ourselves if we really are doing enough? Are we making even a dint of a tangible difference? It has been heartening to see the fully multi-racial campaigners for BLM. That is important as it reflects a growing realisation that it will take all of us, black and white, to shift this dial.

Is it 're-writing history' to expand the narratives to better account for the people, incidents and places that were previously overlooked? They were there. These incidents happened. Just because the stories were not previously told, should we really now be silent?

Opinions change over time. That, elsewhere, is called 'progress' or becoming enlightened. Surely, we too can update the script and acknowledge this period as simply

a new Age of Enlightenment? We have revised and expanded our knowledge and perspectives before – I'm thinking of the revisions to politics, philosophy, science and communications in 18<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe... What is so challenging about doing it again now? We have an opportunity to make a difference, to act and to be different. It is imperative to remember that the decisions we make now will give shape to the time ahead. For this, right here, is history – in the making.

So for me **Inclusion Matters**. And it's a leadership issue – one where we need to act urgently and differently to get different results. Few of us are satisfied with the many inequalities that were structured into our cultural infrastructure before the pandemic. So why rebuild something that we did not like?

I think the challenge we have with diversity and inclusion comes down to power. Very few of us want to give up the reins of power we have had to work so hard to secure. For everyone knows – the jobs we do are not easy. Nor well paid. And it was tough to get here. So we hold on tight to what we have and, perhaps unconsciously, recruit in our own image; and step back from promoting accessible points of entry or opening wide

the routes to career progression. I'm not trying to be controversial – that is what my experience plainly shows me.

Coming out of this crisis, we have an opportunity to build based on values rather than simply to rebuild what we had before. It is already happening – with campaigns

such as #WeShallNotBeRemoved – led by disabled leaders and acting to prevent deaf, neurodiverse and disabled leaders being ignored as we rebuild post Covid-19. There are many campaigns and they need our support. The challenge is to seize this moment and not be satisfied with 'good intentions' leaving the precious outcomes to

fickle chance. We can act now to actively promote diversity and inclusion – in recruitment, in progression, in management and through leadership. We can take the time to create the momentum for a positive change for the future.

## Get Comfortable with Uncertainty

No-one really knows what lies ahead. We don't know the rules of engagement, the timings, the constraints ... and yet, we do need to plan and to prepare for a future that has a place for us. We will have to find our own ways through – and that will be different for each of us, whether as individuals or organisations.

As leaders we need to become more comfortable with questions that have no simple answers; to conjure with complexity, and skilfully navigate dense data, using it as a tool to support our decision-making in the new era. Way-finding in this time of uncertainty and ambiguity is fraught with danger but three watchwords might help us through:

- **Optimism** – looking ahead to see what might be possible. Even the smallest lamp can illuminate a path.
- **Courage** – to act, despite not having all the facts and figures clearly laid out and transparent.
- **Collaboration** – we are each one part of a bigger picture and partnerships and co-working are going to be prized more than ever.

In any crisis, leadership is critical. In order for great culture to have a strong comeback from this crisis and continue to benefit people's lives and the economy, we need our cultural leaders to have the skills, perspectives and resources to respond in the moment, for the future. We need to support current and aspiring leaders to become genuine stakeholders in the making of their 'new normal'.

In this respect, the seismic eruption of Covid-19 gives us an opportunity. As we



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start the ease out of lockdown, there are tough conversations being held and tough decisions to come. Business models, income streams and hierarchies are all being re-assessed, restructured and remodelled. Change is inevitable.

So why not act with clear intention? Can we dismantle that which no longer serves us well and build to our aspirations? Can we lose the 're', which encourages a look back and, instead, engage afresh with our purpose and values? And create the new norms, protocols and practices to bring about the change we want to see happen? Can we genuinely open up our circles of influence to inclusive leadership and share the power that must inevitably be shared for change to be experienced?

It's time for big questions, honest conversations and transparent shifts. Empathy, care, deep listening, equality, fairness and kind-

ness are vital as we set a new tone for the future of our sector and create the society we want for future generations.

Now is surely the time. #BeTheChange.

🌐 [www.cloreladership.org](http://www.cloreladership.org)

# WHAT IS STOPPING US FROM BEING FULLY REPRESENTATIVE SECTORS?

By Vicki Amedume



© Hugh Hill

Vicki Amedume initially trained as a research scientist, entering the circus world in 1997. She founded Upswing, an award-winning Contemporary Circus Company in 2006, to bring new artists and experiences to the stage that reflect a dynamic, diverse and modern world. Alongside its touring and performance work Upswing works to develop new and emerging artists through a range of Development Programmes. Besides her work for Upswing Vicki has worked with The National Theatre of Scotland, The RSC, The Lowry, Cameron Mackintosh Productions and The New Vic Theatre. She is a 2016/17 Clore Fellow, 2019/20 Fellow of The British Council Intersect programme and Chair of the The Baring Foundation Arts Committee.

I was asked to write an article on "What is stopping us from being fully representative sectors?" My instinctive response to the question was...I don't know. Given the years of effort and initiatives, why have we not found a pathway forwards?

The arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has initiated changes in the way we live and work that would have been unimaginable six months ago. We have adapted, and this demonstrates how quickly we can adapt to when the will is present.

Circus and Outdoor Arts are often described as a space for everybody. Quantitative research on our audiences demonstrates that we attract more diverse and representative audiences than other art-forms. In addition we are often allowed to work in the places and communities where other art-forms may be treated with more suspicion. Our problem is that, whilst we may perform to a broad and diverse range of people; our companies, institutions and communities of artists are generally not filled with the same diversity.

Before I go any further, I need to firmly acknowledge that diversity and representation encompasses gender, sexuality, a multitude of disabilities, neurodiversity, culture, religion, class, age, as well as ethnicity. I have written this from the perspective of ethnicity as that is the lived experience I want to offer to this conversation. I can't and won't speak for every



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experience. Identities are dynamic and form complex combinations requiring different approaches, that can only really be defined with the full and direct participation of people with specific experience of that form of discrimination. This does not mean that we cannot support other identities as allies and partners, sharing a pathway toward inclusion.

As a creative community I have come to recognise that we have spectrum of thinking

on diversity, much as we do in our respective societies. It ranges from those who see discrimination as a real and tangible thing, acknowledge personal and systemic biases and are taking direct action to counter their effects; to people who believe, in this example, we are in a post-racial society where racial inequalities and structural racism no longer exists.

This article is aimed at people who are in the former group rather than the later, my expe-

rience has been that it is difficult to convince people, who are unwilling, of the effects of race, as a structuring idea in the distribution of power in our creative community.

As a background to this article it is important to note that social and environmental justice are becoming the defining conversions of our time. Aided by digital communications

the inequalities in our societies are being made visible and inescapable. I firmly believe that no cultural community or art form can endure without recognising and engaging in these dialogues, not only in terms of what it presents to audiences but also in how it organises itself. It adds to the complexity to the creative work we want to do, but we will not thrive if we do not

engage with the social and cultural change around us.

For this article I've drawn together some themes that have emerged from the powerful conversations I have been having with peers in the UK and Europe about inclusion to share some reflections in response.

## Hard to reach...

### A reflection on audiences.

I grew up in a West African community and so grew up with a rich artistic culture high-life music, fashion, visual arts, singing in church were all part of everyday life. I do not identify myself and my community with a label like 'low arts engagement' or other difficult terms like 'hard to reach'.

The wording suggests that the problem lies within the group "you are hard to reach", which is arguably inappropriate when the barriers to engagement are often outside of the communities control.

As a creative from a 'hard to reach' community, the inference is that my creative education, experience and cultural capital

gained before I entered the field of Circus and Outdoor Arts are not valued. Reframing our thinking about communities or artists as 'seldom seen, seldom heard' within our existing creative spaces puts the onus on us to do the work to make ourselves more welcoming.

## Representation...



© Josh Hawkins

Audiences—and artists—are complex; there is no singular audience or viewer identity, just as there is no singular artist identity. It is important when including artists from diverse communities, that it is not under the condition they represent are or become representative of an entire community. It leaves no room for individual desires and artistic intention".

It is also worth noting that for instance - the idea that employing black artists will bring black audiences is problematic. Of course, visible representation has been shown to have an effect on audience demographics but audience development is additional work to artistic creation and should come with additional resources.

Basically, if you are asking someone to do the heavy lifting when it comes to outreach, in what way are you resourcing them to do the work?

## Diversity vs Quality...

Conversations about Diversity can spark panic in some as it can be framed in opposition of quality. The two things are not mutually exclusive. There is no suggestion that supporting diversity means that anyone should be elevated simply because they are seen to represent a particular demographic.

It does, however, require us to do some honest thinking about our communities taste-making.

In Toni Morrison's essay collection *A Mouth Full of Blood* she tell us, "Canon building is empire building. Canon defence is national defence. Canon debate, whatever the terrain, nature and range... is the clash of cultures. And all the interests are vested."

"Quality" art can often default to being art that the observer is most familiar with.

Our ideas of quality are formed by our cultural experiences, education, politics, working approaches. It is fair to say that in most of our creative communities, the taste-makers will cluster around particular cultural identities and experiences.

If we would like to believe that our systems are based on meritocracy, that the best talent



© Manuel Harlan

will win through, we cannot be satisfied with an unexamined approach on taste making.

The goal is to enable the broadest range of talent to gain access to the training, means of production and networks necessary to create work that is meaningful to wider society. It prevents us from supporting primarily creatives that are able to navigate existing structures.

We need to create mechanisms for conversations about values, taste, talent and merit.

To require ourselves to have these conversations with unfamiliar people, people who don't share the same ideas and cultural references. To loosen hold on what we assume makes us successful and become open to new ideas and the potential that is unlocked by working with a broader range of voices.

## Presence vs Power...

### **Presence does not equal power.**

Working with artists of hiring teams that reflect the diversity of society is the beginning of change, but it is not the end. With these changes you may be challenged to reflect on structural issues within your organisation, company or practice. It might mean having

to recognise that some of the approaches you may have taken in the past have been upholding structural inequities, even with the best intentions.

Presence can offer you insight but without bringing more voices into leadership and decision-making it is unlikely that the

changes necessary to break down inequality will happen.

For real inclusion we need the twinned goals of presence and power sharing.

## Taking responsibility...

It is common to think that an inclusive model of behaviour has to do with others. Instead, it is important to start from ourselves and our own level of awareness, openness, and education on the subject. The more we work on ourselves, the easier it will be to be sensitive

to the experiences of others we might previously not have been aware of.

To be open and curious should be part of the creative temperament, it allows us to face situations that challenge (both in a positive

and negative way) our beliefs and our cultural patterns.

We are all part of a bigger system that can prescribe the power relations between different groups, so as individuals we must realise

our connection to the larger cultural context and not imagine we are outside it. Ask ourselves 'What could be my limits to fully understanding this situation?' And 'What do I need to do to remove those limits'.

Upswing is a Black-led organisation, as a company we have endeavoured to make our work not only artistically powerful but also relevant to communities who do not see themselves and their experiences in Circus. We advocate for, present and mentor the work of under-represented artists especially Black/Brown artists and creatives in circus and Performing arts. In these extraordinary times rather than sit back and rest on the work we have done in the past, we recognise that now is the time to step up

our efforts; to interrogate our beliefs and our actions and address more holistically intersections of discrimination. We have not ignored the need to commit to action but this however does not mean that we cannot also do better.

All I can really offer as advice is that if you are truly committed to inclusion in your institution, organisation or your work; it is almost always better to try something than do nothing.

This is especially true when there are now so many people and places to go to for support and guidance. So seek out appropriate support, find people who can offer informed advice for your challenge and make sure you understand the need to resource the work appropriately.

Lastly, there is no finish line. Don't assume there will be, there will always be work to be done, if you ever think you are approaching a conclusion ask 'what else can I do?'

- There will always be work to be done, so let's enjoy the work.
- Nothing changes without recognition of our individual and collective roles.
- Nothing changes without conscious and informed action.
- Diversity in our society is a fact. Inclusion is a choice.

🌐 [www.upswing.org.uk](http://www.upswing.org.uk)



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# IN THE AFTERMATH OF THIS CRISIS, HOW WILL WE NEED TO ADVOCATE IN ORDER TO SUSTAIN OUR ORGANISATIONS AND OUR SECTORS?

By Michael Hoar



© Michael Hoar

Michael Hoar has 25 years' experience in the arts and cultural sectors. In 2009 he established The Michael Hoar Consultancy. Since then he has delivered for over 80 organisations in the UK and internationally on business planning, strategy, fundraising, research and development, team and partnership building, advocacy, governance development, and leadership. Clients include arts and cultural organisations, universities, local government, charities, and independent professionals.

## The Covid-19 Shock: Impact on the Cultural and Creative Industries

Covid-19 has had an exceptional impact on the cultural and creative industries. Sector organisations and governments are scrambling to interpret its effects, mitigate them and make policy anew. The financial relief packages, job retention and creation, support for freelancers, and emergency funds have staved off immediate sector collapse. For cultural organisations where earned income is a big feature of the model, it is particularly devastating.

Outdoor Arts and Circus events were put on ice, from the largest international festivals to

the smallest community ones. Cities, towns and villages normally full of performers, stages and people, are empty in summer 2020 as organisations work to keep afloat, stabilise, and recalibrate activities against an uncertain future. Many think things will unfold in 3 Phases (1) Response: in the first part of 2020, (2) Stabilisation: 2020/21, and (3): Recovery (2022 onwards).

New policies and packages will appear regularly through the 3 Phases so the sector needs to be more skilled in making its case than it has ever been. However, the cultural and creative sector's voice into governments remains relatively weak.



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## Shock as Opportunity

Many sector bodies, commentators, thinkers, policymakers are now engaged in the medium-longer term process of making the case for a new cultural and creative policy, not one which replicates the old world, but which improves and advances things. The 'build back better' thinking.

There are two schools of thought about what the sector should be making the case for. Some 'response phase' campaigns adopted a 'reactive advocacy' mode: 'saving' or 'rescuing' the arts. This can be effective, however a new way of thinking is emerging, about repositioning the 'value

proposition' of culture and where it sits in a new post-Covid-19 social and economic settlement. Moving it more to the centre of policy and people's lives. We can all play a part in growing a new future of Outdoor Arts and Circus.

## Sector Leadership: Leading Big Tent Conversations, Seeding New Ideas, Models, and Thinking

So, what to do? First of all, larger festivals, network bodies, development agencies and consortiums should come together, pooling discretionary income and securing new funds towards bold sector leadership. The biggest threat to progress is lack of collective vision.

Together the sector should gather evidence about the impact of pandemic and commission research to fill the gaps. They should commission 'think pieces' on the future: on topics including socially distanced Outdoor Art practice, to the potential of digital plat-

forms, to new financial and revenue models, to how Outdoor Arts organisations work with communities and places, and more. The ambition must be high. They should consult widely to reframe a new understanding of Outdoor Arts and Circus for a new world.

They should lead widespread discussion and debate, engaging experts from inside and outside the sector. This discussion must be framed by wider cultural sector debates, and the recalibration of wider public policy happening around it. They should formulate innovative new partnerships and projects

within the sector and with other organisations outside it, from the private sector (e.g. digital and tech firms, the wider creative industries), to civic and community organisations, to Universities and academic researchers, and beyond.

Together they should catalogue and champion exciting new models that offer answers to the new challenges. The outputs from this work should be put into the hands of the whole sector so everyone can use it to make arguments about the power of Outdoor Arts and Circus.

## Sector Leadership: Growing Influence

Secondly, as national governments, sector development agencies, (e.g. Arts Councils), city governments and other bodies make big decisions affecting cultural and creative sector recovery, stabilisation, and the sector's whole future direction, they will take varying degrees of advice and may form policy groups, task forces, or steering groups. Outdoor Arts and Circus partnerships, larger festivals, network bodies and development agencies should aim to create influence here.

Membership of the groups and who these ministries and organisations consult is always contested and often contestable. The extent to which they will be receptive will vary country-by-country. Making the case to join or work with policy groups and task forces, perhaps representing a broader coalition may be possible in the case of larger organisations or partnerships. Influencing them will be easier for organisations with 'heft'. Using our contacts, it might be possible to reach the people involved to put forward our case for us. It might be possible

to submit data and evidence, to form mandated subgroups working on a particular area, or to influence them through social media or email/letter campaigns.

The policies and plans they produce will influence the investment schemes that follow. New schemes are already appearing, e.g. covering sector stabilisation, testing new models and partnerships, contributing to social and economic recovery, or reaching new communities and audiences in new ways.

## Sector-Wide Advocacy Activity

Thirdly an area where all professionals in Outdoor Arts and Circus can play a direct part. Online campaigning can be done by individuals and organisations of all sizes - it takes limited time and resources. This might be where an organisation or partnership has already established an agenda or campaign and you support it, or where you begin your own. These might be wider arts sector campaigns, or specific ones for Outdoor Arts and Circus. It could include online petitions, use of hashtags, and email campaigns to gain

the support of interested parties. This form of pressure can enable policymakers to read the 'mood' on a particular issue and it can directly bring about change. It is also important to respond to consultations and calls for evidence from sector bodies (Arts Councils, Creative Industries Development bodies) or Government ministries. This is the ongoing day-to-day work of advocacy. Bookmark key websites on your browser or follow key figures and organisations on social media to keep pace with campaigns and consultations.



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## Influencing Strategy and Investment in Places

Fourthly, we must engage outside the cultural sector and cultural sector policymaking. Again, this is something where everyone can play a role using their knowledge and connections in places. There will be post-Covid-19 recovery boards and steering groups in regions, city regions, and local

places. There will be strategies and 'blueprints' for social and economic recovery. Investment (both public and in some cases private) will be realigned and redirected towards post-Covid-19 social and economic recovery. Aligned to strategies and plans, there will be many tiers of investment allocation: money

will come directly from national government, local government, and public bodies, or trickle down to regional and local organisations for them to distribute. It will go towards health and well-being, social care, community support, city, town and neighbourhood regeneration, placemaking and recovery

of the high street, job creation and skills, and more. It will come through national government, local government, public bodies. Charities, trusts and foundations are also establishing Covid-recovery funds.

We must make the case to join, try to influence those groups, and offer to work with them to ensure the arts and Outdoor Arts and Circus are included in those plans, and are positioned as part of the so-

lution in order to access those funds. The sector needs to make the case to access those resources.

## Demystifying Advocacy

Advocacy is the conscious effort to bring about policy or social change by growing support for a particular action or cause. Some feel advocacy is an obscure art practiced by more senior or better-connected or more confident people than themselves.

However, we are all capable of changing the minds of others. Advocacy is a normal and legitimate part of democracy and the policymaking process. Knowing the facts about your sector is vital. However, the more expert you are about the work, policy and in-

terests of the person you wish to influence, the better. The more you can credibly relate how your festival, organisation, or sector can deliver for them, the more interested others will become in engaging with you.

## Advocacy: 6 Steps

There are six essential practices of advocacy.

### 1. Prepare a Strategy or a Simple Plan

For larger campaigns aiming to create a big change in policy a more detailed strategy with objectives over 1-3 years is appropriate. There are guides online to help with this. For smaller organisations or for a shorter time frame just setting simple goals in a simple action plan is enough.

### 2. Assemble your team

The wider the circle of people engaged in the advocacy work, the better. For an organisation it might be staff, board members, patrons, volunteers, 'friends', or other powerful agents. Assign roles and ensure people have the right skills and resources. For smaller organisations or individuals perhaps partner with other Outdoor Arts and Circus organisations, or other types of arts organisations - either nationally, or in a local place.

### 3. Map Your Sphere of Influence

With your 'team' produce a visual map of your contacts including: government (national, regional, local) elected politicians and officials, arts sector, public sector organisations: economic development, health and wellbeing, education, planning and development, business, the voluntary and community sector, and the faith sector. Then identify any gaps and decide what to do about them. Remember the 'six degrees of separation': who do you know who can help you reach the person you wish to influence?

### 4. Create Your Case

Here include four areas. Data and evidence about sector impact. The story or message you want to communicate: about the impact of your work on people or communities, or its importance to the economy perhaps. Situate your case in relation relevant arts, social, or economic policy. Also include ambition for future: what you want your organisation or sector to be like in the future?

This last point is where we can start building the new story about Outdoor Arts and Circus. It might be a narrative about the unique power of Outdoor Arts to help people come to terms with this crisis and also to reimagine what the future could be like in local places. It might be a much longer-term vision about the way Outdoor Arts is knitted more seamlessly into the fabric and rhythm of everyday life and places. It might be describing new funding and financial models.

Different versions are needed: longer versions for presentations, and shorter ones for quick communication. It can be case studies, videos, infographics, press releases, or creative acts such as a poem or prose.

### 5. Get Into Action

Action falls into 3 areas. Firstly, direct contact with those you identified in Step 3 - politicians, officials and all the other important sectors. It includes everything from attending public events and consultations, asking for one-to-one meetings, or inviting others to 'set-piece' meetings where an influential

figure speaks about the power of Outdoor Arts or the arts more widely. Crucially it involves inviting people to see your work.

Second, growing a 'family' of supporters: the public and individuals, board members, 'friends', champions, advocates and volunteers, and other powerful agents e.g. well recognised artists, celebrities, or figures in local civic life. These are people you'll want to skill up, offer incentives to, and bring closer to the workings of your campaign or organisation - so in turn they galvanise the support of others.

Third, connecting to a broader audience through social media, and traditional media can still play an important role.

### 6. Review and Adjust

Advocacy is very dynamic. A single engagement with a powerful figure can help break new ground enabling you to make the case to new people, meaning you'll need to adjust your path. Your message will need to be kept under review too, depending on the direction the sector takes in your country, and in terms of what becomes possible in the post-Covid-19 world.

What to aim for

- Inclusion of Outdoor Arts and Circus in arts sector recovery plans
- A seat at the table of a task force, policy group, or steering group
- Inclusion of the Outdoor Arts and Circus, or the arts more generally in the recovery plans or wider strategic plans in places: regions, city regions, and local places
- Influential or powerful supporters making the case for you
- The start of a relationship with a new funder
- Organisations outside the arts co-commissioning research or projects with you
- Communities and places mobilising to support the return of festivals and events



© Michael Hoar

## Everything to Play For: Final Thoughts

Many think the Covid-19 crisis is a game-changing moment for politics, policy, prosperity, the dominant economic model, and the social settlement. As with the financial crisis in 2008 we will be experiencing the fallout for many years. For the cultural and creative sector around the world big change is inevitable. There will be a re-evaluation of operating models and how programmes are delivered so they are feasible and safe. As the sector attempts to reposition the value of art and culture, Outdoor

Arts and Circus can take this moment to put forward a re-imagined future. This can only happen if everyone seizes the moment, acts with leadership and imagination, and works together. Sector organisations need to act in concert with those in other nations to influence the thinking of supranational bodies such as the EU. They also need to join forces within nations on national, regional and local levels to make their advocacy cases. Larger festivals, network bodies and development agencies must come together to lead this

new vision and case for Outdoor Arts and Circus. There is everything to play for in this moment. Whilst many people note that Outdoor Arts may be in a position to restart activities sooner than venue-based organisations, Outdoor Arts and Circus can use this moment think much further ahead than that.

🌐 Find out more about Michael's work and connect with him on [LinkedIn](#)



## INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN EDWARD TURNER COMPANY CHAMELEON



© Joel Fildes

Kevin Edward Turner co-founded Manchester based Company Chameleon in 2007. As performer himself and Co-Artistic Director of the company he has created, led, directed, produced, taught and facilitated performances, masterclasses, workshops, residences, interventions and participatory projects nationally and internationally.

**As a company with two Co-Artistic Directors, how do you feel leadership is shared and addressed within the company?**

Shared leadership can be successful as it allows us as a Company to do more work and be open to more opportunities. Chameleon is an anomaly in the sector having two Artistic Directors, as most organisations have one Artistic Director who has a singular vision which they build with their team and work to implement. There can be many complexities and it takes time negotiating and building through dialogue the combined vision of both Artistic Directors. It is worth it as the vision becomes richer and I believe that it is part of our success. Having two Artistic Directors allows us to be more open, flexible and responsive to changes in the sector, the market, our audiences and the communities and people we engage with.

As leaders, we believe in leading by example. We believe in our team and work hard to create a culture of communication and collaboration where our team feels valued and their expertise and voices heard.

By having transparency, great communication, clear policies and procedures and clarity of roles and responsibilities, our leadership is steered by a shared vision and



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clear direction of where the Company is going, which everyone in the team has invested into and works towards on a daily basis.

**You have worked on well-being and mental health through your show *Witness This*, which drew from your personal experience. According to you, what is the role of dancing in the public space in encouraging positive health and well-being, especially when physical and social connections are limited?**

I think that dancing has a very important role in highlighting and bringing focus to an incredibly important topic that for many, especially men, is a taboo. If by watching a piece of work it allows you to reflect, share and talk about your mental health and well-being then that can only be a positive thing.

This was the main inspiration for creating *Witness This*. If I could share the experience of my own mental health crisis and how it impacted upon myself and my loved ones, then it may encourage others to do the same.

From experience, sharing is the first step towards becoming healthy again.

Talking and sharing how you're feeling couldn't be more important than it is at the moment in the context of Covid-19. The massive disruption and isolation have most definitely led to heightened anxiety and well-being concerns for many people.

One way we can tackle this issue is through bringing people together for a shared cultural experience, even if it is with social distancing and the necessary precautions in place. That sense of coming together to experience a spectacle can have a hugely positive impact on your mental well-being and help you feel part of a community. This is even more so if the work helps you to feel less alone with your own feelings, or better understand the feelings and behaviour of those around you.

**How will your company deal with the uncertainty surrounding international touring and cooperation projects in the upcoming year?**

We are living in unprecedented times, with catastrophic results upon the arts and cultural sector. We will be forced by the circumstances that we find ourselves in to reimagine and rethink how we produce, make, tour and engage with arts and culture.

I am optimistic that we will be able to creatively rise to the challenge and come up with novel solutions so we can reconnect with our audiences and the community at large.

We will keep conversations open with our international partners and work with them closely to overcome any barriers, but with so much uncertainty it is very difficult to plan; postponement and cancellation are an ever-increasing reality.

The company is in a very fortunate situation much better than so many other artists and organisations as we receive public core funding from ACE, Manchester City Council and GMCA which is still allowing us to operate and plan for re-emergence.



© Joel Fildes, *Witness This* by Company Chameleon

**How to promote diversity and inclusion and what are your personal reflections on how dance can contribute to making a change in that regard?**

Chameleon since its inception has always had diversity and inclusion at the core of our mission, we truly believe that dance and movement have the power to transform people's lives regardless of their background. We have done this in the choreography that we create, the artists we have worked with, and the multitude of different communities both at home and abroad we have engaged with through our learning and participation programmes and projects.

At Chameleon we have a deep sense of duty and responsibility to create the opportunities that we had as young people. If those people and opportunities had not been there, we wouldn't be doing what we are doing, and our voice would not be heard. This puts the fire in all the work we create whether it be performative or participatory. We love the democracy of our outdoor work and how it reaches new audiences who may never engage with contemporary work.

It is incumbent on us all working in the sector in all the many roles it contains to be working towards creating and providing for those

communities and people who have the least access and engagement.

Providing structured opportunities which provide the training for success, to those who are least represented. This is the only way we can have a landscape of leadership that is not tokenistic but truly reflected of a diverse range of people working within that landscape.

Plurality of opinion experience and diversity of option and perspective is what lies at the centre of greatness. Let's all work towards being the architects of that greatness.

 [www.companychameleon.com](http://www.companychameleon.com)



## INTERVIEW WITH LINA JOHANSSON MIMBRE



© Isabelle Grosse

Lina Johansson is joint Artistic Director of Mimbire, an acrobatic theatre company fusing acrobatics, dance and humour to create visual poetry in unconventional performance spaces. Lina also works as a director, choreographer and movement director for circus, theatre, opera and fashion. Mimbire performances includes *Lifted*, *Bench*, *The Exploded Circus*, *Until Now* and collaborations include Dior's *Dream Parade*, *Wondrous Strange* at Royal Shakespeare Company and *City of the Unexpected* with National Theatre Wales and Wales Millenium Centre.

**As a company with two Co-Artistic Directors, how do you feel leadership is shared and addressed within the company?**

Silvia Fratelli and I originally set up Mimbire with Emma Norin as we graduated from circus school, so we started as three! Sharing the leadership can be hard, but when it works I believe it gives both a stronger structure and a more flexible and supportive environment to work in. This is especially true if you are a parent (or have other caring responsibilities). Both me and Silvia were able to take maternity leave and go down to flexible working when needed, knowing that the other person will keep forwarding the company.

This has made us a lot more resilient. In times of crisis, like this spring with lockdown, Covid-19 and a loss of all our plans, Silvia and I could take turns not only with being off work on furlough (a UK government support scheme to prevent redundancies) but also with the emotional drive. Taking turns between despair and persistence! Since I stopped performing, being two ADs has also allowed us to grow significantly. Silvia is in charge of our outdoor touring and repertoire shows with our core team, while I work more actively on commissioned work with a wider range of collaborators.

Job shares in general are a big thing that should be explored with respect to equal opportunity. It is not easy to make it work, but that is partly because we are so used to expecting all or nothing from people. But all or nothing means that we lose a lot of talent along the way. Looking with fresh

eyes on work approaches will be essential over the next year and beyond.

**On your website - in the missions of the company, you state: "Our performances and participation programme reach beyond social, financial and cultural boundaries and find fresh ways to engage, encourage and inspire people". How do you put this into practice?**

From the beginning of Mimbire we were drawn to performance settings that were accessible to a wider range of audiences. The atmosphere, inclusiveness and directness of outdoor theatre attracted us most of all and when we make shows for indoors or other settings, we try to bring that direct contact with audiences and an openness to what a performance setting can be with

us. We want to be part of breaking down excluding concepts of what performance and culture is and work towards art being a natural part of everyday life.

By working with physical and choreographic storytelling, our shows are not reliant on the use of spoken text or a specific languages and we try to deal with universal issues like trust, risk, friendships, hopes and fears which most people can connect to across borders and backgrounds. We try to inspire by providing a diverse and inclusive image of what women are, can be and can do, challenging gender stereotypes or artificial boundaries and 'unfollow' the mainstream circus body stereotype.

Mimbire's Youth Programme runs in community halls on housing estates in our local borough of Hackney. This, combined with



© Mimbire Youth by Heard In London

70% of places being free or heavily subsidized, has helped to make the classes both geographically and economically available for low-income families and to create a sense of ownership of culture happening in the heart of the community. Hackney is a borough that has gone through a massive regeneration in the last 15 years, meaning the gap in provision of activities for young people is huge and our aim is to do our bit to shrink that.

As we work with more and more commissioned work and collaborations - if a project is set in an exclusive setting I still ask myself, how can we stay true to our values and how can we use the gains from this project to progress Mimbre's more accessible areas of work? Be it financial, artistic, new collaborators or raised profile.

Keeping fresh, this is a constant process! For me collaborations are key. We value long-term collaborators, because there is something really special when you can develop artistic understanding, skills and performance complicity across several productions, but on the other hand working with new collaborators brings fresh approaches, excitement and ways to look at circus and physical storytelling with new eyes! Our aim in each production is to have a mix of old and new collaborators and that way keep moving forward while still building on what we've achieved previously.

*Women stood on other women's shoulders. They strode along the walkways, held high and visible from every angle, breaking gender barriers and breaking hearts with the symbolism of so much female support: She ain't heavy—she's my sister...*

Vogue on Mimbre/Dior Collaboration Dream Parade

**Would you say being a female artistic director influences the way your work is received and recognized in the sector in the UK? How do you navigate through these issues?**

I have had so much support and encouragement, but as Mimbre and I grew in size we definitely hit our head on a glass ceiling when we



© *The Exploded Circus* by Lina Johansson

wanted to go bigger. People were much more comfortable keeping us in a small- or mid-scale niche, which I think is still expected from women creators. We do our best to crack that ceiling, and by standing on each others' shoulders at least we reach higher each time, but sadly the ceiling is still there, and even more so if you are a person of colour, from a working-class background or disabled. The arts world is good in appearing to be accepting, but if you look around the circus and outdoor scene, it nowhere near represents the diversity of the countries and communities we live and perform in. Recent testimonies have reminded us of all the barriers that stand in the way of people of colour who create and as a sector we have to address this!

**How do you imagine the next steps to reconnect and reengage both with the creation process and with the audience (nationally and internationally) in a post Covid-19 society?**

In the CS LAB Keynote Session#1 - *Leadership in times of crisis*, Hilary Carty talked about how our values will be even more important now and the importance of questioning what we want our world and the performing arts sector to look like when we try to rebuild it.

This really resonates with me. Let's not put our energy into rebuilding a status quo that was already broken! Let's really look at how

we can rebuild something more equal, more inclusive and better. Everyone has power to be part of that change: performers and creators, producers, managers, educators, administrators and audiences.

Festivals and institutions: Freelance artists and small companies are on the brink of going under and are being cut out of conversations about the future. Find ways to listen, support and include them in your decision-making. Without them there is no festival to put on. Question hierarchical structures; they are deeply unfair and I would say also often really unproductive!

Creatives, producing companies, programmers: when we audition, recruit, book or commission – who do we give the platforms

to? Look at the demographic information for your area/town/country. Different ethnicities, genders, sexualities, social classes and Deaf and disabled performers. Are you remotely representative of that if you add up the team of your last few shows or festivals? And not just for counts, but in actual status and opportunities given properly. We need to really look at how we're recruiting and question if we have too much tendency to just cast and support copies of ourselves.

Most of Mimbre's shows are all women (so not equal representation!) to balance the huge numbers of all-male or male-led companies in circus and outdoors. I would not limit us like that, if the wider sector committed to more balanced gender casts and artistic teams. But that's not to say that

Mimbre don't still have a lot of areas to improve on and it is an ongoing dialogue and ever continuous journey. But for each step we manage to take I feel not only our company, but also our artistic output becomes so much stronger!

The reason we do outdoor and circus is that it gives us an opportunity to defy set expectations about culture, cities and what the human body is capable of. Let's apply our creativity and defiance to also challenge the personal as well as systematic inequalities in our society and in the performance world, and move forward together to create a richer, more beautiful world.

🌐 [www.mimbre.co.uk](http://www.mimbre.co.uk)



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# LABRARY

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You will find below a thematic list of resources and additional contents to dig further into the issues tackled in this publication.

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## CS LAB#5 Webinar

- [Keynote Session 1 - Leadership in times of crisis](#)
- [Keynote Session 2 - Developing diverse and inclusive leadership practices](#)
- [Keynote Session 3 - Advocacy for change](#)
- [Wrap Up Session](#)

## Leadership in times of Crisis

- Clore Leadership - [Crisis management \(articles and videos\)](#)
- Clore Leadership - [Building Resilience - International Perspectives \(video\)](#)
- Arts Council England: [How to Develop Diverse Leadership, Culture Change Guide \(publication\)](#)
- IETM: [A Critical Ten Point Plan to creating professional sectors that reflect society \(video\)](#)
- Arts Council England - [The Art of Leadership Podcast Series \(podcast\)](#)

## Diversity

- Arts Hub: [Circus is democratic, yet arts companies struggle with diversity \(article\)](#)
- Clore Leadership: [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: What is stopping us? \(publication\)](#)
- Clore Leadership: [Do the Arts Really Value Diversity? \(publication\)](#)

## Advocacy

- Ontario Association of Art Galleries - [Advocacy for Arts Organisations: A Toolkit for Engaging in the 2018 Provincial & Municipal Elections, compiled by Valentyna Onisko \(guide\)](#)
- Global Partners Digital - [Planning Tool: Using the Strategic Advocacy Canvas, Global Partners Digital \(publication\)](#)
- [Using the Strategic Advocacy Canva \(guide\)](#)

## Dance Projects

- Company Chameleon - [Moving for the Mind \(article\)](#)
- Membre lockdown project commissioned by BBC and Arts Council England: [The Sofa Dance \(video\)](#)