

Transform Dance (Generator Pilot Project)

Podcast Transcript Episode 1: Our Advisory Board



Meg Saxby [00:00:02] Hi, everyone, and welcome to the TransformDance podcast. My name is Meg Saxby. I'm a social worker, educator and consultant. And I'm here to host a conversation about this fantastic project called TransformDance that we undertook between 2019 and 2020 to try to address the problems of workplace harassment, specifically sexual and gender-based harassment, but all forms of harassment in Toronto dance workplaces. So on the podcast today, you're going to hear from a couple of people who were part of our advisory committee, Kristina and Amanda. Later on, in further episodes, you're going to hear from transformative justice facilitators who walked with our participants through their processes of transformative and restorative justice related to workplace sexual harassment. And we are doing this as a podcast rather than as a written document because we're hoping that this makes it more interesting, more accessible, and it allows you, as a listener, depending on whether you're just interested in transformative justice, maybe you're a dancer, maybe you're a performer, maybe you're an arts worker, maybe you're interested in alternative organizational responses to harm. We're hoping that this will help you grab the texture of some of what we learned and some of the questions that we still have and where this work could go in the future.

Meg Saxby [00:01:28] Amanda and Kristina, I'm going to ask you folks to introduce yourselves and then we will get started.

Kristina Lemieux [00:01:33] I'm Kristina Lemieux and I'm the lead producer at Generator, which is the organization that incubated this project and produced it as it went along with Meg Saxby's support. I also have a contemporary dance practice and have worked in multiple cities in Canada, Edmonton, Vancouver and now Toronto in both theater and dance. I'm in a stage of my career that I call the years of knowledge transfer, which is a time where I'm thinking about how we learn from each other, who has knowledge, what values can knowledge have? I think a lot about skill growth and embodied change and learning. So not just what are the skills that we're learning with our brains, but what do our cells know? What do they remember? How do we change knowledge deep inside of our bodies? What can learning look like, not just as an individual, but as a community or as a culture? And how can we shift and change how we learn from each other and where we learn from?

Meg Saxby [00:02:29] Great, thank you.



Amanda Hancox [00:02:30] I'm Amanda Hancox and I'm the former Executive Director of the Dancer Transition Resource Center. I am a dancer, was a dancer, maybe still am a dancer, an actor. And I currently work with the Cultural Human Resources Council as a facilitator for their Respectful Workplaces In The Arts Training. So my role in this particular project is on the advisory and it's to bring my experience and my point of view, both from my perspective as my role with the DTRC, but also my personal experience, because I was a performer for 30 years. So I have been there. And that is interesting to me because the major part of my dance career was quite a long time ago. And to see how the dance world has changed... things that as a dancer, I just thought, well, I guess this is just the way the dance world works. And, you know, I said I wanted to be a dancer, so I guess this is just it. And never thinking the way that dancers are now that it could be different. And in terms of the transformative justice, it was a new experience to me. I didn't know very much about it. And it just is so powerful that it makes so much sense because it means that, you know, these conversations can be had that will hopefully protect other dancers from being harmed and hopefully will allow those who have harmed to become a better person. And really, we won't lose the wonderful creativity they have and what they have to offer by just sending them away.

Meg Saxby [00:04:14] Could you tell us a little bit about what are the working conditions like?

Amanda Hancox [00:04:19] Well, they're just... You know, when I was a dancer back in the 70s, there was more funding and fewer people looking for it. So there just... there was more work. And I think now if you are going to be hired as a dancer, you just want to be known as easy to work with. And somebody who doesn't complain, somebody is not going to make trouble, make waves. But it can mean that you're just going to button your lip and deal with it. And I think it's tricky, you know, in a situation, especially... Not especially, but for example, in the contemporary dance world where there is not very much of a company structure, dancers tend to work in very small groups that there's no support for H.R. or anything like that. And also, I think for the contemporary dance world where so much of the work is in creation and done through exploration with the dancers. For example, there's a terrific move in the theater at the moment to use intimacy directors for plays that have sexual or violent content in order to create, as they call it - which is such a wonderful phrase - in order to create safe spaces, to do dangerous work, which I just think is so, so wonderful. But, you know, in the in the dance world, this doesn't happen yet. Hopefully it will. But while you're exploring these themes in the dance movement, it's hard to have a pre-discussion, it's not like there's a play and a script where you can look at it beforehand and say, OK, this is going to be an area that we need to look at. Let's look at this ahead of time before we start rehearsing this scene. When you're actually in that moment of creation and exploration, you're not sure what's going to happen or where it's going to go. If somebody has had a traumatic experience, there could be a physical movement or, you know, a hand in the wrong place at the wrong time that could really re-traumatize. So I think because of this, it's even more important to have these conversations at the beginning of rehearsals to really to set the stage and give dancers permission to speak up when they're uncomfortable about



something that happens or when the exploration is going in a way that is giving them an uncomfortable feeling.

Kristina Lemieux [00:06:30] Another piece that's very different in dance, especially like in more indie dance than, say, in theater or opera, is that the stage manager is often not brought into the room until very late in the process. So whereas in theater or opera, a stage manager would be there looking at health and safety of the process in all of its terms, from the very beginning of the rehearsal process in dance, you might just be working with a choreographer or another dance artist for several weeks. So there's often also not a third party in the room who is able to have a bird's eye view or a pulled back idea of what's happening, looking at all the ways in which safety is being monitored. Dance is also a discipline where talking or writing or speaking about the process is not part of the training. So dancer artists are generally not taught how to be critical of what they're seeing in other dance, either through writing or other kinds of communication. And in general, in a dance class, you're not speaking unless you have a question to ask about what has just been presented. So there's a challenge as well around just as part of the training in this art form of having language to speak about what is happening in the room or what is happening with conflict. And additionally, dance is like a very physical form. There's a different sort of embodiment that can happen with conflict that is difficult to communicate. I think there's just a gap there that could also be addressed in how training is happening. Are there ways in which we could be learning how to read when the body is uncomfortable or learning how to have additional word about speaking around when I'm uncomfortable, what am I seeing, what am I feeling?

Meg Saxby [00:08:11] Something I heard a lot about, and I don't come from a dance background, so it was interesting to me... was people talked a lot about the way in dance training, you teach your body to deal with discomfort and that's just part of conditioning. And you're a performance athlete, effectively. And for me, you know, thinking about my work or people who've survived violence, I just thought, wow, it's pretty tough to teach someone at a young age to deal with discomfort and also try to teach them boundaries. You know, and I'm not saying it can't be done, but that's a pedagogical challenge, you know, and that's where my brain went when I learned about, in particular ballet, and the way people talked about how ballet was taught to them.

Amanda Hancox [00:08:54] I would also add that because you start training at such an early age and because the training is around, this is the right way to do something, you know, a lot in early training. So you've got young people who are just at the age, and I heard this when I was talking to one of our counselors, she was talking to me about this: she said, you know, learning to self-assess happens in that age between around 11 and 13. And that is a prime age for a lot of dancers to be looking to a teacher or a senior person to say, yes, that's right. No, that's not right. Do it like this. This is the right way. And they can often miss that whole development of learning how to self assess and be comfortable without looking to somebody else to say, is this OK? Is this all right?



Meg Saxby [00:09:47] Right. So that internal perception of this is how I need to do this. And yes, that's OK. Can you tell me a little bit about the organizational structure that is most prevalent in dance? So we have small organizations, big organizations. And what's their capacity like around human resources issues?

Amanda Hancox [00:10:06] It runs the gamut. You know, it really does. It's everything from dancers who have complete other careers and full time jobs all the way to a couple of dancers who are getting together. And they may work on a piece and trying to get dancers together who have this incredible portfolio career to just keep a roof over their head, where they're doing, you know, all sorts of different things within and outside the arts field. It's this constant juggling that is happening. And then right up to a company structure, which as we know, there are very few companies and there are fewer and fewer every year.

Meg Saxby [00:10:49] So if you're a dancer experiencing harm in your workplace, you may have someone that you would know to go to?

Amanda Hancox [00:10:56] Yes. I think if you're in a larger company, they would have a certain person set aside. But it'd have to be a pretty large company.

Meg Saxby [00:11:02] Right.

Amanda Hancox [00:11:02] It still doesn't take away from the fact that you may not feel comfortable going to that person. You know, it's not a third party person. It's often a person within the company. And most dancers are not employees. So they are on a contract basis. So there's no protection in that way. Their just contract won't be renewed.

Meg Saxby [00:11:24] Right. Right. And Kristina, could you talk a little bit about... so when I when I first started working in arts non-profits on these issues, I would hear about, oh well, the board. You know, if something is happening in a small arts-based non-profit, then you can just go directly to the board. Have you actually seen that as a possibility in most arts organizations? If it works. Does it work? How does it work? And if it doesn't, why not?

Kristina Lemieux [00:11:49] Yeah. So in the Canadian context we have boards because of the way that funding structures are largely created, which is that once you get to a certain point, if you want more stable funding, the expectation is that you're going to find this group of volunteers who are going to gather, however many times a year they do, to oversee the operations of your organization and to provide strategic support and potentially sometimes operational support. But what's important to understand about this is that these people are volunteers, and often they're volunteering for their friends. So in dance, you see a lot of choreographers or dance artists create companies to house their own work. So the people that come on to support these dance artists in these companies, that are about their own work, are often their friends and family. So when we're talking about who is on these boards, very often the people that are sitting on them... are very close to the leadership of the organization, personally and/or professionally. So that's one challenge that we see with, like, who's on the boards. Again, as Amanda mentioned, they might not be a third party or



someone safe or removed from the process. The other challenge is that they're volunteers. And I think that there's a real difficulty in asking a group of people who are volunteering their time out of the goodness of their hearts to deal with really complex human resources challenges. Even things like hiring or firing can be really challenging for boards. But it can shut a board down when something comes forward around harassment or unsafe work spaces, because that can also put a board at risk of lawsuit, and whether or not they might have directors' and officers' insurance or what that means. So I think there's a big global challenge in how we structure the arts, in that these volunteers are ill-equipped to deal with complex human resources challenges. And they're just there to be supportive and have fun and maybe donate and go to a show. So the idea that the board is a place that's going to be able to provide high-level safety has some problematic bases.

Meg Saxby [00:13:54] So kind of standard workplace safety legislation, Ontario Health and Safety Act, would say that every company has to have a reporting process documented for sexual harassment complaints. But these reporting processes are documented. They exist now. It's enshrined in law and they're still not often used and particularly not in the arts. Do either of you have any comments on why that might be or what you see as connected to that?

Amanda Hancox [00:14:24] I think it's just that the structure of the dance world is it's mostly so small. There just isn't the human resource capacity for this. I mean, there's nobody trained in it. Well I shouldn't say there's nobody. But in most cases, even some of the medium-sized companies will say, well, we don't have anyone who's really trained in H.R. and there's not money, at the moment anyway, to bring in third party advisors.

Kristina Lemieux [00:14:51] Another big challenge with the classic reporting processes is time. They take time to go through the piece of reporting to whomever you're reporting to, an investigation being carried through, and then some determination being made at the end of the investigation. Some of these engagements that we're talking about might only be three weeks long. So if this incident happens halfway through the second week, the process is going to be over before the volunteer board of directors can even get the pieces in place to do an investigation process. So it often just feels like it's not worth going through these lengthy processes because I just need to grin and bear it for another week and a half and then I don't have to do this anymore.

Meg Saxby [00:15:31] Yeah, absolutely.

Amanda Hancox [00:15:33] Also, you know, in terms of harassment, it's a known fact that people will let it go on for a very, very long time before they finally say, I can't take anymore and I need to do something about it. And by that time, often they've left a company, they've left the situation. It's so long since... I mean, I had this situation happen. It was just so long that nobody wanted to really take action because they were saying, well, why didn't you come forward sooner? And, you know, the dancer said, I just I was so traumatized by the situation, I couldn't come forward sooner.



Meg Saxby [00:16:10] So, Kristina, could I ask you to tell us kind of where did the idea for TransformDance come from? What is Generator, what does it do? Why did this project sit with Generator? And then if you could tell us a little bit about the project itself and where it came from, that would be great.

Kristina Lemieux [00:16:24] Generator is a mentoring, teaching and innovation organization that's looking to work with independent performing artists around increasing their skills, tools and competencies as artists, producers and leaders. So we're very much interested in working with artists who see themselves as producers of their own work and who want to be involved in all elements of how their idea gets from conception to an audience. And to do this, we work in a one size fits one model, which means you work with a small number of people every year to create learning opportunities and coaching that really helps directly guide them to whatever their skills that they want to increase are or wherever they feel like they want to shift their practices. We have a really unique role in the performance community in Toronto and Canada in that we work across performance styles. So mostly theater, but also dance and opera and other performance styles there within. But what's most interesting about us is that we don't hire artists. We don't produce work, which means our relationship to how the power of the arts community works is very different. We're not at risk of not being able to have a show that we're doing produced. Artists aren't going to not work with us because we are doing this, that or the other things. So it really allows us to be a bit of an agitator and to move ideas and platforms forward that might not have a place elsewhere because the risk is too high to try new things. In the early winter of 2018, after the MeToo movement had hit the press and Toronto had had his own MeToo moment with Soulpepper and the reports that came out of there. The dance service organizations got together to talk about what we wanted to do as a group of people. So at that meeting, I offered to the group the idea of transformational justice as a potential framework that we could be using to look at ways to create community accountability and offer structures for different kinds of healing... in this moment. And everyone was like super on board in general. I left that meeting and went away, did some more research about what that model could look like. And in Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council has a unique program called Open Door, which allows organizations to offer pilot projects, new ideas, innovation, things that don't fit into any other model of ways that organizations could be thinking things through. With the support of that group, Generator wrote a grant to propose TransformDance. And I really want to commend the Toronto Arts Council here and the jury who sat through that project, because the grant basically asked for, I don't remember, something like eighty five thousand dollars. And we were like, we don't know what's going to happen or what the uses will be. We want to support the participants with, like, counseling or like, lost wages. And we think we'll need a social worker and like, I don't know, anything could happen. It's emergent. And we were well supported in taking this risk. So it's been a very interesting and supportive process, working with the Toronto Arts Council and Rupal Singh around just like, hey, so now something else has happened. What do you think? And the response has always been: go for it.

Meg Saxby [00:19:36] Yeah. Big thank you for the Toronto Arts Council for making this possible financially, especially for being willing to take that risk. So, Amanda, when I called



you and asked you if you'd be interested in being on the advisory committee for this project, or maybe it was beforehand that you'd probably already heard about it through your role at the DTRC. Can I ask what initially piqued your curiosity or motivated you to participate in the way that you did?

Amanda Hancox [00:20:01] You know, in the work that I did with the Dancer Transition Resource Center, we would have dancers who would come to us and sometimes they'd have this difficult conversation with us about wanting to leave dance performance. And when you really talked to them and pulled it out of them, often it was because they had had a bad experience either with a choreographer or an artistic director or in that role, in that maybe power dynamic. And it just seemed to me to be such a waste of talent that someone would want to leave performance because of that experience. And we were lucky at the DTRC because we have personal counselors. So we were able to put a dancer in touch with the personal counselor and talk through this. And often they would realize that it was not something that was across the board happening in the dance community and that they could have a dance career and have good experiences. But I thought of the dancers who perhaps weren't members of the DTRC or who didn't think to come to speak to us and that they may leave dance performance after all those years of working so hard to get to the stage where they could actually be a performer and to give it all up because of a bad experience like that. It just seemed like such a crime. So it was very important to me that this work be done and that we, you know, as a community look at how we can transform the community. And I would say it's not completely just about overt sexual harassment that we're hoping to change. And I mean, there are such subtle ways of harassment that happen. And I'm sure, they happen in any community. But there are aspects of the dance community where this is really a problem. So I was really interested in exploring that more. I mean, you know, there are even things like demeaning language based on gender and and graphic comments about an individual's body, which happens a lot in dance. And it is really distressing. There are many reasons that I was ready to take this on and I was very excited to be part of it.

Meg Saxby [00:22:13] And Kristina, I'm interested to know what initially piqued your curiosity about transformative justice and what made you motivated to try to bring that to the arts as a way to address these problems differently?

Kristina Lemieux [00:22:25] I became curious about transformative justice, specifically through the folks that I was working around with the Generator office, specifically Nikki Shaffeeullah, who is just doing such interesting work around art and prison reform and just the ways in which I saw through Nikki's facilitation of the AMY Project and other work that she's doing was pulling in these other modalities from other parts of the world that were having such huge impacts in how art can be made from a different place, that felt more welcoming, more inclusive. I mean, all of those words that we love to use and throw around. For me, transformative justice offered an opportunity to shift the stories we're telling and how we can work together to create a different way of understanding and supporting each other. So much of what happens in dance is this idea that, like, when I was training, my teacher slapped my butt when I didn't have my pelvis tucked in. And so that's the way I was



treated. And that's the way you'll be treated. Because I went through it. So you have to go through it, too. So I think these other frameworks allow an opportunity for people to slow down and shift the way that they're thinking about things and offer a chance to understand there's another way of doing something, another story that could be told.

Meg Saxby [00:23:49] So transformative justice is a much more flexible approach than punitive, criminalizing or kind of classic workplace legislation approaches. So currently, we have legislation in Ontario that says that a workplace must investigate anything that's potentially causing unsafety or harm to its employees. Of course, this is a good thing, right. If you've got a bunch of people and they're working at unsafe asbestos-filled buildings, you want the employer taking care of that. Right. So there's nothing wrong with that. However, if we apply material safety standards to complex human interactions, what it looks like often is we end up with a workplace is mandated to do an independent investigation. They have to hire a lawyer. The lawyer comes in and interviews everyone. Kind of tries to develop a balance of probabilities of, did this happen? And if it did happen, did it meet this certain threshold of what constitutes a legal problem? This is all based on this lawyer's training, which may be good, may be terrible. My personal opinion is both lawyers are not that good at understanding sexual harassment, even the ones who specialize in it. It's not the best framework. So this is this whole kind of huge burden of administrative and legal and emotional work that gets triggered when we have a problem. Right. Whereas, T.J. is a framework which is a lot more nuanced, a lot more flexible. It says, OK, where is the harm here? Who has been harmed? Who is doing harm? What are the needs of the person who's been harmed for healing and well-being? And how can we support those needs? And sometimes it's as simple as a person, they want to write a letter and they want a friend to read the letter to the person who did harm. They don't particularly want to engage in a dialog. Maybe it was 10 years ago. Maybe it was six months ago. So it can be these kind of small pieces that a group of supporters, sometimes friends, sometimes colleagues, sometimes family members can support them in doing. Could also be something more more complex, like they're trying to leave a violent relationship and they need help in leaving well. And they need help in staying safe. And then at some point, they want to engage in a dialog with their former partner, but they don't want to involve law enforcement. So there are bigger stories like that, too. But I think what's great about the T.J. framework is it makes space for: all I want is for someone to have a word with this person and say, hey, you know, so-and-so left because of this behavior. Knock it off. Right. Sometimes that's all that someone wants. And that could be the case for six months. And then they might later on say. And now I'd like to talk to that person. Right. But, a T.J., framework is more flexible. It's slower. It doesn't worry as much about risk and liability and legal thresholds and finding the facts of what happened. It's more about: obviously, something's gone wrong here. Someone's been hurt. And our interest as a community is in helping the person who's been hurt and also helping the person who's done harm to maybe understand what was going on with their own behavior, that maybe they didn't know.

Amanda Hancox [00:26:52] One of the things that I think is so great about this is that, as you say, the policing approach doesn't work and it also doesn't allow for the person who's harmed to learn what they've done, understand the effect, because, you know, it is possible



that they don't really understand the effect that they're having and the harm that they're doing. And that's another loss of talent, you know, if that is allowed to continue. I mean, everyone knows the golden rule: treat others as you'd like to be treated. But then there's the platinum rule, which is treat others how they would like to be treated. And I think that's really important because when we're looking at cultural differences and learned experience, we can't assume that what is nothing to us is going to land on somebody else in a very negative way.

Kristina Lemieux [00:27:44] Yeah. And I don't think anything is gained when we jettison those who create harm out of our communities. We don't learn more about how we need to be treated, how we need to communicate about the harm that's done to us, how to better be in conflict, and they learn nothing because now they've just been sent away and maybe they do or maybe they don't know why.

Meg Saxby [00:28:03] So maybe I'll summarize a little bit for the listeners what actually did end up happening in this project. We had funding for three case studies. We started off in, I believe it was April of 2019 that I came on board. And the majority of the summer of that time, we were building the advisory committee and we were starting to do outreach work. We were trying to pull together guidelines and principles by which we would try to do this complex work. I was going to have a lot of meetings with dance service organizations and try to get to know the different folks in the industry who were probably holding disclosures and had been key points for survivors and people who had experienced harm. And it was really only at the end of the summer, August and September, that I started to get a couple of people who - dancers, performers - who were interested in talking to me and trying to understand what would this project look like and would it maybe be beneficial for them. So there was a really significant lead up in terms of building trust. And so we did not get the deluge of the tidal wave that I was concerned we might get. And then over the fall of 2019, we started a couple of processes with two individuals who'd experienced harm. And the third, we were talking to a couple of different people and for a variety of reasons, it wasn't appropriate to use the third case study that way. So what we decided to do was to hire some great adult educators and develop an in-depth learning workshop series for male-identified leaders in the dance community on psychological safety, and how do we build that in a really embodied way in dance workspaces? So that was what we ended up doing for our three cases: two T.J., processes that dealt with individual people and harms that they had experienced. And then a third, which is more of a preventative approach, which is an attempt to change the conditions that enable abuse for the future. The outreach I did was also a significant part of what I ended up doing. So that meant face-to-face conversations, going to dance conferences, going to dance festivals, going to dance workshops. And I learned pretty quickly... I'm laughing because I would show up and I would introduce myself and say what I was working on, and sometimes literally people would actually move away. It was such a stigmatized topic. And so I learned pretty quickly... I remember talking to Kristina and thinking that's not really working. This doesn't seem to be creating safety for people. So what we decided to do instead was, okay, well, why don't we try to do outreach in the form of education and learning and try to do some really interesting participatory interactive workshops. And that was the mechanism by which most of our



outreach actually ended up getting done. So I believe the first one was in August at SummerWorks, and then we ran three or four more across the fall. And that's how we tended to come into contact with the people who would eventually be the participants in our processes. We built those workshops to look at conflict because we thought that conflict is a... We've all experienced conflict. It's a... unavoidable part of being a person in the world, and it's a less stigmatized topic. And a lot of the skills that go into navigating conflict are the same skills that we need to talk about accountability both in ourselves and with the people around us. So we built this workshop called Navigating Conflict and Conflict Dynamics. We made it very participatory. We used a lot of Theater Of The Oppressed techniques, tableaux. And we also used a great tool called The Compass of Shame. That's what therapists call it. We can also call it Zones of Regulation, which is a little bit less of an intense therapist name. And we used that to give people a language and a model for talking about how we can all become reactive under stress. And our reactivity looks different. And sometimes our reactivity is harmful to ourselves and other times it's harmful to other people. And something about approaching it this way made it easier for people to begin that conversation about stress and how it affects our workplaces... aggression and how that comes out... and sometimes our own lack of skills our own lack of self-knowledge and our own lack of language and skills with one another can turn into bullying and harm and aggression. So a lot of our outreach was done in that format and it seemed to create a lot more safety for people to engage, a lot less stigmatizing than saying, come to a workshop on sexual harassment. So that was a really useful thing to learn. And I think the kernel behind it was that we need to take an emotional literacy approach. If we want to get people in the room, we need to offer them a low-risk way to engage where they're gonna feel that they're learning something, they're going to feel capable and they're not going to feel policed. So that was the approach we took, and if we had money to continue, that's what I would keep doing. And I want to ask now, if we can think to the end of the project, so a year out... when you reflect on it, what surprised you the most about what happened? About what we learned? About what you saw and participated in? Amanda?

Amanda Hancox [00:33:26] I think for me, it was the realization of just how tricky it is to bring those who've done harm into the discussion and therefore make real and lasting change. And we, as you know, we have many discussions over the course of the project around ways to get them in the room. And, you know, was it a direct request that we might send out or maybe it was better to be an open invitation, you know, for people in positions of power, whether they be women or men. But it was just trying to not make people feel like they were going to be singled out, so therefore wouldn't come, but encouraging them to join in this important conversation. And then we realized that if you put out an open invitation like that, the people you're going to get with, the people who were interested in it because they were, you know, the good people who were really trying to work hard at this and we'd be just preaching to the choir. So I think that that was a really, really tricky thing for us to navigate. And I don't know that we ever got around to cracking that nut, but we're still working on it. I mean, I know even in my work with the CHRC and their Respectful Workplaces, in the workshops that I do there, there's always somebody who looks around and says, there are people missing from this room who would really benefit from this. But



the people who would benefit from it don't seem to show up. So I think that's something that surprised me in one way. But then maybe not.

Kristina Lemieux [00:35:01] And to add a little bit onto that, when I think about like the people who do show up and the people who don't, like a way that I made myself all right with that, is to know that the people who do show up and especially the younger folks who are showing up at the conflict resolution workshops, who are showing up at these things, are the ones who are the future leaders. And if it means that we just have to live in a world where the folks who aren't doing the work and are getting left behind or in power a little bit longer. I am so excited for the tools that this next generation possess, that when they're given the opportunity, they're going to be able to make immediate and well-educated, confident changes in the world, that they're gonna be given the opportunity to have a direction and control over.

Amanda Hancox [00:35:46] Yeah, that's so true, Kristina. Really, yeah, it's the young people are definitely our hope.

Meg Saxby [00:35:53] What about you, Kristina? Anything that you would like to highlight that really surprised you? Something that you didn't expect?

Kristina Lemieux [00:35:59] I think I'm very grateful for about this project is my experience working with social workers. I feel like I learned more about this project in the interview process as we were going through the process of hiring Meg than I have about most things. I was just very impressed with the frameworks that the social work community had to deal with things like this, about the ways in which they had complex ways of breaking down a problem that opened up lots of possibilities and could also be adapted very quickly to one size fits one model. So I think I'm really walking away with here is again, that there is another community that has a system that was working and tried and tested and true that the arts is not participating in that we could really be learning from. An excellent example of that is Meg has a clinical supervisor, which is an individual that Meg can go to talk confidentially about what's happening in her career. And my goodness, what what would happen in the arts if our leaders had someone they could talk to confidentially about the challenges that they're having as leaders, and with the individuals that they're working with, and get the supports that they need so that they're not burnt out and bottling up all of the information that's being sent to them.

Meg Saxby [00:37:13] Yeah, absolutely. I think for me, there are two things that really surprised me, and they're connected. The first was I was I shouldn't have been, but still, I was very surprised and really struck by the levels of fear and anxiety in the sector about opening this conversation up. I spent the first few months doing a lot of talking to people who were working in dance in positions of some power and helping them feel comfortable to begin the conversation. And that really struck me and I thought, wow, this is this is a big moment because this indicates that there's a lot of bubbling lava below the surface and there's a lot there's a lot here for people. And then the other piece that I think connected to that that I really took and surprised me and impressed me was how if we moved at the pace



of people's emotions, which meant sometimes we slowed down and sometimes things paused and sometimes it took a couple of months for people to get comfortable to have the next part of the conversation... then it actually worked very well. And I know that as a therapist and I know that as an educator. But for some reason, I guess I had never seen an institutional or workplace process work that way. And so it was hard for me to imagine it. And it was surprising how much easier things were if we just let things move at the pace of the emotions underneath them.

Kristina Lemieux [00:38:41] One of the things that was really reinforced for me with this project is that when faced with trying to make a change, people often want to talk about like where the best place to start is. Is it like the schools where people are taught? Is it with the dance artists or the individuals who have been harmed? Is it with the individuals who have done the harm? Is it with the boards? It's like there's this like way in which people get wrapped up into a conversation of where's the best place to get going from. And what I took away from this is that all interventions matter and just start. And I think what we're seeing happen now, 2+ years after the initial beginning of the MeToo movement, is that... when we're working at this problem from all these different places, there's what the CHRC is doing, there is what we're doing with TransformDance... change is going to come from all ways. And the idea of worrying about where to start isn't maybe all that useful. Just do something, and see what happens.

Meg Saxby [00:39:42] Thanks for joining us for episode one of the TransformDance podcast. If you'd like to hear more from the perspective of process participants themselves, you can check out episode two. And if you'd like to hear more in-depth reflections from our facilitators, you can tune into episode three. For more on the logistics of how we made it work, you can see a written report on the Generator website at generatorto.com/transform-dance. Thanks for listening. Take care.

The Transform Dance podcast was produced by Katie Jensen of Vocal Fry. To learn more about the project, visit generatorto.com/transform-dance.

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