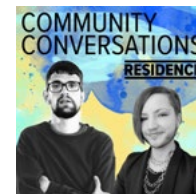


Community Conversations

Episode 1: Max Marchewicz & Neal Pike



Alison Denholm: City Arts' Community Conversations podcast explores the diversity of Nottingham's creative community. Series two shines a light on the lives and work of deaf, disabled and neurodivergent artists in Nottingham. Part of City Arts Residence project, it's hosted by Laura Guthrie and Jay Sandhu. The production is supported using public funding by The National Lottery through Arts Council England

Laura Guthrie: So this episode we're meeting two new artists. We're meeting Neil Pike, who is a poet, a playwright, and a performer. Three Ps! Welcome Neil. And we're welcoming Max Markovitz, who is a BSL interpreter and a performer. And we'll find out more about Max and Neil as we chat. But welcome. It's lovely to see you both. And today we are talking kind of about the lived experience of having a visible or an invisible disability and how that kind of impacts on the work you choose to do, or the way people perceive you or your work. Amongst other things, but that's kind of the starting topic. So if you just want to introduce yourself and audio describe how you look today, if that's all right. And we could start with you Neil?

Neil Pike: Yeah. Hiya, so today I'm wearing a kind of pinky-orange shirt and a pair of black jeans and green socks. And, yeah, I'm feeling alright today yeah. A little bit nervous but... I've not really done this in a while but it's kind of like "ah!" and you get into the kind of brain again.

Laura Guthrie: Thank you, Neil. Max.

Max Marchewicz: To describe myself, I'm a white, non-binary person. I'm in my mid-thirties. I've got blue hair, which is long on one side and short on the other. I've got a beard, I've got a purple lipstick, I'm wearing a skeleton jumper cuz I'm rocking the Halloween-wear all year round, and I've got a bit of a chain necklace going on. Yep, that's me. My pronouns are they and them.

Laura Guthrie: Thank you so much. So let's start with telling us about you and your practice. So what kind of work you create, where you create it, how you create it, maybe. And let's start... Neil, shall we start with you again?

Neil Pike: So I'm gonna say I've started - bit of history - I've started, I've always

been interested in writing, I think when I was at school boy, I was interested in , making, making stories in my head, but at school, I never acquired a confidence or the right sort of ground to really let my ... I wouldn't remember why, but also, come back to it later. I'm a humongous fan of music. So I've been kind of inspired by sort of lyric fiction. So I've always wanted to have a go at writing something or being on stage. So fast forward to 2013, I was struggling with life. It was not really going well in many ways. My friend Jim, Jim Hall, told me to, uh, start trying to go to Mouthy Poets sessions. Well it's a poetry collective based out of Nottingham Playhouse run by Debris (Deborah) Stevenson and Anne Holloway. So we met every Friday and it kind of gave the confidence to start writing and I began writing poetry and perform on stage. I'm gonna say my practice is mainly kind of started out as poetry and then I decided I wanted to write a play about school because, yeah, I went to a SEN school in Nottingham, well Bramcote. I wanted to tell about that because it's like no one's, no one's ever really written about SEN schools. It's very sort of mixed my experience. There was good bits, but some bits that were definitely not good.

Laura Guthrie: I was just gonna ask how long ago, when you said you first started by going to Mouthy Poets, how long ago was that?

Neil Pike: Sorry, it was 2013. So nine years. So in nine years I've actually done quite a lot.

Laura Guthrie: You really have. Thank you, Neil. So Max, tell us a bit more about you.

Max Marchewicz: Yeah, so currently, primarily I work as an access provider. I'm a baseline interpreter, audio describer, access consultant, and I also provide training on various things. But creatively, I... I've done various things over the years. It's quite a long and winding story. I trained as a dancer and physical theatre practitioner, and I also studied acting. I sing, I used to... I did traditional folk music primarily, and I was just starting to get paid gigs and then I needed to use a wheelchair and I couldn't get paid gigs anymore cuz the venues that were small enough to pay me were also not accessible. But yeah, lots of music and stuff like that, bits of visual art. I had a piece exhibited in the New Art Exchange as part of the Queer and Trans Art Collective's inaugural exhibition, which was really cool. And yeah, currently looking into getting more into performing arts again. Having done lots of access to other people's performing arts, it would be quite nice to explore that for myself again. And I'd kind of like to get into a bit of choreography, movement direction kind of stuff. That's, yeah, so I've got my eye on various things. I interpret a lot of drag and I know a lot of drag artists and I'm being persuaded by lots of people that I should really

start working on my own act so.. maybe that's on the cards.

Laura Guthrie: Wow. A really broad breadth of work that you've done and that you're, you're planning to do. Wow. So do you feel that, I mean it sort of feels obvious because you'd said those opportunities dried up, but do you want to tell us a little bit more about kind of how that happened and what impact did that have on you as a musician?

Max Marchewicz: With the music side of it, it was kind of very abrupt in that I'd made lots of connections locally and I had connections in the local folk club and I was always part of their, they used to have folk days regularly, like twice a year, and they'd invite certain guests and pay them to perform and I was always invited to be part of that. And then I was also starting to get gigs and make connections and do open mics and stuff like that and all the kind of basic building blocks of starting a small... kind of as an independent artist. And then kind of as overnight, really, as soon as I needed to use my wheelchair all the time... I'd used a walking stick for a while and that was fine. I could get someone to help me bring my guitar into the venue, no problem at all, as long as I could walk the distance it was fine. As soon as I needed level access I couldn't get into the venues, and so I'd get invitations and there was a period of about six months where I kept getting invited to do things or invited to paid gigs, and then I'd have to go "is your venue accessible?". Knowing full well that they weren't and just to make sure that I had the right information and then find out that I couldn't. So, it didn't... I never got the impression that anybody wasn't offering me an opportunity because I was a disabled person. It was more that the opportunities happened to be in places that were not accessible to me because of my specific access needs.

Jay Sandhu: How did the people booking it respond to that?

Max Marchewicz: Usually with lots of apologies: "I'm really sorry *but* there's one step to get in the door and the disabled toilet's down a flight of stairs"... which was my funniest one. [chuckling from everyone] Why is your disabled toilet down a flight of stairs? Yeah, the folk club I mentioned is in a pub back room, but that's up a full flight of stairs and there's no access. Which... I mean... the thing that is very frustrating is that traditional folk has a target market for people who were around in the folk revival in the seventies who are all increasingly going to have access needs. Why are so many of these events happening in inaccessible spaces?

Max Marchewicz: Where I used to live, there were two folk clubs that were really close to me, but one was in an upstairs room of a pub and one was in a basement of a pub with a full flight of stairs for both and no access. And so it

doesn't make any sense for the art form that those places, that those events happen in inaccessible spaces, but that is the...

Laura Guthrie: It's just so frustrating, isn't it? Because it's not like, this isn't something that hasn't been around forever. Like people with access requirements have been around forever and even, you know, in theatre... So the other night I went to see a piece of theatre, that was by a disabled artist, in a pub theatre in London. And it was totally inaccessible. I mean it was accessible to me, but there were many, many people for whom it wasn't. And I just kept thinking, why now... why now are we still doing this? Why... why is this still acceptable? I'm interested as well, Max when you talked about now you are doing a lot more, you are doing work where you are interpreting performances a lot more. And I've seen you in performances with Graeae, beautifully and brilliantly interpreting as a character on stage. And obviously Graeae Theatre, the starting point for Graeae is that the process and the performances will be accessible for everybody both on and off stage, but that's a quite unique company. So you were saying that you are looking at... people have been saying about you performing again in drag, as a drag artist, and so on. Are there more opportunities now for you to physically access those spaces to be able to perform or will that still be an issue?

Max Marchewicz: I think it's still a huge issue because a lot of venues are improving their access for front of house - for audiences. But they forget that sometimes disabled people have jobs and do things on stages. So there are so many venues I've worked in where I can sit in front of the stage, but I can't get on the stage. Or if I've visited venues where I'm like "okay, so I know I can get in this venue" but actually back of house I'm aware there isn't anything. And that's from very small scale to huge. I did an arena tour this year interpreting for a band and the number of massive arenas which have terrible disabled access backstage is kind of shocking. It's not shocking because I kind of expect it, but also it is... it's shockingly bad that people still aren't aware that disabled people don't just need access front of house. We also want to work in the creative industries, and when those barriers are still there in so many places it, I think, puts people off even trying a lot of the time because there are so few opportunities.

Jay Sandhu: The other thing that I think happens as well is that there are some venues in town that I work with that are fully accessible, but, and I don't know whether it's right... I think it's wrongfully, they don't shout about it.

Neil Pike: No.

Jay Sandhu: Like they're fully accessible for artists and for audiences, but I

only know that because I have booked disabled artists and I've had to ask the questions and they're like "Yeah, of course we are! There's a lift here, there's this here, there's this here, there's this here". And I'm like, why is this not on the website?

Neil Pike: That should be on your website, front page!

Jay Sandhu: Yeah. And everyone should be able to see that. Or there should be... literally all you'd need is the tab that says "accessibility".

Neil Pike: Yeah.

Jay Sandhu: And, and that's all you'd need. But for some reason a lot of these venues, and I don't know why, don't make that public and you have to talk to someone, who has to talk to someone else, who has to talk to someone else, and then you find out that actually, yeah, they've had it all along.

Max Marchewicz: I think there's an additional point there in that a lot of venues that do talk about their access it, again, they're thinking of public audience access. So for example, there's a venue in town which it, it's kind of wheelchair accessible. It's an upstairs venue, but there is a platform lift. It's not the best, but it's fine. It's a platform lift, it's just about big enough. It fits my wheelchair, I can just about manage it. It was much more difficult on a scooter cuz you, you go in through the short side and come out through the other side into a smaller room and have to then navigate your way out of... it's a complicated thing, but at least you can get to the venue, so I've attended lots of events there. But the stage isn't accessible and the disabled toilet is in the shop downstairs, so you have to get a member of the bar staff if they're free to come with you downstairs, unshutter the shop, and let you into the disabled toilet... which they use for storage. So it's an accessible venue in a way...

Neil Pike: ... but not really...

Max Marchewicz: But actually as a performer, it wouldn't be because I can't get on the stage.

Laura Guthrie: And so much of that is around people's thinking and how people perceive... like if people perceive access to be access for somebody using a wheelchair and that's it. But all that means is that there's a ramp or there's no steps but, exactly what you've just said, it's not just about, well "where's the accessible toilet" but it's also "how can I get to the bar?", "can I be served?"... you know all of those things. And also just the attitude of the staff and so on. Can I ask you Neil, the same question that I asked Max really...What

kind of barriers do you feel are there, have been there, and what impact has that had on the work that you've done?

Neil Pike: I think it's an interesting question..... The thing about it, I think it more, all kind....of.... obviously my stutter, yeah and kind of dyspraxia. I think it's more just like organisation. Just like it does take me a while to get to emails, I find the idea of emailing intimidating. It's like, um, you get into that mode. If I get into that mode, which it doesn't happen very much, where I can maybe write 20 emails in half an hour. But then it's, there's some days or weeks or months where I can't. I think the barrier for me is general organisation and kind of just struggling to... like I know what I want to do it's just figuring out how to do it.

Laura Guthrie: And how have you addressed those barriers? So in order... Because you've been a very successful artist, you've created one show that you've toured, and when you've been on tour with that show, there's an element of organisation and admin that has to go with being a performing artist on tour. What kind of things have you put in place?

Neil Pike: Yeah... I think if you get the team or even a person that you are comfortable with and they'll do your kind of dirty work for you [laughs] - the admin. So for me, my creative partner is a person called Matt Miller, who directs the show and they also, they take most of my admin...before we had a producer Matt used to do a fair chunk, I did bits but I'd get a bit flustered, so I'd send it to Matt and Matt would do it for me. So I think, when you're a disabled artist it's quite hard to do everything on your own. Which I've tried to, to become quite independent but it's like, I'll be feeling like "yeah, this is not gonna work", feeling a little bit snowed under... so you've gotta have some support or someone who can kind of do that stuff . But I think it, well that it does take away from my brain power from that creative side as well. So trying to balance, to do everything... yeah it does get a bit exhausting.

Max Marchewicz: Just to add about visibly and invisibly disabled. I have a very obvious physical access need in that I will arrive sitting in my wheelchair and it's very obvious to people or I'll tell people in advance that I need wheelchair access, but I'm also an autistic person and I have access requirements regarding that. But that often gets a bit forgotten about cause people are so flustered worrying about physical access that they, then when I go "actually I need my interview questions in advance" like I had for today - which is great - so I had time to prepare and so that helped me manage my anxiety and I've had a think about what I was going to say, what I would talk about today - just as one example. But there might be things in a space that I find it accessible or that I find difficult, and like food is quite a difficult thing for me so often when

I'm doing contract negotiations I'll have a bit of a chat with somebody about my needs around that. But that often throws people cuz they're so busy going "oh, but visible access needs... you already have all of these things, you can't also have all of these things". But weirdly that's not how it works.

Jay Sandhu: Max so I was gonna say, like, I've never even thought about the difference between a wheelchair and a scooter. Until you mentioned it earlier, it's the first time that I've ever thought... just cause it's accessible for one of them doesn't mean it's accessible for another. And I've put gigs on and made sure that it's accessible for things, but I've never thought about it from both... cause they're completely different devices, aren't they? In everything.

Max Marchewicz: They drive differently, they're different weights. The way they manoeuvre is different. Yeah... even within just wheelchairs, the way a manual wheelchair works is very different from the way a power wheelchair works and power chairs come in lots of different shapes and sizes. Turning circles change where your turning radius is. So whether you are like driving from your back wheels or whether you have got a centre turning circle. Yeah, there's a huge variety and the thing that actually... so now with my current wheelchair there's quite a lot of platform lifts that are too small. So if they're like fold down ones, it was something that came up a lot when I was touring with the Graeae Show, that they had to check in all the venues that if the lift that was to access the stage was one that folds down, they had to measure it and make sure that I could actually fit. My favourite example of bad access was at a hotel, in London. We're there for the premiere at the South Bank Centre - big, glitzy, glamorous! I arrive at my budget hotel, and the accessible room on the ground floor is actually up six steps. And to get to that room, you have to get a member of staff with a key to turn on the platform lift, which folds down, which I couldn't use because it was too short for my wheelchair. So then they had to put me on a different floor in a different accessible room, which had a bathroom I couldn't use because I can't use a lowered bath I have to use a wet room shower, and then yeah, that was the [laughs] "welcome to the glitzy premiere weekend that you've got going on".

Jay Sandhu: Well I was literally just about to ask, like, have you been somewhere that said they're accessible and then you've got there and they're just not set up for your accessibility, even though you've told them prior?

Max Marchewicz: Yeah, and it can be in lots of different ways. So sometimes it's that they say they're accessible and they're actually not for a lot of people. And sometimes it's, they think that they're accessible, but actually they've only thought about a very narrow selection of things. And when I do access consultancy, obviously, part of my job is to go "so this might be accessible for

X, Y, Z reasons, but it's not accessible for all of these other things" and to kind of spot those bits. But yeah it's a thing that's, I think, lacking that knowledge, and I can understand why, because venues don't have an access manager as standard. That's not something that people have access to. But I strongly advocate for bringing expertise in when you need it. And actually it's a thing that's, I think, missing from a lot of performing arts venues... is that kind of breadth of knowledge. And if it's not in-house then, you know, bring somebody in to talk to you.

Jay Sandhu: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Laura Guthrie: Can I ask another question of both of you really, which is about the work that you do, and I know that it's different for both of you because your approach to performance or making art, is... they're different genres and so on. But how much of yourself as a disabled person and your lived experience as a disabled person, how much of that is in your work?

Max Marchewicz: It's hard a one to answer really because a... a visual arts piece that I made was about specifically the intersection of being a trans person and a disabled person and being hyper visible and also invisible kind of simultaneously cuz people see the wheelchair but they, they don't see anything else or they, they only see that I've got a beard and that that doesn't fit with what they think I should look like and that's this weird thing. So, yeah. But it's this, yeah, that was all, my whole thing was kind of about that. So that was a very personal piece. I think as a broader thing I'm kind of open to trying both, I think.

I'd also quite like to answer Jay's question just because it's accidentally hit upon an interesting thing. I still feel like I can't write and I know the roots of it now, and I didn't get my autism diagnosis until I was 30, and that kind of gave me permission to kind of look back at my whole life and go "oh, that thing that I've always found really difficult, I always thought I knew why, I now for sure know why that was difficult". And in school, in the literacy hour, we were all given a blank sheet of paper and told to do some creative writing, and I would sit and have a panic attack and a cry for an hour and not write anything because that wasn't enough information to go on. And even if someone did try and support me, because I was in quotes "an academic high achiever" people didn't really feel like they needed to support me academically because I was getting the good grades and I was doing everything right in that sense. Didn't matter if I was falling apart because emotionally it was very difficult or it was very difficult in terms of anxiety because I was getting the grades that they needed and that's end of story. So I didn't get that support that I actually needed. And yeah, so even if somebody did try and kind of intervene, it would

be, “well, you like dancing, why don’t you write the story about ballet?”, and I’d go “okay, but what about? And what’s the structure of it? And how long should it be? And does it need to be perfect?” And I have a million questions, but at the time I didn’t know, I didn’t have a vocabulary to express any of that. But that has manifested as now if I have to write anything creative, I immediately go straight back to that place of “I just wanna cry”. There was a moment where, as a creative exercise, partly to feed into our audio descriptions for the Graeae show that I was in, we were asked to write a haiku about ourselves and I cried for three hours about that, which I know is ridiculous and it – yeah – in the end I just wrote in kind of five minutes and I was like “right, I’m just gonna go with a list of words and I’m gonna take the pressure off myself, I’m gonna go right: describe me... just list things, make it fit the right syllables, that will do.” And most of that ended up in the audio description of the show cuz it was fine. But that level of panic is specifically there because education taught me that I can’t write even though I actually can and always have been able to, but I, yeah, it’s meant that I’ve shied away from it. Specifically because I was... the environment was not an inclusive one.

Jay Sandhu: Mmm-hmm. I just wanna say Max that’s a really similar thing to me. That I got told I was dyslexic after I’d left uni and done my teacher training and everything like that, I just wondered why all my assignments were terrible and just had sentences that weren’t even English. And then I got told I had got ADHD when I was 30, so yeah similar to you. And then in that moment, cause I was a secondary teacher by trade for a long time, and I’ve sent so many kids through to be diagnosed and got all of them correct and then when I got told I had it I was like, “oh right... that makes sense!”

Max Marchewicz: “There’s a reason I’m an expert on this thing... I’m helping other people with a struggle that I’m having myself.”

Jay Sandhu: And it’s mad because I didn’t do anything creative. I loved writing creatively at primary school, but then when I went to secondary school, I felt like it got beaten out of me, even though I absolutely loved it, didn’t touch anything creative till I was 29, nearly 30, and then it’s now my full-time job. And I just, I have sat in there and thought, if I wasn’t the top in the school at maths, would I have had the support? Would they have picked up these things earlier? And then... would I have been creating for a living from 21 opposed to... would I have picked a different uni course? I did accounting and finance, the maths side of it, loved it, all the writing side of it, hated the entire thing of it. And I sit there and think, could my life have been completely different if someone had just went, “oh, Jay, you can’t read and write properly... instead of putting you in top set English and forcing you to do what everyone else is doing, we’re actually gonna support you”?. Yeah, it was really interesting to hear you say

that cause just, everything just struck the exact same notes that mine has.

Max Marchewicz: And it's had such a knock on effect in other creative practices because not only have I never explored writing, and I kind of don't think it's ever gonna be something that I could do just because it makes me so anxious. Even thinking about doing a creative writing assignment I'm immediately back sitting, staring at a white blank sheet of paper having a panic. But improvisation in any context has the same kind of effect. I'm fine if there's, if it's music, if it's movement based with music, I've got enough stimulus for that not to feel so scary. But when I was studying physical theatre, we'd have one afternoon a week where they'd do: "this your chance to improvise! Have an empty black box theatre, we're gonna put you in a spotlight and you're gonna just improvise in front of everybody". And I would never volunteer but when they forced me to, I literally would just stand there and cry because it has the same effect that I'm immediately going "I need more information. I need some kind of guidance as to what to do so I can click into the head space of "I can now create something".

Laura Guthrie: And I think that's about those barriers, isn't it? It's about, people as disabled people with invisible disabilities, particularly neurodivergent diagnosis... It's when we talk about physical structures that are in place, ramps, et cetera, lifts that are flexible size, signage and so on. They're really obvious to people, but if you think about the processes and structuring processes so that they become accessible, then that's a whole area that people just don't... people are starting to get it, but it's just not there, is it? So when you are talking about "I need support with admin and organisation", that's about that blank sheet of paper again, isn't it? It's like, "okay, so I know I've got to get this idea that I've got in my head in a format that an artistic director is going to understand enough for them to get excited about it. But how do I get from in my head into the format that's going to be seen by the people who can program my work or, or even support my work?". And having people working with you who get the structures that you need in place is just so important because if any of that changes or isn't there, you're back to square one again, or you are back to that space where all you can do is cry or freeze or your self-determination and self-esteem just goes out the window and what you know intrinsically you can do, which is create a piece of theatre, create a piece of music, create a piece of visual art, create a stand-up routine, whatever, intrinsically you know you can do that, but without structures in place, you're frozen. You can't actually get anywhere. It's so important that people understand that as disabled people access needs are not just about the physical, obvious physical, things. It's also those processes and structures that are really important and it's gonna be different for different people. So what, Neil, you find useful to help you create a piece of work is gonna be different to

Max what you find, you know... and Jay and, me...

Neil Pike: Yeah... that thing that Max said about an empty black box theatre... I'm like, that sounds like my idea of heaven.

Laura Guthrie: [Laughs] Yeah... it's funny.

Neil Pike: But I get it kind of, I think for me, I think the fear is starting something. Kind of similar thing, once I've started I'm fine. So I think for me improvisation helps because then I don't have to think, you take the thinking away.

Laura Guthrie: Mm-hmm. So when you are a viewer or you are an audience, do you seek out work, uh, by people that you recognize yourself in? Or is that something that you - I don't mean only seek that out - but is that something you would do? Would you look for work by people that you could recognise yourself in?

Neil Pike: Eventually.... most of the work I find inspiration from is mainly by people that are able bodied. So I find that interesting. So in terms of actually you know the kind of people that have influenced you as well... there's actually a couple who I've liked for years...there's kind of a poet, rapper, podcaster named Scroobius Pip. I didn't realise until a few years ago that he has an incredibly severe stutter. And it's like... it's really bad. But until you hear a podcast...

Laura Guthrie: But you were a fan of Scroobius Pip before you knew that?

Neil Pike: Yeah. So that's kind of... sort of kind of... well yeah, because he started out as a poet, then kind of went into rapping with dan le sac and then kind of moved into a podcast and acting so he kind of left the music and poetry, kind of left that scene. But it's still like someone I kind of felt a bit of connection to because it is, he was doing it on stage he does kind of. yeah. Also, yeah. That's the only one I can think of. I've kind of, I have, I have lots of influences but all the influences are more like people that have definitely, as far as I know of, they're able bodies, it's a bit weird. Pip's the only one I can think of.

Laura Guthrie: And of the non-disabled artists that you've had inspiration from or that you really enjoy or impacts on your work? Who else is there?

Neil Pike: The same... I obviously, I think I kind of pick and choose it, what kind of voices.... in the poetry scene, Caroline Bird and Roger Robinson. Because

one's... cuz Caroline Bird's quite surreal and Rogers's ethos is kind of like similar to mine, kind of just *do it*. So I think I was taking inspiration from artists who I consider fearless, I as I say, I'm a massive music fan and two of my big influences, maybe not on just what they make, but also I feel that they are completely and utterly fearless, one is Radiohead and another one is Kendrick Lamar. But because they're someone who's just like, "I'm gonna do this... if it takes me years to do it, fine. I'm doing it". Yeah.

Laura Guthrie: That's interesting. The idea that it's the type... that description of people as fearless. They're the people that attract you to their work.

Neil Pike: Fearlessness, yeah.

Laura Guthrie: Yeah, yeah, that's interesting. Max, how about you? What artists do you, you know, what draws you to artists?

Max Marchewicz: I think as a consumer of arts as opposed to a creator of arts, huge diversity really is the thing. And I find that whatever art form I'm watching, there will be some element of it that I'll go, "ah I love that bit!" and it might not be the bit that I'm meant to be focusing on, it might be that I love the lighting in the theatre and I'm there to watch the theatre and the theatre's great but actually I'm going "oh, I love that lighting and the way that they use that and that, that was brilliant". And those are the bits that I find quite creatively inspirational. And in terms of like people who are maybe similar to me or under the same kind of a general umbrella areas of me, so other queer people other trans people or other disabled artists, I do definitely seek out work by those people and whether it's about that topic or not, there's something special I think in just knowing that I've got something in common with the person who created this... And it might be terrible and I might hate it, so it's not like I will necessarily love every piece of work by every person I share any kind of characteristic with, but often I find that there's so much lived experience that is shared in certain marginalised communities that actually you find a lot of common threads that really resonate with you in people's work.

And I didn't plan to name drop, but Jamie Hale is definitely a huge one. I interpreted their show recently, which is, it's entirely fo-, it's called Not Dying, and it's focused on being a disabled person and having high care needs and having other people decide what you are and are not allowed in terms of your care package. And it's about much more than that. It's a brilliant show, I found. I would recommend seeing it if that's possible for you, but, yeah, it's, it's just, it's very, it's very intense and it kind of pushes people's awareness of "oh, actually, yeah. If you take away somebody's 24 hour care package, they can't work anymore and they might... they're also at risk of losing their

health and going back into hospital” and there’s all these things that are not decided by the person themselves. And so the whole piece was brilliant and I loved interpreting it and I loved working on it. I loved watching it start to finish. Excellent. But also, we’re both trans people. And there was a, there was a section where they had a, like an acted Zoom call, which was a group of professionals discussing the care plan for the character in the show. And they keep misgendering and getting the pronouns wrong. And there was a, the kind of hum in the audience when that was happening was really kind of satisfying cuz this shared experience we’re all going “yep, we’ve been in those meetings, we’ve had those meetings done about us, we’ve received the letters which have three different sets of pronouns in them because people don’t know what they’re doing and even though it’s been very clear from the start. Like my care plan from... my care and support plan from the council from my carers at home has three different sets of pronouns in it. And I’ve told them to change that so many times and they keep going, “uh...” like okay but it still says a mobility scooter, which was in 2014, could you maybe update it cuz it’s really incorrect information and I actually need my care and support plan sometimes for evidence for things, and it’d be quite nice to have one that doesn’t have he/him and she/her in it cuz I don’t use either of those pronouns, so can we not? So yeah, Jamie Hale’s work really resonated on so many different levels so it was brilliant to part of that. And I know they also were very pleased that I was the interpreter for that because we have that shared lived experience so I could connect with the work in a way that somebody who didn’t have that lived experience... I don’t, I’ve gone off on a bit of, a bit of a tangent but...

Laura Guthrie: No, it’s really interesting! Well, we’ve come to nearly the end. Is there anything, Jay, that you still want to ask or anything that Neil or Max you wanted to tell us while you were here, or that’s come up?

Neil Pike: I’ve really enjoyed that! So I feel like, yeah, yeah. About the word *brave*. I remember a few years ago, five years before, when I was performing, someone was talking like you’re so brave, and...did you see what the point of the show was...ugh

Laura Guthrie: Yeah, yeah.

Neil Pike: It’s like, listen, you gonna say..... I would ban the word ‘brave’ from language. The words brave and inspirational, they’re the two words, if I could, I would ban them from language.

Laura Guthrie: Brave and inspirational?

Neil Pike: Yeah.

Laura Guthrie: Yeah, ban them.

Jay Sandhu: Yeah, I'm down for that.

Max Marchewicz: Yeah, well I think we're all very brave for having that chat today. So brave, it's been such an inspiring...

Jay Sandhu: [Laughs] And I think on that note, we'd like to say thank you to everyone that is in this podcast and everyone that is listening at home, and there's gonna be information where you can find both of these guys... Where they're performing, their Instagrams, where to find out more information about them, in the description you're gonna see all of that. So click around and enjoy.