



Transcription of recorded conversation

**Dance Dialogues: Caroline Bowditch & Luke Pell**

4 March 2021

**Tom Pritchard - 00:00**

So, good evening and good morning those of you joining us from elsewhere in the world, and welcome to this Dance Dialogues conversation with Caroline Bowditch and Luke Pell.

I'd like to begin by acknowledging that we gathered on and sending out today's talk from the unceded lands of the people of the Kulin Nation. And I want to pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and extend this to any First Nations or other Indigenous people joining us today.

So, my name is Tom Prichard and I'm the Studio Program Producer here at Lucy Guerin Inc. I'm a white cis man in my mid-30s with short brown hair and a beard. I'm wearing a blue shirt with a light pink t-shirt underneath and black trousers.

And tonight, I'm here in Studio One of WXYZ Studios in North Melbourne, which is a large white-walled space with grey floors.

There are a few reasons why we're very excited about tonight's talk. Firstly, because of our wonderful guests, Caroline and Luke. Secondly, because through the wonders of technology, we're bringing this talk about dance and practice and art making across the world live. And finally, because this is the first talk that we've presented simultaneously here in the studio with a live in-person audience, as well as one joining us via zoom. So, given this is our first run-out in this format, please be patient with us in case we take any unexpected detours along the way.

So, on to tonight's talk, we're delighted to welcome Caroline here and Luke from a very early morning UK in a conversation exploring what practice and art making is now. And by way of offering some



reintroductions, I'd like to offer a brief summary the artists supplied about their connection and professional relationship.

Long term companions in practice, Caroline Bowditch and Luke Pell have worked in dance performance and choreography for around 50 years collectively. They are makers, performers, advocates and activists. Their artistic works range from epic to the intimate; work for outdoors, for theatres and unexpected spaces, for children and early years with intergenerational ensembles for cabarets and nightclub spaces. They first met in parallel roles when Caroline was Dance Agent for Change with Scottish Dance Theatre, and Luke was Head of Learning and Research for Candoco Dance Company. Since then, they have collaborated on both their respective artistic works, and in hosting spaces of development for other disabled, and LGBTQIA+ artists. At the heart of what they do is always conversation, questioning and love. Caroline is CEO of Arts Access Victoria, and Luke works internationally as a maker, curator, and dramaturg.

In this conversation, they will talk a little bit about the synergy between them, their approaches and perspectives, and why they believe dance, choreography, and performance are so important. Especially in this now, and our unimagined tomorrow's.

And with that, welcome Caroline, welcome Luke. Over to you.

**Caroline Bowditch - 03:34**

Thank you so much.

Hi, everyone. It's lovely to be in a space with you. Good morning, Luke.

**Luke Pell - 03:45**

Morning Caroline. Hello everybody that I can't see off screen but I'm waving at you.



**Caroline Bowditch - 03:51**

Yeah, I was gonna make that point actually, that Luke can't actually see you guys in the space only I get that joy. So, I'm faced with a group of lovely people in the room with me, which is really joyous.

I want to begin by extending Tom's Acknowledgement of Country. I live and work on Boon Wurrung lands. We, I live in St Kilda, and Arts Access Victoria is based in South Melbourne. And...but originally I come from Yorta Yorta country. So up in the northeast is where I was born. And I just also... I want to acknowledge the traditional owners of all of those lands, and pay my respects to their ongoing traditions and wisdom that they continue to share with us so generously. I also want to acknowledge any Disabled colleagues that might be in the room with us or online. It feels, yeah, important that we also acknowledge those things, and also those...I want to acknowledge those people that can't be with us, for either access or any other reason.

I'm going to hand over to you in a sec Lukey. I'll do for audio description purposes, I am short, as in three-foot-four short, white woman, with an asymmetric blond curly hair-do, wearing a mustard spotty t-shirt, and navy blue jeans that I'm proud to say I made myself, sewed it on a sewing machine. And I'm currently wearing some very fancy black slippers, with sparkly things on, because I broke my leg, just over a week ago. So, I'm justifying wearing slippers by the fact that I have a broken leg with me.

So enough about me. Let's talk about Luke.

**Luke Pell - 05:55**

Thanks Caroline. Good morning everybody, my name is Luke Pell. I am in my...one of the two rooms that I live in in Leith in Edinburgh. Leith is a part of Edinburgh that used to exist in its own, as its own entity, and then was consumed into the capital. But I live in what was a very old worker's cottage in Leith.



And it is now 8:08 this morning, so the sun is slowly coming up here. And it's a pleasure to begin my day with you.

I am quite a long person. I use the pronouns he/him and they/them. I'm a cis-gendered white man. I have not much of a beard, but a little bit of fluff around my chin. I'm wearing some big, honey-coloured glasses, a lavender jumper, and I have wrapped around my neck a soft, grey cashmere scarf. You can't see the lower half of me, but I'm wearing some long, grey trousers. And also, because I'm at home, I'm wearing my slippers. And in Scotland, it's still quite cold, so I also have some big thermal socks on. In the background of my screen, you can see some books and some pictures and there's a lamp dangling.

**Claire Bowditch - 07:25**

Right, so as a way of beginning... Tom obviously gave us a really lovely introduction about how Luke and my works have intermingled over many, many years. And we've worked on many projects together.

But I wanted to... the last time Luke and I were physically together, was actually in this space. So, we were in this space together leading a week-long residency, called *Being Enough*, that was the topic. And I invited Luke to come and co-facilitate it with me, because I kept meeting artists in lots of different spaces who would talk about, particularly if they hadn't had a hidden disability, not being disabled enough to be in that space. Or people who were maybe being gender fluid, or questioning their gender, and all sorts of things, and they would say I'm not queer enough, or I'm not gay enough, or I'm not enough of something.

And it really made me think there was a conversation that Luke and I needed to have with a group of people, which we spent a week having. And I remember as part of that, being introduced to an exercise about, *I remember*, by an artist called Dasha Tan who very generously led us through the process.

**Luke Pell - 09:24**

So, we're gonna rewind a little bit back to the beginning of us meeting. And so I remember, six or seven years of us, Caroline and I sitting together, in rooms, on panels, or across from one another, in rooms, on panels, or in workshops, on projects about moving bodies below the waterline, about curiosity challenge, change, about rethinking, reflecting, restocking, building on pathways to profession. And each time at the end of session, Caroline and I would say, "do you feel like we're just having the same conversation again?" And a desire to build on that conversation.

And in preparation for today, we were thinking a little bit about the fact that for about six or seven years, whilst I worked with Candoco Company as Head of Learning and Research, and Caroline was Dance Agent for Change with Scottish Dance Theatre... That we were in conversations that were very much about being included in what already existed and ideas of how dance should be that were made and led by certain kinds of bodies, and certain kinds of ways of being in the world, which were not the ways that we, and many of our peers, experienced the world.

**Claire Bowditch - 11:01**

I remember that, very well.

I also remember, an event that you facilitated at the Southbank in London. And it was... I think it was instigated by... was it instigated by Candoco or was instigated by you?

**Luke Pell - 11:26**

Probably Candoco, because it was at the Southbank.

**Claire Bowditch - 11:29**

And I remember, because I was living in Scotland, and being an artist, and a performer and all those sorts of things. And I remember, for the first time ever, thinking, I'm not sure that I can really call myself a Disabled artist anymore, because I'm not experiencing any barriers as an artist living in



Scotland. And... because I had access to studios, and I had access to funding, and I had access to performance platforms. And I started to think the barriers were dissolving.

And disability would always be part of my identity, but in terms of the social model of disability, which acknowledges that we are more or less disabled by the environment that we're in, I remember thinking, maybe I'm not being disabled by this artistic environment in Scotland, maybe it's allowing me to do all sorts of amazing things. And that was quite shocking for lots of people in the room. And for myself on reflection. And it was momentary. It was a momentary thought, and a momentary experience. So, yeah.

**Luke Pell - 12:50**

It's so exciting to me that, in that moment, or a little bit of that past year, having been in Scotland working with Caroline on her performance, [Falling in Love with Frida](#), and having attended an event called [Pathways to Profession](#), which was sort of the culmination of Caroline's time with Scottish Dance Theatre as Dance Agent for Change, I decided to move to Scotland. Because I thought, I want to be in that community. I want to be amongst those artists where different aesthetics, different ways of being, are welcomed and understood. And that we as a community are advocating for and practicing that shift in who is involved in making dance, and what dance can look like. And so yeah, I moved here about eight years ago, whilst Caroline and Tom we're in fact, both still here, and not long after they left. And I hope it wasn't to do with me moving.

But what I remember next, is seven years of Caroline, you and I, making, performing, creating... of us exploring our artistic voices, and the artistic voices of the artists, performers, dancers that we worked with. I remember Watermelons and Mattresses, and [Leaving Limbo Landing](#). I remember Libraries, and [In the Ink Dark](#). I remember loss. I remember language. I remember [Private Dancers](#), private parties. I remember performing in our underwear, and in leg warmers, in pubs and clubs, in fields, and theatres, and always at the heart, the poetry of different bodies. And I remember feeling like this was a next



wave for each of us in the ways that we wanted to attempt to shift who we understand as being critical to the dances that we see and feel in the world.

**Claire Bowditch - 14:50**

Yeah. I remember writing you a love letter every day, for a week. When I was making *Falling in Love with Frida*, which was a piece that I made about my love, or my interest in Frida Kahlo, who was a very famous Mexican painter, and... but she also lived with disability for her whole life. And that's not the thing that she was necessarily remembered for. So, I wanted to reclaim her, as a disabled artist.

So, I made a piece called *Falling in Love with Frida* and Luke, was involved in the project as my text advisor. So, in developing the script for the show, because it had lots of text, as well as lots of dancing... Luke asked me to write him a love letter everyday of everything that I knew about Frida. So, every day, I would spend 10 minutes just writing lists of what I knew about Frida. And then I would send them to Luke. And then, because he's magical, he put all of those amazing things into this...the thing that essentially became the script for the show.

But I remember how amazing that was as a process and how, yeah, how brilliant it was, and still is, to say those words. We toured that show for 3 years and performed it 93 times in 6 countries. And it's amazing, and the cast continue to talk about when we're going to bring it back. "When are you going to bring it back!" So, we're still trying to think about that.

**Luke Pell - 16:40**

I remember one of the things that came out of those letters, which were a joy to open every morning. Caroline's very early riser if people didn't know this, she's usually up before everybody else. So, I'd open my laptop and the first thing I'd find would be Caroline, and in these letters were somehow butterflies came up. And this analogy of the butterfly, almost as a... sort of became part of the dramaturgy of the work, this unfurling from chrysalis into another form.



And that makes me think a little bit about how then butterflies came forward into your next work, *Snigel*, and what I wanted to... I was thinking about is the way that your touch and your practice has moved between very different contexts and generations, I think we both do that in our practice. So, you went from making this work about Frida, *Falling in Love with Frida*, your own experiences of love and loving your body, loving the people around you, other kinds of lovers, who we fall in love with, to your love of children and young people.

And I was just wondering, I've never asked you this question, but if you could talk a little about that shift, what it was like to go from *Frida* to *Snigel*? Yeah.

**Caroline Bowditch - 17:56**

So, *Frida*, we serve a shot of tequila to every audience member within the first two minutes of the show. We always have a non-alcoholic option. And there's quite a lot of adult talk in the show. And lots of watermelon eating. And... but one of the most important things about *Frida* was that it was never for more than 100 people. And I wanted to have eye contact with every one of those audience members. So, it was really important that people came and felt seen by me. Seen. It never went dark. They were very close, they were on three sides of the audience.

And I think when we started to make *Snigel*, there was something about these tiny people... So Laura, my partner Laura, who's in the room, was the co-creator of two pieces that we made. One called [The Adventures of Snigel](#), and the other one was called [Snigel and Friends](#). and *Snigel and Friends* is where the butterfly is, and was played by the brilliant Welly O'Brien. And, again, it was about seeing the audience, them being very present and influencing what was happening on stage and reflecting themselves.

And yeah, it was about them being close, about...there was no... sometimes we talk about the fourth wall, you know that thing where it's like, we pretend we can't see them. And I don't do that very well. So yeah, there was definitely no fourth wall. And I think the themes for me iare still about the being



seen, the being noticed, the importance... feeling important being there. And they always... I would say most of my work is about love.

**Luke Pell - 20:09**

Which I think is something that we both share, that love and radical love, it's always at the heart of what we do. I think also, this... another synergy that you just described, I don't think either of us have really ever, other than when working with others, made work that has this fourth wall aspects. We both make work where the folk who are experiencing the work are with the performers and share space where we see each other being seen. Seeing and being seen are so important and also touch, being close, being intimate, feeling the touch of one another. And I think that's something that has been with me a lot over the past year.

And as we move forward, I know that you know, in Australia, you're in quite different place to where we are in Scotland in terms of restrictions and lockdown. But as somebody who has always made work that is intimate, that is close, where you can feel the sweat, the scent of a dancer, where we can touch one another, I have found myself spending quite a lot of time over the past year thinking about how do I reorient what I do? How do I still advocate for careful touch, for being with one another, whilst also staying safe and recognising the world that we find ourselves in now.

You and I've been talking a little bit about the fact that many of us live... have lived experiences of being marginalised people navigate precarity as part of our daily lives and have the tools for this. And I was just remembering, when we were talking about remembering, the last thing that we did before we were together, and before we were not together. In 2019 we were in Malmo, with a huge group of disabled artists, for a project called [\*Unexpected Bodies in Unexpected Spaces\*](#). And then I came to Melbourne, as you say, we were in the studios there hosting this residency space *Being Enough*.

And with all of those artists, we're talking about people being experts at themselves, I was sort of tracing back this thread of, in the time that I worked Candoco often, we were advocating for inclusion to what



had already existed. And that shift, I feel very much my practice about working with artists around the fact that the expertise they have is their expertise. That they are the experts of their self, their disability, of their gender, of their sexuality, and what that touch brings to the world.

And I was curious how you're feeling about those sorts of things now, Caroline, as we begin to... as you begin to open up in Australia.

**Caroline Bowditch - 23:01**

Yeah, I think it's a really big thing for us, isn't it, at the moment, to how do we go back into a studio together? How do we... How do we work together in that physical space? Where is people's confidence? And one of the things that we know from the research being done the moment, is that in Australia as our audience numbers increase, the comfort level of the disability community decreases. So, our drive to go back to normal is actually... well, I suppose it's making people retreat again in a way that they haven't.

And, I think there was a different sense of...well I was going to say that there was a sense of equalization, I suppose, that happened during COVID, because we know that there's lots of people who live in isolation all the time, for whatever reason. And for many of us during this pandemic, it was the first time that people got a taste of that. And I think people... they want to get out of that.

So, there is something really interesting for me about what happens if getting out of it isn't an option for you? How do we stay connected to those people? And I think one of the questions that has come up for us is about what are the dances in these bodies right now? So, what's the new dances that have come out? What's the dances that we can do as a solo body? What's the wisdom that we gained in that kind of isolation? And how is it affecting the dances that we do now? Are they different? Or are they the same as the were before? Have we gone back to those familiar patterns? Or have we developed some new ones? And I think I'm really interested in what's the dance? What are the dances of now? And what are the dances that these bodies do now?

**Luke Pell - 25:19**

I think it's, it's interesting, isn't it because there's been so much talk about a return to normal. And of course, normal never was for so many of us. There's so many people who've lived and have lived in the ways that people have been living for the past couple of years, for their whole lives. And there's also been so much talking...and there's been wonderful things which have happened in terms of access, the spaces that we can be in, that people can show up in, can participate in. But also, that's not a one-size-fits-all answer. And so, I think we've been talking a little about like, how do we open... hold open multiple possibilities? Now the fact that we can have these online spaces, it's interesting, but today is online and in-person. Where are the places that these converge? And how do we utilise the skills and the knowledge that we have to speak to all of those kinds of spaces?

I'm just about to begin with two organisations here in Scotland, one called Imagine, ewll you know both of these organisations Caroline, [Imagine](#), which is the children's festival and development organisation, and [The Workroom](#), which is a membership dance organisation, working with 30 artists, about navigating the now. What is the work that I make now? How do I make work now? We're going to go through a peer led process over the next three months, and we're beginning that process by asking the question: what's at the heart of my art? What do I do? And what's the compass for my art? What are my guiding principles? And how do I begin to think about what things might need to shift in the world as unfolds now?

Because as we know, this is with us for the ongoing.

**Caroline Bowditch - 27:16**

Luke, I don't know if you heard it, but there was a big crash in the background, which no one seems alarmed about. So that's a good thing... Ah it's just a sign, that's fine. It's not a sign, could be a sign. Is it a sign? I don't know.



Yeah, interesting. I as you know, I... So, I made two works during lockdown. One... I hadn't made any work since I got back to Australia. So, I'd been in the job for two years, two and a half years? Two years. And I hadn't made any work.

And I was invited to make a [short solo as part of The Seniors Festival](#). Not that I'm quite a senior yet, but I'm fast approaching it. And I made a solo on the pier at St Kilda with a mask on, and it was amazing, to a piece of music that was written by a very dear friend of ours. And I listened to it and all of a sudden, I was like, I want to choreograph something to that. And I hadn't had that feeling for two years. It was quite amazing.

And it was, yeah, it was really interesting to see that process. Laura filmed it on my phone, like there was nothing high-tech about it. And it really reminded me how easy it is to make work that can be presented online, if we feel we have the permission, or we're given the platforms, or the invitation to do it, which was really interesting.

And the other piece that I have been making is... I made a solo work on a dancer that's based just outside of Belfast in Northern Ireland. Which involved some very early mornings, and some very late nights for her, and... but we made a piece. And the really interesting thing is, that piece was not made for screen. It wasn't made in a studio. But it was made, and worked, because it had been made over Zoom. So, I didn't have the option of anything other than what I could see on my screen.

And that was a really interesting process because, again, so much of it was about the conversations that Linda and I had. So much of it was about what sat behind the dances. Not just what were the dances, but what was leading the dances. And also what was the dance that she needed to do in lockdown? What was the dance that she needed to do at that time? Yeah.

**Luke Pell - 30:12**

Can I asked you Caroline, you can't of course speak for Linda, but you probably can share as choreographer, what the dance that she needs to do was. But I'm curious to ask you first, what was the dance that you... when you were invited by the elders [Senior] festival, to make dance... when you were making that dance, what did you... what was the dance that you needed to do in that moment?

**Caroline Bowditch - 30:39**

I needed to... in a way, like if you see that... it's very floaty, it's a very floaty dance. I was in the outside. So, I was in the air. And there was something about... I suppose in it... and there was lots of sky, and the sea was behind me. And so, I suppose in a way, it felt very freeing. Because I'd been... we'd been so locked up, so locked up. And we literally filmed it in 15 minutes. But it was, I suppose, in a way, there was something about the significance of the everyday freedom that was taken from us in that time. And us... me really recognising what it is to be able to feel the wind in my face, and see the sea, and smell the sea, and yeah.

I think it was about freedom and being present to the elements around me.

**Luke Pell - 31:42**

When you describe that, it makes me think so much about our relationship with the more-than-human, with everything else we are, that we need to be with, and our attention to that, and how much we've missed it, or many of us have missed it.

And what was the dance that that Linda needed to do?

**Caroline Bowditch - 32:03**

So Linda, the dance that Linda and I made is called [Armour Off!](#) and it sort of loosely linked, in a way I suppose, to the work that you and I both worked on, I think, with the fabulous Janice Parker, who's also an Edinburgh-based artist, who made a piece called *Private Dancer*. And I suppose with Linda, our



conversations were about the masking that, as people with visible disabilities, we do in order to survive in the world. And the fact that... what are the dances that she could do, without having to have her armour on. Because she was in her home.

And so her dances were different, she didn't have to mask... there was no judgement. And so, the dances that emerged were different. And there was something profoundly beautiful about that.

**Luke Pell - 33:09**

You talking about that has reminded me of the first time I met Janice Parker, who you just described, who's a dear friend and colleague of both of ours, and a huge influence in terms of somebody whose knowledge has been present in our community for so long, and has shifted things in a very quiet, gentle, subtle, and radical ways.

But in this work, [\*Private Dancer\*](#) that she and the artist, Richard Layzell, created little rooms where different disabled performers, different performers, performed and invited you into their spaces. And the dance that was possible in that space was maybe quite different to when they were... if they were invited to performance in spaces governed by other people's ideals. And think Tom was also one of the performers in that work.

And I remember experiencing that work when I when I came to Scotland and being so deeply moved by these intimate encounters and the generosity and I... you saying that makes me think about the possibility of the spaces that we might be able to be invited into now, and the spaces where... that we might look to for performance, that are not those that we have always imagined we might encounter performance in.

And that sort of brings me to this thinking of...we're talking about how do we hold different possibilities open now, so it's not just one way. Like a rush to return, or everything's online, but how do we have a myriad of opportunities. And coming back to this data that you were sharing, which of



course, there's a kind of fiscal drive isn't there, when we think about people returning to the theatre. And I'm wondering, where you as CEO of Arts Access, it feels... it sounds from the conversations we've been having that you're beginning to think about some of these things already.

**Caroline Bowditch - 35:00**

Yeah, so we...in collaboration with an amazing arts manager, just incredible human, called Kate Larson, and Kate and I developed a series of guidelines for people return... how do we return to the world so that we can maintain as much of the access that's being generated in this time? And lots of the conversations that I'm having at the moment is how do we maintain this? How do we allow ourselves to be in two places at once, literally? How do we maintain that in a way that feels effective and affecting, in the ways that live performance used to.

And so, the first kind of, guideline is about don't ditch the digital, like, we need to remain in a digital space as well as being able to be live together.

And so, this is fascinating, this is like a bit of an experiment in terms of how does it feel? How is it to be in two places at once? So, they're a lot of the conversations that I'm having with people at the moment is, you ran a whole festival online last year, what of that are you gonna keep? How much of your access budget that you've got, are you allocating to your digital kind of presence, and online what you're going to keep doing? So, yeah, they're the conversations that I'm having.

**Luke Pell - 36:47**

That sounds like one of the, or a first of... we talked a little bit about one of the things that we might hope for going forward, and that sounds like one thing you might hope for. Are there other things that you are hoping for, as we move forward into a kind of next wave? If I think about the different periods of time we've spent together, and in this next phase while we can't be together as companions in practice, what are you looking forward to?

**Caroline Bowditch - 37:16**

Before we launch forward, I would love to ask the same question of you, because your work is incredibly intimate, and is so much about being in a space with bodies. Thinking about the work that you've done in libraries, thinking about the work that you've done sitting, gathering stories from people sitting on park benches, taking people on walks through landscape. Like, how do you envisage your work, or the work that you're going to do moving forward?

**Luke Pell - 37:50**

Yeah, it's been interesting, the question of what's the dance this body does now, particularly when those things have been sort of cornerstones of my work, about being with people in space. And you and I have had this conversation as an ongoing way, that whilst digital has brought many wonderful things, for many people in terms of access, it's actually prompted a kind of formal diagnosis for dyspraxia, dyscalculia and dysgraphia for me, because I'm struggling so much with digital, the way I'm wired, I stall quite a lot.

So for me, it's not super accessible. And it's really helped me to reflect on the fact that being in live space, and touch is really critical to how I understand other people in the world around me. I've been taking time with that.

And funnily enough, this week, I have sent out something close to 100 artworks or offers in envelopes, through different projects that I'm working on. So, one is a correspondence course called [Queer by Extension](#), and my module is called an [Inner Quiet Queering](#). But that's the beginning of thinking, how can I have a dialogue with people that involves the tactile? And it's, I guess, mixed media, there's digital interaction, but there's also people receiving things in the post from me and sending them back. And in some ways, to me, this begins to be a little bit like an intimate one to one.

I also have an [ongoing collaboration with the artist, filmmaker and writer, Lucy Cash](#), who actually is in Sydney at the moment, and sort of has got stuck there during lockdown. And so we began a project



and we're now having to work across time zones, but also... that's in the north of Scotland. And again, we're making offers by correspondence, these tiny choreographies that fold out for people to hold. So, I'm thinking a lot about how I can still have that sense of touch with people, and kind of return a little bit to the analogue, and where the analogue and the digital might meet.

In many ways, I also feel like a lot of the stuff that I've been up to in my practice, probably has resonance now. You know, I used to do lots of walking encounters with people or in outdoor spaces, and it hasn't felt safe, you know, we're in a different level of restriction at the moment. But I hope that actually some of what I did, kind of has a...I can just carry forwards.

And I think the last thing that sort of is with me that we've talked a little bit about, is that I've made this whole series work for libraries, which were a project called [In The Ink Dark](#), which is sort of, how do we find language for loss, and talking to people about things that they've loved and lost. And it feels so apparent to me that globally there is this incredible accumulative grief that we have that's, you know, come over the past year, across many different experiences. And we need to metabolise that, and I think dancing and live performanc, are really fundamental to how we metabolise some of what's happened over the past year, how we come back together, carefully. And that can be across media.

But asking these questions are having these conversations I think is the beginning.

**Caroline Bowditch - 41:18**

Yeah, great.

So sorry to... your original question to me, pre-me Asking you that question again, was about my hopes for the future.

**Luke Pell - 41:28**

Yeah, going forwards.



**Caroline Bowditch - 41:31**

And they are about being able to maintain... to refine and maintain these hybrid spaces, where everyone... when no one is left behind.

And I think that's a real challenge, because that's the other thing that we saw really appear last year was this incredible digital inequity. So we, particularly at AAV where we run 10 studios a week, all of which are in real life with people. And all of a sudden, we had to take everything online. And for lots of the people that we work with, they didn't have access to technology, or necessarily had the digital skills, or may have been living in a shared accommodation with a gatekeeper who wouldn't give them access to equipment that they might have had. And that's really hard. So, for some people a lot opened. And then on the other end of the spectrum was this incredible... the digital divide that we've heard lots of people talk about.

So, I think my ambition moving forward is, how do we move in...keep... maintain a hybrid space, and ensure that no one is left behind.

What about you? What are your hopes going forward?

**Luke Pell - 42:58**

I think we need tools, and better tools to be with what's tender. And I think that knowledge is already here in communities who, as I said earlier, you know, who've navigated the precarity their whole lives. And I think, therefore, for me, part of my desire or hope is, who are the people that are leading and shaping the ways that we go forward, so people like yourself... I was very excited to see recently that our friend and colleague Dan Daw, has been appointed as [Associate \[Artistic\] Director at Candoco Dance Company](#).

So, who are the voices that is shaping how we go forward, I think is something that I really hope for. And that we can return to hope, because there's also been... and how we spend time, returning to hope, I've fallen in love... speaking of *Falling in Love with Frida* I have fallen in love recently with this word that I discovered called respair, which is R E S P A I R. And it kind of fell out of the English language, but it means a return to hope.

And I feel like that's really what I want to focus on over the next few years. A return to hope, and who are the voices that are leading us?

**Caroline Bowditch - 44:22**

Yeah great, that's a hopeful future.

**Tom Pritchard - 44:24**

And on that, if we can jump to some audience questions, potentially.

So, we haven't had any from our online audience. So please feel free to jump in, if you are online, just open up that Q&A part and pop your questions in there. So, I just wanted to turn to our studio audience and ask if anyone had any questions. And if you don't, then we'll start to endure the questions that I've got. So, let's save the artist and ask questions from the room.

**Audience question – 44:55**

*(Inaudible)*

**Caroline Bowditch – 45:15**

So, the question... just so that everyone online can hear the question I'm going to repeat it. So, your question was: *Did I have any struggles in my life before I became a dancer?*

That's a really long time ago now. I'm sure I did. I probably had some fairly horrible moments at school. Yeah, but I think finding dance, coming to dance, was a massive shifting place for me because it was the first time in my life that I had landed in my skin. And I was given the chance to find out what this body, that I'd grown up thinking was strange and awkward, was actually capable of. And that was, what it could do, rather than what it couldn't do. And I think just knowing that made lots of those other struggles just fall away because I kind of, yeah, I landed and kind of went, oh okay I'm not weird this is okay, and I can do all these amazing things.

So yeah. But I came to dance really late. I was 26 when I first really started dancing, I would say. And in dancer world that's quite late. So yeah.

**Audience question – 46:49**

*(Inaudible)*

**Caroline Bowditch – - 46:57**

In my life? Have I have I been bullied in my life? At school, yes, a lot. But less... I think as I've got older, that I've become better at...I was gonna say caring, but maybe it's more about having a different message in my head. So, listening less to the bullies, and actually being true to me and speaking my truth, I suppose. Yeah.

So Luke, question coming to you.

**Audience question – 47:52**

*You said before that you're struggling as far as the digital world goes. I'm talking to as well. So, I want to hear from your perspective. Since you are struggling, today, are you struggling now?*

**Caroline Bowditch - 48:19**

Did you hear that Luke or would you like me to repeat that?

**Luke Pell - 48:24**

Could you repeat, please? To make sure I heard it properly.

**Caroline Bowditch - 48:28**

Yes, of course. The question was about...you mentioned the fact that you're struggling to be online because of the new things that you've learnt recently.

*And so the question is: Are you still struggling now? Or have you started to, I'm going to expand a bit, but have you got some new techniques and things that are working, because you also struggle with this digital world sometimes.*

**Luke Pell - 48:55**

Yeah, great. Sorry, can I ask who's... the name of the person who's asking?

**Jamie (audience member) - 49:04**

Yeah, my name is Jamie.

**Caroline Bowditch - 49:05**

Jamie.

**Luke Pell - 49:07**

Hi, Jamie.

One of the things that's been super helpful is that I've spent most of my working life working in the disability community, and I have friends who have given me so much information about choice, the choices that we make for ourselves, and asking for what we need. I...there's an artist based in the UK, who, in Scotland but Caroline know quite well, called Abby Watson, who has shared lots and lots of her



research with me around neuro-divergence, which has been incredibly helpful. She's been so generous, and it's such a gift to have peers. So, going to my peers has really helped.

But I think the thing that has become clearer for me over the past few months, is that I have a choice. So, for example, there's such a demand right now to be, or the culture we live in to be present on social media platforms, on Facebook or Instagram or Twitter or online in a zoom conversation. And I can feel quite overwhelmed by all of that. So, I've made some choices to only be on certain ones. To kind of go, actually, I can stay connected, but I can stay connected in ways that work for me.

I've started being more explicit with people about how much time I can spend on-screen. And quite tough with myself. So, I know that I can probably do one, maybe two meetings like this in a week. If I have to do a bigger meeting than I have to kind of schedule my time differently. But letting people know that, and not beating myself up about it.

But in that, because so much connection is happening digitally, I'm again I've been going back to the analogue of like, calling people on the phone and listening to people's voices, of writing great old friends postcards, finding other ways to be in touch. And this is a big question that I think has come into... that I'm sort of placing in the centre of my practice right now, is about... a colleague of mine in Berlin talked about being an artist as being the way that the world touches you, and the way that you touch the world. And I'm trying to think a lot about how do I need to touch the world? What kind of touch what quality of touch works for me?

So yeah, figuring out what I need, and what my choices are, has been really important. But taking lots of time away from screen going outside has been critical.

**Jamie (audience member) – 51:41**

*Inaudible*

**Claire Bowditch - 51:59**

Can you say sorry, Jamie, can you ask that question again?

Yeah, so: *Do you have any advice for people who have different disabilities, about how they can say what they need, if they're struggling?*

Is that true? Is that accurate, Jamie?

**Luke Pell - 52:31**

Yeah, I mean, find your kin. Find your people and talk about how... and talk with them about how they've talked about what they need.

I don't know whether you work in the field of making work Jamie, but for example, there's a couple of artists in the UK recently who've started sharing things like access riders. So, when they work with organisations, they send information upfront about what their needs are. And I think that exercise in itself, just kind of... in fact, Caroline recommended this to me, when I first started talking with her about my suspicions around how I was struggling online she said, "well, why don't you start making a little list of the things that are difficult for you, and also the things that you might need that would make a difference?" And like, just doing that exercise for myself, and then saying it out loud to a friend, and being heard, was a really important beginning.

And so maybe I would say start with that, is like, make a list for yourself, and share it with somebody else that you trust, and begin to say these things out loud. I don't know what, Caroline whether you...what you would add to that?

**Caroline Bowditch - 53:39**

Yeah, I think we need to be talking about our access and what we need as a fact.



Like, it's...we don't ask it as a favour, we don't ask it as...yeah, we just kind of go, this is the fact. If you want to work with me, this is how we need to work. And so being really unapologetic about saying what we need, I think is important. And having an access statement...so that says things like, this is the best way to communicate with me. Or, if we're in a studio, these are the things that you need to be aware of, or whatever.

So, there's a company based in Glasgow, called [Birds of Paradise](#), and they have a really beautiful [access statement template](#) that I could share with you guys, if that's useful, that just really allows people to jot in the ways that work best for them, that they can then... it's a bit like this access rider idea, that you can share with people when it feels right for you.

**Luke Pell - 54:47**

I was just going to add to that Jamie, to say to Jamie, that I worked recently with two artists called Leslie and Claire who are disabled artists here who just graduated from the Scottish Contemporary Dance School. And in conversation, they were saying to me, “but we're kind of young and like, can we say what we need? And there's people who know more than us.”

And I was...you are the expert of your experience of yourself. Nobody knows you better than you. And only you can say what you need. It's not for other people to tell you. It's good for other people to listen.

**Caroline Bowditch – 55:20**

Yeah.

**Tom Pritchard - 55:23**

So, just to finish up, we might...there's a couple of questions online, which it'd be nice to kind of get to. So, the first one, Luke, I'm going to direct this towards you first of all, it's from Linda, she said:

*What is your advice for a newly diagnosed disabled person trying to return to dance, but unmasked. Dance being a basic need, not choreographed blah, blah.*

**Luke Pell - 55:50**

I think for me, when Caroline was just talking about her dancing outside, is to find a dance that brings you joy right now. Start for yourself. Start dancing for yourself, for the things that give you pleasure. And what gives you pleasure now.

Because this question that we asked, what's the dance this body does now? I feel like that's a dialogue that we've been in for a long time with all the other dance artists and disabled artists. And so, it's like, my body changes every day, I have to have a conversation with it.

But I think starting with, what's the pleasure? Where do I find pleasure today? And working out from there is maybe where I would begin.

**Caroline Bowditch - 56:31**

Yeah, I would just, I would just add to that, I think we are very deprived of disability pride in this country, which is why we feel the need to mask if we can, or hide what our access requirements are, what our, yeah... where we are today, where is our 100%?

And I think there's something about the need to grow our disability pride so that we...and I know that's much easier said than done, but to get to a place where, actually, we start to think about the very specific and unique perspective that our bodies bring to a space as advantageous, rather than as something that takes away from it.

**Tom Pritchard - 57:24**

So, one final question, from Janice... Janice Florence. So, Caroline, I'll throw this to you first, so it'd be nice to get both of your perspectives on it. It's very simple, as a question:

*How would either of you describe inclusive choreography?*

**Caroline Bowditch - 57:47**

I learned from a fantastic, I suppose, theatre director, based in Edinburgh, David Greig, who stopped giving character descriptions for the plays that he was writing, he would just give them a name. There was no sense of age, or physicality, or whatever, he would just give them a name. And he very much talks about... he makes for the bodies that are in the room.

And I would say that that is very much what I do, and that is my idea of... I think true inclusive dance is about making for the bodies that are in the room. Not... and really exploring and embracing those incredible bodies, rather than trying to make those bodies be anything other than what they are.

Yeah, so I think it's about embracing the physicality. The bodies in the space.

**Luke Pell - 58:55**

And I would...we mentioned a colleague, Janice Parker earlier, there's a project that she made many years ago called [Take a Look at What's Actually There](#) (2005), which follows on from what Caroline just said. I think, you know, when I'm making practice about, I work with who's in the room.

And if I think about Caroline's *Falling in Love with Frida*, how to work with all of our collaborators, how do we fall in love with ourselves? And how do we fall in love with one another when we're making? And I think so often dance, there's an idea of where people should be striving to get to, rather than being with who we are and where we're at. And that being not just enough, but more than enough. When I work with an ensemble, on my last project, we talked about that a lot in the studio like, you are



more than enough. And celebrating your unique knowledge. And that's where for me... that's where I would begin with inclusive dance.

Tom, I just spotted there's another question in the chat. Do we have time?

**Tom Pritchard - 1:00:00**

Yeah, go for it. I'm just gonna be on-screen.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:00:02**

Yeah, great! Take a load off.

**Luke Pell - 1:00:04**

This is from Tanya. I believe in Malmo. It says,

*Thank you so much for this talk. Listening to both of you makes one really look forward to your next artistic collaboration. Is that something that you would like to share? Or is there not anything in the pipeline? What would you like to be your next joint project?*

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:00:28**

And yeah, is obviously and happily writing a funding application, and is hoping we've got some amazing thing up our sleeve.

Luke and I can not *not* work together. So, even though we're on opposite sides of the world, there is still at least three things that we know of this year that we're going to do, but they're quite conversational, right? This being one of them.



**Luke Pell - 1:00:50**

Yes, but I did... I did actually put on a piece of paper last night, when we asked each other this question of, what might we hope for going forward, is that although we have both... So, I was text advice on *Falling in Love with Frida*, you performed mine and Jo Verrent's work, [Take Me to Bed](#). We've never made work together. And, it is actually on my list of things I would love for us to do.

So, I'm going to put that out there if somebody would like to, and if Caroline would like to, invite us to make a work together I would very much love to do that. I'm sure we have lots of ideas.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:01:23**

Yes, absolutely. Absolutely. I would happily be in a creative space with you anytime, anywhere.

**Tom Pritchard - 1:01:36**

So that's a commissioning invitation.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:01:39**

Yes absolutely. We're open to commissions.

**Luke Pell - 1:01:44**

And I guess if there are things that in this conversation have been of interest, we are having another conversation in Scotland, or with Scottish organisation, with Dance Base, who I'm Associate Artist with, in a couple of weeks' time, on Friday the 19th of March between 9am UK time. I don't know what time it will be there? 8 in the evening? Yeah, where we're going to talk about touch, being enough and leading with love.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:02:22**

Yeah. Maybe it should be being more than enough? Just based on what you said.



**Tom Pritchard - 1:02:30**

So, thank you both. Thank you Caroline, thank you Luke for the last hour. And thank you also to our wonderful interpreters, Sarah and Michelle. And to Lloyd, our technician who's been keeping the whole thing going for us. And to both audiences, to those in the room with us here in North Melbourne, and those zooming in from all over.

And if you did enjoy this talk, and you want to listen to it again, or read any of it back, we will post the audio of the talk and a transcription of it on the Lucy Guerin Inc website in the next week or so. If you would like to share that with anyone else as well, who wasn't able to be here, live with us tonight, then please feel free to pass that on, so that the wisdom of Caroline and Luke can go further into the world.

The next Dance Dialogues will be coming up in April. And we'll announce more about that shortly. But before that, if you are in Melbourne, and you want to spend some time in a studio with Caroline, she'll be teaching morning class here in a couple of weeks' time, Monday the 15th of March. The classes run from 10 till 11:30 in the morning, here in this very studio. So, hopefully some of you will be able to come in and join us for that.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:03:44**

That'd be amazing. Come and do some dancing.

**Tom Pritchard - 1:03:47**

Yeah. And more information on that if you go to the Lucy Guerin Inc website and navigate to the calendar, you'll find information about the class there. And that's all from us. So, good evening, good morning. Wherever you are. Thanks again for joining us and see you all soon.

**Caroline Bowditch - 1:04:04**

Thank you so much for coming and being with us.

END