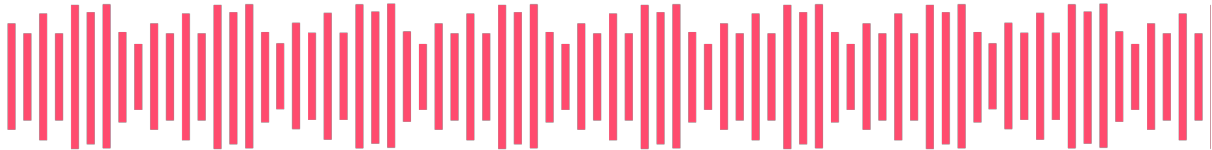


TALKING MOVES



A PODCAST ABOUT DANCE

Running a Youth Company in Lockdown S01 / E04

Episode Description

In this episode we talk to **Ingrid Molinos** and **Tory East** about running a youth dance company during a global pandemic. They tell us about the work their companies, Young Amici and Hampshire Youth Dance respectively, would ordinarily do and how this has changed over the course of 2020. We discuss how young people reacted to their cancelled performances and auditions and the ways in which they have adapted, successfully or unsuccessfully, to online dancing....and we delve into the ways they have been able not just to train, but to live up to their intention of being 'performance companies' whilst being restricted to a digital output.

Ingrid talks about the ways in which she has tried to rebuild an inclusive environment for her young people and their families online and her summer school which had sold out. Tory reflects on the barrier Zoom put between them. They both reflect upon the race to upskill digitally in order to support their young dancers, the opportunity presented by One Dance UK through their U.Dance digital festival and the ways in which both they and their young people have come to appreciate just how much they can all achieve.

Together they discuss mental health, the vocational journey, leadership and whether these young people will ever want to make another film again!

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Talking Moves is a Greenwich Dance production

Presented by Melanie Precious

Production by Carmel Smith, Lucy White and Melanie Precious

Intro:

Melanie:

Hello, and welcome to talking moves a podcast from Greenwich Dance, where dance artists come together to talk about their work and practice the things that matter and the issues which move them. I'm Melanie precious, and in this episode, I'm talking with two artists about running a youth company during lockdown.

Here at Greenwich Dance, we take great pride in our youth dance program, called Energy Dance. It seizes offering weekly dance classes in five locations across the borough with arts award embedded alongside Lotus, our performance company, or rather that's what we used to do. Then lockdown happened, and some of these young people disappeared like wisps from our network of support. Throughout lockdown I watch my own two children show signs of stress, anxiety de-motivation and a loss of physical fitness, and I, along with many, many others worry about the imprint this will have on their characters and their learning, their behaviors.

Very little has been said about this with an industry press, so concerned, are we, and rightly so for theatres and freelancers that keeping the next generation of young people creative and inspired is a fundamental part of what dance organizations, like us are here to do. So today we have two people joining us virtually to talk about this very thing. Tory East is the rehearsal director for Hampshire Youth Dance Company, part of The Point in Eastleigh. Tory has kept her company going through lockdown with weekly online classes and a series of films called Hampshire Dance at Home. And Ingrid Molinos artistic director of Young Amici a company, integrating able-bodied and disabled artists, and ordinarily based at the Lyric Hammersmith. Ingrid also relocated online and ran workshops, including a very successful summer school within that virtual space, so let's find out more.

Welcome Ingrid and Tory and thank you for finding time to join me.

So Ingrid, COVID aside, tell me a little bit about Young Amici

Ingrid:

So, we're an inclusive company and we have young people who are 11 to 25 years old, and we have a very diverse group, disabled and non-disabled dancers, and there's all kinds of disabilities also represented in our group, and we meet weekly at the Lyric. We have a class, we create new work, you know, we are trying to support our young people with their developmental, trying to create opportunities that would not be accessible for them. And we're trying to bring those and trying to bring as many experiences of like a professional dance environment or great places where they can develop their leadership and grow their confidence as well, and to support them to do anything that they would like to.

Melanie:

And you have performed around the world, haven't you?

I read that you had a commission, was it to Lithuania?

Ingrid:

Yes. So last year we went to Lithuania, we brought like a Young Amici lab. The aim was to bring a bit more inclusion to the practice there, because there isn't many inclusive

opportunities. So, we worked with a dance company called OUDA, out of dance theater company, and it's a professional company with loads of international dancers. And then we mixed together with a group from a day center and the three leaders from Young Amici, we went there, and we put some, some workshops and did a presentation at the end. That's all sponsored by spending 22, which is going to be European cultural capital in 2022. So that was a fantastic opportunity.

Melanie:

Hugely exciting, and how about you, Tory? Tell me about your company, who are your dancers and what kind of work do you usually strive to do.

Tory:

Hampshire Youth Dance Company are an audition-based company, and they bring together 22 young dancers from across Hampshire and they're age 13 to, they can go up to 21, but the current cohort goes to 19 and similar to, um, Ingrid's company, um, that we're trying to create with a unique professional experience. They are really young, aspiring dancers, so the majority of the company are interested in going on into the dance or performing arts profession after Hampshire Youth. So, we give them quite intense professional experience, giving them a company experience rather than just a technique class. I think that's what makes them different. So, like Ingrid, we have the creative side as well as technique class, and we actually have a couple of really exciting commissions every year. This year we had Bota sever who just made a piece on the company in February, which we were due to tour between March and July. And then, I also make a piece on the company, and we also work quite closely with Rambert school. We have a mentoring program where two third years from the school come and create a further two pieces, so there's normally four or five pieces of rep that they would tour. So, you need quite a unique experience for a youth company, I think, to be able to move around the region.

Melanie:

And they tour theatres around the region, do they in Hampshire?

Tory:

Yeah, so it might be various youth platforms that have been running over a long period of time already. We might go into schools and colleges and with that, we might deliver a workshop so they can have a taste of what it might be like to be in HYDC. And then we have an exchange with some youth companies as well.

Melanie:

So, picking up on that, sorry, Ingrid, what would you say is your group as well on this kind of prevocational journey, similar to HYDC, or is there a different reason for coming together?

Ingrid:

We have some students who are prevocational, some of them have actually gone to university and some have also gone through a professional ballet school, but we have a big proportion of students which are excluded from all of this. They are excluded from any kind of dance training and the possibility of either going through an open dance class or a vocational classes it's not available for them at this moment in time. Maybe, hopefully in the

future, things change at one point, but yeah, at the moment, that's not possible for a big number of our members.

Melanie:

So that's part of what Amici's purpose is then I'm imagining. So, both of you have got incredibly busy programs for your young people. What did they miss through lockdown? What activities had you planned that were canceled?

Ingrid:

For us? The last activity within that was, um, being part of you dance, and we were performing at Trinity Laban, but for some of our young people, they were already in isolation and they weren't able to even come to the last rehearsals into their performance. So even before everybody else went into lock down, some of our members were already in lockdown and I think what's been missing for them, most of it it's been, you know, the human interaction and the relationship that we usually have, because I think our sessions, they provide a safe space where they can just be themselves. There's nothing else that makes them different and nothing else that's pointing out to them, no, you can't do this, or you can't move forward in this way, so having that taken away, I think some of them have been finding it quite isolating and some of them haven't even been able to participate in those sessions. Some of them have participated but have taken a backseat, then they're kind of just watching the sessions and, and some of them who were not able to come out to our performances, into our, uh, into the rehearsals, they've actually really appreciated the fact that we still see each other online. So, it has been different for all of them.

Melanie:

So, for you actually, that's quite monumental, isn't it? Because it wasn't just about loss of a performance opportunity or a competition or whatever it might be. It was a loss of, uh, of a safe and inclusive space where those young people felt that what they could do really mattered and disappeared. And how about you, Tory? What performances and opportunities did you have to cancel?

Tory:

So, we missed our curtain raiser with Far From the Norm with Botis Seva, which we've worked really really hard for. It was meant to be a highlight of their year. And then we also missed our Rambert School commission. So, our work with our third years from Rambert, and then we normally have about 15 performances. So, they missed all the usual annual performances, and we always have a little, uh, graduate showcase for, um, our dancers who are, uh, moving on at the end of the year, and I think that was one of the biggest highlights of the year for them is that they, they get to show what they've achieved, um, as a company and as individuals.

Melanie:

So, we found out a little bit about what you canceled, what you were missing, and I really want to talk to you about online classes, certainly for Greenwich Dance, we had some success and some challenges with our online classes, for young people. We found that they worked brilliantly with older people are over 55s, actually suggested that they move their classes

online. Our adult classes went really well, but we found pretty early on that our young people didn't particularly like Zoom as a place for dancing. They felt shy, they didn't like their cameras being on and they didn't like people seeing their homes. Sometimes they couldn't commit sometimes they didn't have devices. So, what we ended up doing is moving to more of a creative challenge-based model. We had quite a few activities over the summer and we'd use Zoom for pastoral check-ins every week. But it seems to me that that hasn't really been the case for you, you seem to have worked quite well in a virtual setting, uh, particularly you Ingrid, your workshops were sold out and your summer school also, tell me more about how those worked and, and why you thought that they worked.

Ingrid:

Yeah, well we've kind of made a bit of an evolution through lockdown. You know, the first class was really sure that got cut off when people, you know, we were doing a relaxation on the floor and, but, you know, we've moved on quite a bit from that. And we have mixed bag of experiences as well from the young people. Some, as you say, they don't really want to be seen. They don't want to dance in front of camera. And some of them, they, they have the camera on and they dance on the side of the camera. Uh, some of them they'd rather watch. Then we have, we've also had those issues where we have not been able to reach all of our members, but for those who have been with us, it has been really successful in terms of keeping the connection. And, you know, we've been doing quite a few things. We've done a film also through lockdown. Cause it has also allowed us to connect with members of the main company. So Young Amici is affiliated with Amici, the original company, and we are following, there work for, um, younger people. So online sessions have provided the space where we can bridge that generational gap somehow. And we've had also external members joining us. Yeah. But we've kind of grown from trying to have as many ways as in which we can adapt the sessions as well for everyone to make them accessible. So, we now have, um, a close caption service that accept titles to all of our obsessions and develop the system that kind of keeps the engagement going.

Melanie:

Hm. How did your summer schoolwork, were young people on Zoom for the day?

Ingrid:

Yeah, Yeah, so that was quite an intense experience. We had three sessions a day. It lasted the week and we had two sessions in the morning, which one was like a Young Amici session, but it was just improvisational and just creative work, and then we had sessions like yoga and ballet, and then in the evening we had sessions which had a bit more of a holistic approach. So, some meditation and we had Phelan cries and we also had drama. So, we had a, of a, of a break, because otherwise it's, it's too intense for young people. Our session started being an hour, and then when we had the summer school, then we realized that actually they can, they can still keep their engagement longer than an hour. And now we are back to our original, weekly time slot then, and our sessions are one hour and a half. So yeah.

Melanie:

And didn't you integrate parents into some of your sessions as well?

Ingrid:

Yes, so throughout lockdown we're quite open, were always quite open, and also because our members, some of them, they do need some support, not just through lockdown and doing the online sessions, but also when they're in the studio, some of our young members, they come with their carers or, or their support worker. So, some of it is working in the same way while it's online, and some of them they've just been happy to join with their families because they're, you know, their parents weren't working and they had more time together at home, and it was actually very nice to see, families moving and following the sessions together.

Melanie:

Oh, how lovely

Ingrid:

Yeah, and the same for summer school. Um, we followed more or less the same thing. So, it was organized by, by Young Amici, but it was open to anybody and whoever really wanted to join and enjoy this week together.

Melanie:

And do you think that your young people stuck with those sessions because of their connection to you and the company. I'm just trying to work out, I suppose, for myself, why Zoom was working for some young people and not others. And what the reason for being there, because it's become such an integral part of their lives, do you think that they were just determined to find a way to be there with you?

Ingrid:

Yeah, I think because, you know, our group is so different, you know, and we have so many people represented within our group that not all of them are in the same situation. I think some of our, uh, young people who are in school and they were doing their home learning and always connected to a computer, I think they kind of, at times needed a break from looking at a screen. But for some others who are actually cut off of any interaction and they're not in a navigational setting, they welcome having that connection with others and having something that it's actually their time. Cause some of our members enjoy doing the sessions with their parents, but some of them, they don't really want anybody around. Is there moment, is there time, that's what they want to do on their own? So, you know, we've been successful, but we haven't been successful in reaching all of our young people, which is something that we're kind of trying to move farther on with at the moment, you know? Cause, um, yeah, as you said, not all of them, they have an internet connection and not all of them, they have the technology to access the sessions. So, we're just trying to look for as many ways as we can to reach out to all of them.

Melanie:

Yup. Yup. And Tori you also delivered on Zoom; how did your young people find that experience?

Tory:

I've got to say actually I'm starting to, now we are back in the studio and I'm having face-to-face conversations with them. I've started to realize that it was different to what I had

perceived my end. So, whilst we were really successful in what we achieved as a company, we had some, we had films, we had lots of creative projects and we kept going for 18 weeks and we had some also like Ingrid, some intense sessions in the summer. I noticed quite early on that they started to shut down. There are a very close group, their friendships and their connections are really strong. And um, they have quite a close relationship with me that they would come into the space and they'd let me know if they'd had a difficult day or I'd know what was going on in their lives so that I was able to support them or guide them in leaving that outside the studio or perhaps exploring that creatively.

But what I found is they really shut down and they became really quiet and I would be asking them questions. How are you, what you, what did you do today? And they, sometimes would just look blankly at the screen and no one would, um, unmute themselves to say anything. Unless I kind of guided it and went off, um, um, Trixie, can you, how are you, unless I kind of directed it to a specific individual. They did shut down a little bit, and halfway through lockdown, I decided that I would do some one-to-one with them to have that mental health check in and to really find out how they were coping. And they are a very determined group of young dancers who, you know, they are very professional in the way that they work already at this age. So, I think there was perhaps something in them where they felt like I can't actually say that I hate this right now. And they did close down. And since we've been back in the studio, some of them have said to me, Tory I hated it, hated dancing in my bedroom. At first it was exciting, and then as time went on, it became exhausting. And I, that really resonated with me as an artist because I also was taking part in professional class. And as time went on, I did less and less professional classes. And then I didn't want my camera on because I didn't really want people to see me dancing in my kitchen. So, I really could understand where they were coming from. And I think what made me quite sad is a couple of our most talented dancers have said my experience of lockdown and dancing at home has changed my kind of goal. If you'd like, they're kind of saying, I don't know if I want to take dance further now, which is really quite heartbreaking, and when I talked to them about that, they just said, it's just the whole experience. And they said, I don't want to dance in a box forever. When they look at going on to take their dance further, they're seeing images on social media of all the dance schools. We were all dancing in boxes with masks on, and that is not, I guess, what they know dance to be and adjusting their mindset, actually. And saying you can still dance, but it's going to be slightly different.

Melanie:

It's not what they signed up for.

Tory:

I don't think they can quite get their head around that just yet. Um, so I think there's a lot of work to be done in terms of rebuilding young people's confidence and supporting their mental health right now, as in terms of their physicality, they came back in the studio and they were as strong as they have ever been. But yeah, it made me question, could we lose a generation of really talented, young dance artists because of their experience of locked down and COVID, you know, the numbers of young people wanting to pursue dance, about to drop and about to change.

Melanie:

You talked about that as well, didn't you Ingrid about feeling that you've lost connection with a section of your cohort? Do you have similar feelings to Tory then around that a feeling that those young people might have gone through the cracks and how do you save them?

Ingrid:

Yeah, for us, so much of building our relationships, then, you know, building their confidence happens in the studio, obviously like, you know, it happens with, with Tory as well, but, um, a big part of our members who are, they're not at home or they live in homes and they come with a support worker or their carers. And that has kind of been, that connection has been lost through lockdown because they're not entirely just dependent on their own initiative. So it's not been easy to be able to get everyone in the studio at the time, or like in our virtual studio or, you know, if they're in a home, they don't have the facilities to access the internet or the support there for them. And some of them that rather not use them and they'd rather not be on screen, but what we have done as well, we've we have a WhatsApp group, and we try to just share things and get connected with each other in that way. And, you know, try to keep the message positive. And, you know, we always kind of like checking up on each other and saying, hi, you know, we have the session starting and stuff, but it is going to take, I think a lot of work, you know, coming back to the studio and rebuilding that confidence and rebuilding those connections. And I'm sure for a lot of them, they're going to be super happy to come back and to be able to be together. But for those who have taken a step back and really suffered with her mental health, it's not going to be easy going back to all the work that we kind of had before.

Melanie:

There's something that I wanted to ask you both about the barrier that Zoom put in front of you and your group. And I know this isn't the same thing because my little one I've got a nine-year-old and a five-year-old and we're talking here about young people, 11 plus. But when my five-year-old, uh, signed up to one of our classes or rather he didn't, I signed him up as there's part of the problem. He decided he was just going to be a referee there. He said, and he, and he sat in front of the screen and I could hear the poor artists trying every tool in the book to get him to do something. And he would run off and come back. And I, and I thought to myself, God, she's absolutely powerless. She's only got her voice to try and cajole him from wherever he's disappeared off the screen, back into that little square to try and get him to participate in the class. Now you're talking about, obviously, as we said, young people that aren't running away and eating carrots and telling you that they're going to be a referee, but there's certainly that sense of, you know, not being able to reach out to those young people and help them with a movement or ask them how they were doing. How did you approach that virtual thing that was in front of us? Tory? What tricks did you use?

Tory:

Okay, well, sometimes I gave them the individual tasks where rather than the instructions or the exercise or the creative task coming from me, I might've asked one of the participants to take charge. So, at one point I asked one of our young dancers to teach some of their material that they'd created in their space, so that I was trying to create that kind of friendship and that connection with each other a little bit more, rather than we're all just staring at the screen and focusing on what Tory is telling us what to do. So, I was trying to build that company feeling through Zoom. That was one of the things that we tried. I don't think it necessarily worked, they learned the material and they shared each other's work. One

of the things I started doing towards the end was in technique class or creative session, I would divide the group in, in two so that they would actually watch each other, as they would do in the studio, because I realized that we were, you know, just doing class and working on things. And then we miss watching each other, you know, they're inspired by each other's talent and each other's creativity. And I realized we weren't really taking time to stop and see that in each other on Zoom. So that was quite good.

Melanie:

Did you use the breakout rooms for that?

Tory:

We use the breakout rooms. We actually did end up working with Rambert School students creating two films online. So, we use the breakout rooms for that project, but in terms of when I was trying to get them involved in leading each other, we stayed as one company on the screen. Which in itself has a lot of problems because while my end, I'm trying to see 22 body's and they're, you know, they're very small. They can obviously pin their videos to see whoever's guiding and see them slightly larger. That worked quite well, and we started using that in class where we would have a phrase at the end of class and we could say, okay, you can come in and out of the phrase at any point you want to, and just stop and observe, and then you can come back into the phrase rather than going, okay, group one, go, group two, go, they could choose whether they wanted to dance or not. And then we had a lot of one-to-one conversations, which gave me a little bit of a insight into actually how they were feeling at home. And I think what was difficult was that when you're in the studio, you're able to create this environment where they can leave their baggage or their daily pressures outside the studio and come in and just embrace dancing and being together and on Zoom, it felt like they weren't able to do that maybe because they were in their personal space.

Melanie:

There pressures are still there I suppose, all around.

Tory:

So, things like, yeah, so things like missing out on their proms, their GCSE results, their A-level results, where they are leaving college, and they might not see their peers again, because they're going to university. They were key points in a young person's life, that was suddenly taken away from them. And I remember we had a session on what would have been a prom day for some of them. And it was really, really hard because they were not, you know, they're not mentally able to leave those things and just dance, whereas they can do that when they come into the studio. So that was a big, big challenge.

Melanie:

Ingrid, you lecture on this subject as well about building an inclusive environment when you are in a physical space with your young people. And I know you've touched on that a little bit today, but what tips would you give a dance facilitator in an ordinary situation within a studio space? And what did you learn about transferring any of those tips into working through an online platform as we have done?

Ingrid:

Well, I think the most important thing is to be open and to be flexible and to be, I think, accepting of the situation that dances are going through, because the story said, they're all going through different stages in their life, and their engagement is not the same every day. And your own feeling is not the same every day, so I think finding different ways in which you can explain what you're trying to convey, then that's going to tap into as many people as possible in, in a way. So, this is, I think what we've continued doing through our online sessions in the studio, we work a lot with improvisation and whilst we do technique and, and some of the things are a bit more traditionally taught, there is also an option for everybody. So not necessarily because someone has a disability who has to be taught in a different ways more because, you know, you might be in a different place that day and, and, and some things might not be available to you. So also, for some of our members is, you know, their physicality or their mental health is not always available in the same way, so we keep our practice quite open. And that has also been translated into our online sessions where much like said, we've taken some time as well to watch each other, cause this is something that we do a lot in class, and we've taken that time to take a little break and see how others are moving in their own space. And also, you know, taking advantage of the situation that we are on a screen and maybe seeing how they can play with this environment and how they can interact with their own space. So rather than just being on this spot in front of the camera and just dancing we're doing something, you know, projecting outwards in a way we've kind of been trying to look into projecting inwards, and how can you actually find your own movement and your own way of doing things, and then can we observe how others are doing the same thing in their own way.

Melanie:

Hmm. Lots to learn from, I suppose there's been challenges in that, but there's also some highlights.

Ingrid:

Yes, It's been challenging, It's been also like, I don't know, I feel somehow it's kind of kept us together where before we used to just be in a studio and kind of not know so much about each other, it kind of like has open ourselves to, you know, I don't know, somehow it has connected as a bit more in the sense of we now know each other be more, it's become like a family in a way where we can see what their environment, you know, some of our members I'm not even in the UK anymore. Yeah, it's been quite interesting in that way and trying to get to know each other in their own environment. And yeah, it's, it's been quite different.

Melanie:

So, it's one thing I think, trying to keep up the regular training, but both of you run performance companies and you have both touched upon some of those creative projects that you've been using. Certainly, uh, at Greenwich Dance, we've played around with a number of different ways of engaging our young people in creative projects. They did one film with our over 55s company where they use chat to write poetry to each other about how they were feeling. They were paired up with an older person and then, uh, movement was created through that, and that was choreographed by Sarah Blanc and then Maria Ghoumrassi their artistic director of the over 55s, and Colleen Joseph, the artistic director of Lotus came together and created a piece for DDIF, which we actually did outside, goodness,

in real space, but they've written, they rehearsed the whole thing on Zoom, which was challenging. And, and in that experience, we found young people dropping away, because the commitment to rehearsing each week at a certain time, with a device, just simply wasn't possible for the type of young people that we're working with. And so instead, Colleen did things like set them individually little challenges, and they created little films called Me Being Me, and they went out on social media. So, we've played around with loads of different ways, and I wondered, what kind of ways have you been playing with in terms of, keeping your performance company performing, even though that's often in an online space now, Tori, I know you've done a series of films and I think you were also part of You dance, the One Dance UK National Youth Platform right? It's the digital edition.

Tory:

That's something that we would of never have done before, because we wouldn't have had the budget, I guess, but we did it all on our phones online. I didn't think it was going to turn out as well as it did, so I really learned something myself about that, and so we thought, okay, let's give it a go, let's make a film. And this was to replace a project that we already had planned. So, we did this over three days. I think we spent about four hours online. So, we did a company class and then worked creatively with each other online, and, um, that involved a lot of sharing of each other's material and learning from each other, which is, it was challenging because one person might be in a very small space and then someone else might have been in the garden, so it kind of really changed the material. Then I set them a little creative task and then they dropped all their videos in this Google drive. And then I edited them over four days, trying to work out how to do that.

Melanie:

Did you have editing skills before this?

Tory:

None at all, I had done very basic iMovie edit, for like a two-minute trailer. So, I think with the films we made were about four and a half minutes and I started to play with some other editing software, which is the film that we managed to make for You dance. And I kind of thought, wouldn't it be great for them to see that they can still share their work with other youth companies and other people online. So, I kind of really wanted them to know that they are still seen, and they're still valued, and they're not just hidden behind a screen. Um, yeah, so that, that was the You dance film.

Melanie:

Did they enjoy that? Do you think?

Tory:

I think they were surprised I that the outcome, cause I think individually, they were just like, what is Tory asking us to do so once we'd done one, I think they realized what they could achieve. And we did that quite early on. So, it was in April the first one. Yeah, I think they did enjoy the challenge of it, but then later on, we actually, when the government said you can meet in groups of six, we went out in groups of six, which was really exciting. We went to four

different locations with four different groups. So, they all had an opportunity to go and create a piece together outdoors. And I bought some of their costumes with them. Had no idea what it was going to be like. We had three hours, because obviously we were quite conscious of being outside for a whole day. We spent three hours in each location, and we went to the beach and that was brilliant. And we put the films that we made into then an online platform via our social media. Very similar to what You dance did with their digital platform, which came with lots of problems because obviously, uh, Facebook likes to mute the music.

Melanie:

Ah Yes, we've come up against this problem as well.

Tory:

Yeah. The Point has a Vimeo page, so we managed to upload onto there so that if people couldn't hear the music on the live stream, they could log into the Vimeo and watch it there. And I think the families and their parents really enjoyed it and we had lots of lovely feedback for them. So, I think at that point it really lifted their spirits. And then we made a further two films. Um, and I think they're done making films for a while, I've got to say. We made a further to where we had the graduates from Rambert School, that's where they use breakout rooms and the same thing, sending lots of little clips and creative tasks. And at that point it was June, July. They really started to struggle that they were starting to feel, I think a little dip in their mental health and emotions and just exhausted, but the outcome, I think it really challenged their perception of what's possible.

Melanie:

We found summer a funny time as well, because we would ordinarily have finished the term, but because there was no such thing as terms this year and, you know, there were material, the kids weren't at school at all. We thought that we'd just keep going, but I think there was a mental kind of, Oh, we need a bit of a break. So, we did struggle a bit with the engagement over sort of late July into August. And we had a series of 26 tutorials. So, we filmed tutorials very quickly, and similarly to Ingrid, we used the WhatsApp group and we used to drop some of these tutorials into the WhatsApp group and do things that way. Ingrid What about you? What was your creative output like over this time?

Ingrid:

So, we've also done a film, because our last performance was You dance, we've taken that performance and then translated it into a film, that they had gone to record in their own time, as well on their phones, then we used some of the sessions to record them. We used some of the sessions, also to rehearse and to go over the theme of performance and then kind of rehearsed through part of our sessions and then recorded some of the clips as well. We've been quite lucky. We have a production company, we have [inaudible] who kind of supporting my crazy ideas during the style as well. So, um, same as Tory, all the young people, they sent me their clips and stuff. We had clear instructions of what we wanted in a way, so it was open but had to kind of follow what we set them, because we were somehow translating a performance onto a film, but without being able to be together in the same space and kind of like try to create the storyboard, then we would work from that. And then something else we've been also doing is supporting them into creating their own warm-ups and their own creative tasks. If they'd rather do that, some of them, they prefer to teach a

warmer up or they prefer to do a certain kind of exercise or maybe a technique exercise. And some of them they're a bit more creative, so they would rather teach a creative task, or they would rather tell me what they want and then I then have to be their voice. So yeah, we've been trying to keep their engagement quite open in this way. And then in the summer school, we also had a presentation on the last day in which they could share their thoughts or their ideas or their reactions to the week or, or just simply show us just how they felt in whichever creative form they wished. And there was quite a big range of reactions to that, so we had some poetry, and we had some drawings and we also had some paintings in which then, turn into an improvisational jam, kind of like, um, some music as well. Yeah.

Melanie:

So, there is a sense, I think perhaps for all of us, we've learnt something in lockdown, haven't we, that sometimes there's need to create a thing, a dance performance, a film or whatever. We can just let go of that and just be and create and just little moments of creativity or are worth just as much as this polished thing with a beginning, middle and end, perhaps. So, I'm really interested to know whether you've experienced any difference in engagement since schools reopened. We have noticed it's had an effect on our older young people because their worlds have suddenly, well, all of our worlds are constantly shifting, but those young people really are having all these challenges thrown at them. And now they're expected to go back into a school and yeah, we've definitely seen a shift, but we're also considering whether working through schools might be a better place for some of our youth programs.

So, it used to be in community centers, but of course, putting a session in a community center, bringing kids in from lots of different schools is breaking all of the bubbles that schools are trying to set up. So, one of the things we're talking about with one of our funders, which is the council, is whether we transfer what would have happened and would have been an offer for young people across the borough into more school specific bubbles. So, it becomes a schools after-school club program, which isn't how it was designed, but maybe that's the steppingstone back to normality for us. So, we're exploring that a little bit at the moment. Has school effected your practice in any way? I know Tory that you're using a school as a temporary space until The Point opens, but are there any other relationships with schools developing for you as you consider how your company might operate?

Tory:

Yeah. So, we've been in a secondary school. I think we're really lucky in that the dancers in Hampshire Youth come from a huge variety of schools and college. I think, I think we nearly have like one dancer from every local secondary school in the company and from the surrounding colleges. And we have already really strong relationships and we're used to going in and performing at those schools and colleges. But at the moment we've kind of stayed a little bit quiet, not wanting to put added pressure on teachers, dance teachers in particular, who we would normally say, would you like us to come and teach a workshop? Would you like to have a HYDC experience? Or can we come and perform as guests? How can we help you raise the profile of dance in your school? So those are the things we would normally do. So, I haven't been having those conversations right now because I think that teachers and schools have a lot to manage and a lot to deal with. And there's part of me that maybe feels having gone in separately as a freelance artist, gone in and spoken to some teachers, I know that there's general rules, that there are no visitors coming in at the moment. I feel like those conversations will come back in January, February next year. I don't think they're ready right now.

Melanie:

How about you, Ingrid? I just wondered whether you were having any different relationships with schools, um, given that schools had a sort of slightly different way of operating with their young people with their bubbles than those that are operating in a, in a more community setting.

Ingrid:

Within a workshop actually, we have to do the workshops virtually. Um, so again on Zoom. Yeah. And in terms of the relationship with our members, some of our young people, as you said, now, they're back in school. It's actually been more difficult for them to be engaged with us because before some of them, they would come straight from school, into the theater, they're now having to go home and you know, they don't get to the class on time or then they have to like eat or, you know, they have homework or they have parents evenings or, you know, there's a whole lot of difficulties to navigate.

Tory:

I just pick up on that Ingrid, because we have similar where they would come straight from school or college to us and they might hang out and have dinner and socialize before coming into the studio. And now we can't have that. For obvious reasons, I think they find that quite overwhelming. They're in these bubbles at school and then they want to come us and be a giant bubble when we're like, you can't really do that anymore. So I think trying to get their head around, but at school, we're in this year group bubble and we can do this together. But when you come to HYDC, we can't all stand 22 dancers in one big huddle of a bubble, you have to spread out. You know, we have to filter you into the space in small groups, rather than all going in all at the same time. There's lots of things like that, and I think the last couple of weeks I have noticed it's been overwhelming for them. I thought, Oh, they're going to be so excited. There's going to be so much energy in the room. And there was physically energy in the room, but they were again quite quiet. And it's almost like they're learning how to communicate with each other, again, face-to-face, that's gone a little bit off of track from the question about schools. Cause they all come from different schools as well, so they don't necessarily see each other at school, so it's, it's almost like another place where they've got to relearn. How do we behave? How do we communicate now?

Melanie:

And this bubble thing, we can understand why CEOs have needed to adopt it, but you do look at it and sort of, what are the rules here above and of 150. Okay. And then why can't we have a bubble of 22? What is a bubble?

Anyway, I'm going to ask you one last thing before we finish. And that is, what do you think you've learnt? One thing you've learned about your young people through this crisis.

Tori:

Oo Ingrid?

Ingrid:

Well, I think they're extremely resilient and they've actually kept me going as well. You know, it hasn't been an easy period either, you know, losing work and, you know, in my case, I haven't

been able to travel and visit my family in Barcelona either and doing the homeschooling and everything. They've also been supporting me as well. They just amaze me because they are able to adapt so well to any situations that we could have been throwing at them. And life in general is throwing, they're much more adaptable than what we may think they are. Yeah.

Tory:

I think they've always been very resilient, but I think lockdown, just highlights how resilient they are. Very passionate, very driven. I would say the same as Ingrid, but I have this feeling with them in the studio anyway that they are inspiring me and I hope I'm inspiring them, but I really feel like we have a really mutual relationship together. I think we've worked a lot of things out together, like technology, definitely technology, but also how to stay focused, how to stay positive, new thoughts and ideas, you know, coming from them all the time. And they are just amazing. I think young people are incredible. That's why we work with them and I'm really proud of how well they've managed, and I hope they know that. Yeah.

Melanie:

And I think that's probably a really good place to stop. So, thank you, Tory and Ingrid for spending time with us today. And thank you for listening. If you'd like to hear more episodes about subjects, moving artists of today, search for Talking Moves, wherever you get podcasts. And don't forget to subscribe, leave a review and spread the word and for more information about Tory and Ingrid, head on over to Greenwichdance.org.uk. And do you remember if you know someone you think we should talk to or have a topic you'd like us to talk about, please tweet us @Greenwichdance, but for today, that's it from us and do join us next time for more Talking Moves.

There we go!

Ingrid:

Thank you

Tory:

Thank you so much