



ARTS PODCAST

Putting marginalised cultures centre stage

This is a transcript of a podcast recorded and produced by the British Council in September 2016, presented by Georgina Godwin.

In this Arts Podcast, we look at how marginalised cultures take centre stage in a couple of exciting projects we're involved with.

Southbank Centre's biennial Unlimited Festival celebrates the artistic vision and originality of disabled artists. In September, selected works from the Unlimited commissions programme will be presented at Glasgow's Tramway during the art centre's two week disability arts festival of the same name.

Among these commissions is *Hiraeth*, a collaboration between Candoco Associate Artist Jemima Hoadley and NCA Small Theater, Armenia, which came out of the British Council's Unlimited: Making the Right Moves programme.

The piece is Armenia's first ever integrated dance project, bringing together disabled and non-disabled artists, and tells the story of the journey of the Armenian people throughout their history. Jemima and NCA Small Theatre's Vahan Badalyan tell us more about the project. We're also joined by Paula McFetridge, Artistic Director of Kabosh Theatre Company, Belfast. Paula has recently been involved in research and conferences looking at conflict resolution in three countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, and tells us more about her experiences.

Unlimited: Making the Right Moves programme is supported by the British Embassy in Yerevan, the Ministry of Culture of RA, St. Sarkis Charity Trust and the Armenian diaspora in the UK. The project partner is the National Center of Aesthetics Small Theater.

Contributors:

Vahan Badalyan, Director, [NCA. Small Theatre](#), Armenia

Jemima Hoadley, Associate Artist, [Candoco Dance Company](#)

Paula McFetridge, Artistic Director of [Kabosh Theatre Company](#), Belfast

Georgina Godwin:

You're listening to the British Council Arts Podcast. I'm Georgina Godwin. Today we're looking at how marginalised cultures take centre stage in a couple of really exciting projects that we're involved with here at the British Council. Southbank Center's biennial Unlimited Festival celebrates the artistic vision and originality of disabled artists. This year for the first time, selected works from the Unlimited Commissions program will be presented at Glasgow's Tramway during the art centre's two week disability arts festival of the same name.

Among these commissions is *Hiraeth*, a collaboration between Candoco, associate artist Jemima Hoadley, and NCA Small Theater Armenia. The collaboration came out of the British Council's Unlimited Making the Right Moves program, which in 2013, saw an exchange visit by artists from Candoco's dance company to Armenia. The resulting piece is Armenia's first ever integrated dance project, bringing together disabled and non-disabled artists and tell the story of the journey of the Armenian people throughout their history.

Well I'd like to start by introducing you to Vahan Badalyan, who's the director NCA Small Theater Armenia. Vahan, thanks so much for coming in.

Vahan Badalyan: Thanks for the invitation.

GG: Really interesting project. Tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be involved.

VB: Oh, I started from my company. Small Theater is one of the youngest theater companies in Armenia, and it was founded about 20 years ago by yours truly. And first it was like a drama studio and our mission then and now was to organize different educational programs for young people interested in theatrical arts. So since its foundation, we have done a lot of work and we had some different collaborations with different foreign theatrical companies. And one of the successful collaborations was with Candoco Dance Company from UK and British Council.

And the idea to establish the first integrated dance company in Armenia. And it's about three years we're working on this project. And we already have, as a result, two productions put into performances. And we're really happy also to be here and to participate in Glasgow Tramway Unlimited Festival.

GG: Well let's find out a little bit about Candoco Dance Company from Jemima Hoadley, who's the Associate Artist. Jemima, tell us about Candoco.

Jemima Hoadley: Well Candoco happened to be celebrating 25 years this year. And they started as a group of dances doing workshops, eventually forming a company, going on tour, touring the UK and the world eventually, with their education and performance program. And it was the first company of its kind to integrate disabled and non-disabled dancers. So really they are the first company, and they're very well established now after 25 years. And they have a youth company, and youth groups, and lots of projects in and around the UK and abroad.

And they approached me to ask if I would like to go to Armenia to choreograph a second project with Small Theater Yerevan, and like Vahan, I jumped at the opportunity. And we had a meeting in the UK. Vahan came over with Narek Tovmasyan from British Council, and we also had an artist, Seta White, who is British-Armenian. And she was like an artistic adviser for the project, which was great actually because she has experience with both cultures, a good kind of person to have in to advise us. And we talked about what we wanted to focus the project on. And Vahan asked me, as it was the centenary of the Armenia genocide, there was a big festival not just in Armenia, but around the world wherever there is Armenia diaspora, to commemorate the Armenian genocide, and did. I wanted to be part of that, and so that was the discussion that we had here in London. And I felt that I really wanted to do something to be part of this commemoration, this festival, but I didn't really feel qualified to talk about or look at the genocide itself.

So we discussed really in those two days that we had to throw around ideas. We discussed issues of exile, relocation, having to flee your home in a hurry, being somewhere and longing to be back home, being relocated and searching for home, and how that informs our identity. What kind of things suggest and represent to us, and how can we recreate that wherever we go? And those are really universal themes that anybody who spent any time away from home can probably relate to that. And in fact, after our meeting, Vahan went back to Armenia, and

we kept our discussion going through email. And I just started to have conversations with people about that, people here, and a lot of people had a story about things that they do, things that they take with them as they are on tour or have had to relocate for a while. A plant or a certain carpet, or certain pictures. So that became a kind of starting point for the work.

GG: *Hiraeth* is the name of the project. What does that actually mean? What language is it?

JH: 'Hiraeth' is a Welsh word, and the word came to me via social media, and not, it didn't just appear in my mind. It came to me with a translation, and there wasn't one word that could translate 'hiraeth'. It was more an explanation of a longing for and a searching for home. And it could be a home that you've not necessarily even been to. And to me, that seemed to really be talking about this experience of being a diaspora, and having a sense of identity. And maybe a longing for a homeland that you've never even been to before. So I thought this word, 'hiraeth', was a really beautiful word that we could use.

GG: And is there something similar in Armenian?

VB: Yes, we have another word. We say 'karot', and I think it express in a similar sense, as 'hiraeth'. It's not a missing, it's not a homesickness, but it's something else, something special.

GG: Tell me about bringing the Armenian artists on board on this project. How did you go about finding them?

VB: The artists involved in this group, the part are my existing company. And disabled artists, they were chosen through different workshops done in collaboration again with Candoco Dance Company. And it was a long process. We had 80 participants during all this workshops. And finally we had chosen 10 people, and we have started to work with them more deeply and more concentrated on this project.

GG: I mean, this is really important though in Armenia because the country really has not a great history on disability rights.

VB: We are really proud of this because it's really the first project and first integrated dance group. And for the moment, we see really the fruits of our labor, and you'll see how the big influence to the society, to the social life, and it's a very visible and nice example of making changes in

society, yeah.

GG: We were talking about the genocide. And I just wondered how all this plays in, the significance really of Armenia's history, and the question of an Armenian identity within the piece.

VB: I think it's, as Jemima told, really in this piece, we find our national sense of identity about this homesickness and when you watch this dance production, you have really this sense of looking for your identity, your historical background, and I'm really happy that it happens with Jemima's work, and the dancer's work as well.

GG: Jemima, how would you add to that?

JH: Well so, rather than looking to the past and what other people went through, although that was a part of my research, we started by, for the artists involved, looking at what is Armenia to them. What is home to them? And building a kind of collection, and we imagined it first. This was something from Seta. We imagined each had a little, small suitcase, a very small one. What would you take with you if you had to leave suddenly? What would be the important things that you would take? What would help you to feel like you could recreate home?

And some of those things weren't things that you could put into a suitcase. You know, some of those things were cultural things, religious icons, you know, just the practice of going to church every week, sounds, tastes, smells. So we looked at all of this, collecting these things that make home for each individual and in the magic world of dance, we you know, we transformed these things into movement, and into dance. And they became the raw materials for the dance that we've made.

And one of the things that we discussed was the significance of carpet making in Armenia. And the work, *Hiraeth*, each of the performers has a rug, a carpet, that is their own. And they use this in a way to kind of recreate home. It becomes different things. The individual rug becomes different things to them, but also collectively, they become different things in the work. So at some point, the rugs become a caravan. And this was an image that I was very kind of impacted by when I went to visit the Genocide Museum in Armenia. They had lots of images, and there were lots of rugs in the images of people carried their clothes, they carried their possessions in the rugs. And there were images of people that didn't make it, lying in the desert with rugs over them, and carrying

their possessions, so the rugs were bags, and clothing, you know, the clothing, the traditional clothing is somewhat rug-like.

And there was these caravans that the people were taking. Their possessions that eventually got abandoned because they, you know, they were going too far. So we have at some point, the rugs become a caravan. They become a shelter. They become clothing, the traditional Armenian clothing. And they eventually become, we're not completely sure, but a person laying covered in rugs.

GG: So, I mean, hugely significant. How has it been received in Armenia, Vahan?

VB: Very well. We have opened with this production, High Fest International Festival, which is performing arts festival in Armenia. And it was very well welcomed by our audience. And we already have some invitations to other festivals, and we're looking forward to preserve this work.

GG: Do you think that it's going to change the attitude within Armenia to disability?

VB: It's already changing, I can say, because I can feel it from the feedback of public. Also some stated institutions as well because there is big interest of making change. And I think it's a very good example to make changes through the arts, through the dance.

GG: Well of course, you're off to Glasgow this week. What are you expecting, or looking forward to from your experiences at the Unlimited Festival?

VB: Oh, the most important thing is to see this life-changing experience for our dancers, because for most of them, it's the first travel, first impressions. I mean, they are like in a dream even to be here in London. When I see the eyes of one of our dancers, she's in a wheelchair, she's looking around. She cannot believe where she is. And it's very touching, moving to see this.

And in the same moment, they have this sense of real artist that they went to present themselves, you know, very good way. So I'm hoping Glasgow, it will be really good experience also, these artists.

GG: Jemima, what are your expectations?

JH: I'm interested to see what a British audience makes of this work. We had a small presentation of the work when I was there, public performance, but a lot of invited audience went there. And Small Theater really is a small theatre. How many seats does it have?

VB: We have 80 seats.

JH: Yeah, so we had an invited audience, and it was lovely to be able to present it when I was there and have some feedback. But I'm interested to see it performed, and even just this morning, we did company class together. I led company class at Candoco, and the Unlimited Project dancers from Armenia joined in. And then they did a run through for us. So it's the first time I've seen the piece in a year, and Vahan's done an amazing job putting it back together. And also there has been a slight cast change, one of the dancers had to move to America, and so Vahan recast his part, and did an amazing job of bringing him into the project in an authentic way. Because Hike, the dancer that he replaced, is deaf. And he was using sign language in the work, and the new dancer, who's not new to Vahan, he was in previous work. His name?

VB: Maher.

JH: Maher isn't deaf, and he's not using sign language, so he has a solo in there. And it was really beautiful to see that you had really used the...

VB: The same structure...

JH: The same structure. Yeah, I could really see that, that it was authentic to the original process. And it was just so impressive that the having landed, you know, one and a half days ago, performed to Candoco Dance Company. This work that I made a year ago, you know, they've put it back together. It's fantastic. So I'm looking forward to seeing how the audience respond.

GG: Well we're also joined by Paula McFetridge of Kabosh, who's been working with the British Council, looking at peace building and the arts. Paula, tell us a little bit more about that.

Paula McFetridge: Kabosh is a Belfast based theatre company. We do theatre in non-theatre spaces. So we've performed in churches, synagogues, on the street, in Spiegel tents, in taxis, on the road, in prisons, in courthouses, various different sites. All of our work is

commissioned from professional playwrights. I direct each of the projects. And inevitably if you're performing in spaces like that, it's a space that tends to be single identity. You know, you don't go into a tobacco shop unless you're a smoker. You don't necessarily go into a synagogue unless you're Jewish.

So people's perception of another community is very much related to space. A lot of our projects were inspired by sites-based people. We believe in giving voice to the silent. And we challenge the notion of what theatre is, who it's for, what it's about. So that's the type of work that we've been doing. We've doing it for quite some time. The company's going since 1994. I've been on it about 11 years now. More and more of our work is about dealing with the past.

And we have a 29 year conflict in the north, and Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998. So we're in post conflict the same at the time, we're in conflict. And yet, we are probably more divided, more fragmented, more damaged now than we almost were during conflict. And I think that the role in the artist in an awful lot of these types of environments is to animate the other, the perceived other. Challenge preconceived ideas, be provocative. Try and facilitate informed discussions. And for a long time I thought that the work then by its nature would be parochial, would be about a single conflict. And then I realized that an awful lot of the methodology we were using, where we were working with ex-prisoners, whether we were animating specific sites, we were dealing with conflict on loads of different levels, and issues of conflict.

And it became apparent to me that we could share that methodology and those projects national and internationally. And really in the last five years, I suppose, I started to do that.

GG: You've been to the sub-Sahara in Africa. You've been involved in conflict and resolution research and the conferences there. So tell us about that.

PM: What happened was, I mean, I met the British Council team. I was invited to the Salzburg Global Seminar initially. And they were doing a peace building through the arts collective, where they brought artists, policymakers, and basically practitioners from conflict zones around the world together in Salzburg to look at policy, to look at how we can share practice, how we could explore different ideas. And then out of that then, the British Council invited me to speak at a conference in London, where I then met other practitioners from other countries.

And it became, and then we performed a recent project, those you pass on the street, at the British Embassy with British Council members there. And there were people there from South Africa who said that the issues that we were addressing were exactly the same issues as they were addressing, the notion of truth, the notion of what is truth. The notion of bitterness, the notion of how you move forward. The notion of how you ensure that bitterness isn't passed on to the next generation. How do you stop the cycle of violence? The kind of humanity of war. How do you humanize the other, and ensure that we can learn from the past, rather than pretending the past didn't happen.

And so I have thought then, I was invited then to take that particular show to South Africa. And we went, we were brought over for the 40th anniversary of the Soweto riots. And running alongside that, the British Council asked Kabosh to go to Nigeria. And we went to Nigeria in September and we did a scope and visit in Nigeria to see if we could share our practice and facilitate communication between very active civil action groups that were looking at key social issues, that were very pertinent and very sensitive within the communities, and pair them with artists who weren't necessarily using their craft to directly deal with conflict. And so we were there to meet people, but also to listen to what their concerns were, and what the issues were, and then help them design a project that would link artists, link the civil action groups, and create a sustainable creative industry going forward that could be responsive to the context in which it's found itself.

And so try and facilitate community development on some level. So that was kind of running alongside then as going to South Africa. And then went to South Africa as I say, for the Grahamstown National Festival. And we performed there in July. And representatives from British Council came to see the show and facilitated further discussions. We led some master classes. We did post-show discussion after every show as well, I should say. And because the piece itself it very provocative, it's very agitprop, we can do it in six chairs, you know? It's a 50 minute piece, and it just worked. The response was unbelievable. The post-show discussions lasted as long as the show. We couldn't get people out of the theatre. People were following us up the street. We were stopped going to the other shows. People wanted to talk to you about how they cope with oppression, how they cope with guilt, how they cope those emotional issues that are in conflicts all over the world, as well know. And how they felt for the first time, they could talk about it because they were witnessing somebody else sharing pain.

And then we went then from South Africa then after that experience, we then flew to Rwanda, and we performed on the Genocide Memorial in Kigali for 3,000 people in the open air. And again, heavily supported by British Council team on the ground. The kind of new officers out there came to see the show, and they witnessed, as we witnessed again, how as a piece, it's interesting watching white Western people sharing stories of oppression to other people. And the language of conflict, the stories that we are trying to tell, just spoke to people.

And again, because we believe it very much in our work, that if we are going to create provocative pieces, that we facilitate discussions, and master classes, and workshops. And I led three different workshops for young practitioners from Burundi, from Kenya, from Cambodia, and Uganda, who were all performing in the festival. They wanted to know about our work, and how you do site specific work, how you do pop up stuff, how you can do provocative stuff. How you create, like we've created apps of our works as well, how it is possible to share methodology and make it specific to the context in which you're producing. And how you, as an artist, can really look at your context in which you are an artist. And use your craft to facilitate the creation of a more informed, more inclusive society.

And again, it was incredible. And yeah, and then we flew back from Rwanda, and I have just been in Zurich in the weekend there. And it sounds like a travel a lot, and I don't, but I was invited to Zurich on the back of all that for the biggest international conference, which regards Building Peace, that looks at the role of technology, and the role of narratives, storytelling. But in its cleanest, sparsest form. How do you create a narrative where you leave enough room for an audience to engage with it and have a response? And then how to create a facilitated response that doesn't re-traumatise?

And it has been quite incredible, and I've been talking to the British Council, and it's been great. Been here for a couple of days to kind of meet workers who I've dealt a lot with virtually, but I've never met them, to talk about it is possible to share methodology, to share practice interculturally. And I think that that is a very cost effective way of celebrating local arts practice, as well as allowing arts practice to be specific to individual countries.

GG: It's very universal, as you say, people's response to this. But I'm wondering if you found differences in the way that people responded to

you depending on the different countries in which you were working.

PM: Yeah, I mean, unfortunately having grown up in a conflict zone, it's a really good calling card, you know? You're kind of accepted on a very different level. And that's your way in. But yes, absolutely, it has been very different. One of the reasons why I suppose I haven't done as much international work, or international turn over the years, is because I was acutely aware that there is no way I can understand somebody else's context, or somebody else's conflict. So I don't pretend to know. And I have to approach it from a human basis. But the response has been very different.

For example, in South Africa, like we were in the Grahamstown Festival. The majority of our audience was white. And as I say, their engagement with it was coming from a perspective of they felt that they never got a facilitated environment in which they could talk about the past in South Africa. And exactly that thing I said, that them watching white people talking about oppression, and talking about structured ways of moving forward, and what truth is, and whether truth actually is a thing that exists, and whether you have the right to move forward as an individual when your community, your family, and your peers aren't. Do you cause more damage by trying to do that? Can you do enforced reconciliation? Can you reconcile something that was never conciled? Is there such a thing as peace building?

So that's what happened there. In Rwanda, it was interesting, and you know, this is only my experience. But in South Africa, everybody kept saying, "Rwanda's our success story. Wait until you get to Rwanda." And the concept of forgiveness in Rwanda is overwhelming. I mean, the scale of genocide, the scale of neighbor on neighbor, murder. The way that memorial is built, and I haven't been to the one in Armenia, and it was completely overwhelming, but the way that also that the genocide is, it's put into an international context. But that we were there sharing pain, but in a moment also sharing survival. It's really interesting.

We weren't talking about forgiving or forgetting, or erasing the past. We were talking about, listen, 29 years down the line, we still have issues. And as artists, and as practitioners, you can air those issues in a manner that politicians, the media, can't and/or won't. So we were celebrating the artist. And the response in Rwanda was that there was a sense of recognition. There was a sense of connection. There was a sense of being part of an international narrative there.

Nigeria was very different because what happened in Nigeria was the style of work that we were doing, that kind of quite sparse pop up, site specific, was not within the culture. And we were talking about, you know, what happens when there is a threat that regards gathering people in public space because of security issues. So we were sharing small pop up, wee, tiny, mobile things that could happen in a library, or in a shop, that is 10 minutes long. But that is completely responsive, totally engaging, without the trappings of theatre. So sharing that, how the small beautifully formed thing can have as much impact as a, you know, two act, three act drama in a proscenium arch. And also the notion of revival, the notion of being on the road, and the notion of being confrontational. So that was a whole different change in Nigeria.

So yeah, like it's different, like every environment's different. But then that's the thing about live theatre. You know, every single show is completely affected by your feedback from your audience. So yeah, it's been different, but we've learned from it. I mean, inevitably, it kind of distills your practice. It makes us better artists, and it means that we've had to find a way of articulating why we do what we do, how we do it, and whether we want to keep doing it. And inevitably, the conversation always comes trying to hopefully get to a point where we don't have to do it. But how intrinsic the role of the artist is in each of those situations, and reminding people that they can make change. And they can have positive change, and that as long as they do it with a sense of responsibility and a sense of quality, and a sense of integrity, and having long term project, like the project that's been talked about.

That you know, these things don't happen at the drop of a hat. You know, I mean, it's taken us a long time to get to this point, and I'm delighted to be working with organisations with the British Council to make things like that happen.

GG: Well let's bring Jemima and Vahan back into the conversation now. Because, of course, genocide is something that has been discussed a lot. And the Armenian genocide, of course, plays into your work too. So what about healing? Do you think that that's something that the Armenian viewing public is getting out of your work?

VB: For Armenians, it's very sensitive thing and to survive and to experience, again the same thing, sometimes it's very hard for all of us. But it's good also to remember people all the time, remember the generations that it happens, and you have not to forget about that. And still we have problem that it's not recognized by Turkey. And it's one of

the biggest issues that happens now. And but, we also see that there are changes. It's happening also. So maybe we'll change some days, and people will understand that it's impossible to live without recognition and... because the recognition stop us not to do these kind of things again. And as it was said, still happening, terrible things around the world.

PM: I mean, you're right about bearing witness. You know, if we bear witness to pain, if we give voice to pain, if we recognize it happens, you know, it's key.

JH: As part of the centenary commemorations last year, as I said, around the world there was a festival of voices from the Armenian genocide. And I went to see a very powerful production in West London. It was a small production above in a theatre above a pub. And it was verbatim script as it were. They were using real stories, accounts from the genocide. And it was, you know, it was traumatic to hear those stories. But it's important that they're heard.

And they also framed politically the kind of, and historically the run up to the genocide and since, and how in fact, Britain also doesn't recognize, officially doesn't recognize the Armenian genocide for political reasons.

And also, that Israel doesn't recognize as well. And as a British Jew, I feel sorry for that. And it's what I wrote in the book, in the visitor's book at the genocide museum in Armenia was that I recognize it. It did happen, and it's important that we recognize...

VB: We all speak about these and also, yep.

PM: I think you're right. Like I think it is important we speak about it. You're absolutely right. It's about giving voice to something. And it's also about us trying to frame those moments. You know, what is that moment when somebody decides war is the only way? What is that moment when somebody decides peace is the only way? Somebody in that moment makes a human decision, you know? And so often, that's not the moment that's recorded, and that then where the artist kind of meets conflict. Because I think in that moment, our job is to imagine, to propose the idea that somebody took an emotional decision in that moment because of circumstance, and because of context. And I think if it's based on truth, and we have the foundations there, then yes, we can frame it. We can shape the context. We can fictionalize. We can help people imagine. And I think that there are times when it does have to be

difficult, and it does have to be hard to watch and to listen to. But I also think that as artists, we also know as well when is the right time to play with it, when is the right time to make it light? Come at it slightly left of field because we know our audience. We know the timing, you know?

GG: You talked a lot there about working in those communities, and basically laying the groundwork for locals to then carry on your work, and continue with your legacy, and really help to change things. Do you think that in Armenia, people have been inspired by the work that you do? Do you think that there will be other theatre companies, and other dance companies, that come in your wake?

VB: Yeah, absolutely. And even now, I see the signs of them. Now there are other organisations. They are initiating flash mobs with disabled people on the street. So it's kind of movement which starts, I'm sure that it will continue. Because as I had told before, it's really a good visible example that you see the result. And public goes out after the shows always in tears or laughing, and it's [inaudible 00:032:22]. You see the feedback is immediate.

GG: In terms of speaking for a marginalised community, and I'm thinking here of disabled people not only in your work, but certainly in Rwanda, I know that there was a lot of mutilation. And so therefore a lot of disabled people. I noticed all of our are able-bodied, and I wondered if there was any kind of barrier then with engaging within that community.

JH: Yeah, absolutely. I am a Western white, non-disabled person that hasn't grown up in a conflict environment. You know, which was the reason why I didn't think I was qualified at all to look at the genocide. And in terms of, you know, working with people with disabilities, it's something that, you know, I've questioned myself about throughout my 20 years or so of doing so. And I mean, now it's just kind of, it's what I do. It's the community within which I work quite often. It's the jobs that I get. It's the companies that I work for.

But initially, it was for me, first of all, it was a job working with Candoco in 1999 as a dancer. But then it became about interesting answers to unusual questions. It was interesting, and I have to say in the Unlimited Festival, after watching a lot of work in the Unlimited Festival at Southbank, I kind of come away thinking why would I want to watch theatre by non-disabled artists? Like this is just so much more interesting. But yeah, I mean, I don't really have a place within that community. I just happened to be privileged to work with artists with

disabilities and without disabilities. And we make work together. And as long as the work is exciting, and good, and relevant, then I'll be there.

GG: And Vahan for you, bringing in disabled dancers into your company, were these people who had any history of dance or...

VB: Absolutely not. No, no. None of them had any experience in dance. And for me, it was very interesting also to work with them because I'm a curious person. And it's always interesting to explore a new body language, a new way of expression, and as director, I'm always looking to something special. And it was exactly for me to this project.

JH: And Tony, the choreographer on the project at Small Theater, she told a story about Manuk when he first came along to one of the first workshops that he has cerebral palsy. He has never danced in his life, never done a theatre workshop before, and somehow he ended up at this workshop, and he came in jeans. And he sat at the side, and he didn't participate. And Tony, you know, eventually kind of managed to coax him into the space. And it has been a massive change for him in his life because I think his actual movement possibilities, he had reached a point with his physician where they were saying that there's not anything more we can do for you. And his body's changing and developing, and he's in the piece. He's in *Hiraeth*, so he's here.

GG: Paula for you, not just people who are disabled, but also people who have been terribly traumatised, these are people who you're now helping, albeit indirectly in that the projects continue without you. It's really a, as I said before, a legacy. You're helping people heal now through the work that you've left behind.

PM: I find it very hard to, like I would never say that necessarily about myself. I think people help themselves to heal if we provide a circumstance and a context in which they can do it, I think. There has to be those that are inspired by the work that then continue to do it on the ground. I mean, all of this work is led by visionaries. It has to be. I think there is always an individual that encourages people to continue. And I think it is about us finding those individuals who are inspired by, or experiencing something that we do, and facilitating them to run. You know, and I think that that's why it's so important that we continue to support emerging artists, and I think when we do international work, it's important that, you know, that the British Council help us find those individuals on the ground that need ongoing investment, and have the skills by which they can drive a project forward, whether that be the

business skills even more so than the artistic skill. Or the production skills. It's those kind of add-ons that make a vision possible. And I think if we find that, and support that, you give people the tools. Inevitably, if they have the desire and the ability, they will be able to do it, you know?

I mean, yes, I like to think, you know, that we do have a positive impact. I question all the time about, you know, the big thing for me is when is the right time to do a show? Who's the right people to do it for? Am I the right person to do it? I ask that with every single show and I think that when you're dealing with issues like this, we have to be sensitive. It does take a very long time to deal with issues of genocide, or long term conflict, or even some of the terrible social ills, and even elements of racism that is going on within our society. It is going to take a long time. We need to invest in it. We need to recognize the fact that, you know, there's a lot of pain floating about. You know, and you can't just wipe it out with one simple show, or one simple intervention, you know?

But yeah, I mean, I'm proud of the work that we do. And I can see it in people. I can see in people's faces. And an awful lot of the examples that any of us will ever give is always anecdotal. You know, it's always that moment where you see somebody, or somebody comes up and talk.

Like it was like a young guy sitting in the Genocide Memorial in Rwanda, watching the Global Arts Corps and Cambodia do a circus show about the Killing Fields. And he couldn't breathe, he was so excited. Every time they did something, he would clap. And this mad kind of energy would go through him. And he would turn round and kept looking to see there was nobody else getting it, you know? And just watching that young fellow, and he must have been 13 years of age, and he was a wee whip-it of a thing. And he kept looking at his phone, which is a wee old-fashioned phone, and he knew he had to be somewhere else. But there was no way he was going to go away.

And we were all sitting there saying, we come back in 10 years, he is the person that's going to have a show in the stage. That moment when he saw them do back tumbles and describe the Killing Fields, through circus facilitated by external artists, was one of the most incredible things because he couldn't contain himself. There was an energy that ran through his body. His eyes were popping out of his head. And it's that thing that that live event where somebody either witnesses as an audience, or they're a participant. And they feel it's speaking to them. That's when it works, you know?

GG: That's what it's all about.

PM: That is, indeed.

GG: Very many thanks, Paula McFetridge, who's Artistic Director Kabosh Theatre Company, Belfast. Also thanks to guests Vahan Badalyan, who's the Director NCA Small Theater Armenia, and Jemima Hoadley, Associate Artist at Candoco Dance Company. And don't forget that *Hiraeth* will be at Tramway, Glasgow on the 15th and 16th of September.
