

Transform Dance (Generator Pilot Project)

Podcast Transcript

Episode 2: Conversation with a Participant



Meg Saxby [00:00:02] You've tuned into episode two of the TransformDance podcast. In the previous episode, we were talking about where this project came from and we were talking about some of the problems of the dance industry and dance workplaces. And we were looking at it from a fairly macro lens. Today, in this episode, we're actually going to look at it from the perspective of one of the people who went through a T.J. process. She'll be sharing with listeners her experience of what it was like to take this approach to healing and transforming harassment that she experienced in a previous dance workplace. The participant herself will be kept anonymous, but you'll hear her being interviewed by B.K. Chan, who was the facilitator of her process. B.K. and the participant met one on one, and they designed a process around the participants needs, around her experience, around her hopes, her dreams, her concerns, her goals and what it would feel like for her to achieve healing and justice and repair. We're lucky to hear from this participant as she invites us in and tells us what it was like to take this approach, especially an approach that is new in the context, at least, of dance organizations in Toronto, and her willingness to step into that space and see what could happen.

B.K. Chan [00:01:21] What made you connect to this project? Like when you saw the project... written about... what made you think, that's good for me, versus run away, or say, hell no.

Participant [00:01:34] Well, OK. So if I go back a little bit, I had an experience somewhere where I felt unsafe, I felt harmed, and I was experiencing a lot of like trauma and grief post this experience. And after that initial moment and having, like some time to reflect, I knew that I needed to do something about this experience that I had. I knew that I needed to speak about it and take action in some way, because for me, it was also not just about me. It was about something that I had witnessed in the past and something that I worried about perpetuating into the future of this organization. So it was important for me to do something where not only myself, but also the company that I was experiencing this with, could learn and better themselves through this experience. So, you know, initially thinking about my options of like, getting a lawyer, and going to court, and having these, like, really intense discussions. That felt really overwhelming to me. And it didn't feel... It didn't feel right. I felt like I had been harmed. But it wasn't my goal to harm in return because of my experience. I



wasn't seeking revenge or anything like that. I didn't want to hurt anybody because I was feeling hurt and court, like that option, kind of felt like that to me. It felt like a little bit... it didn't feel real... I feel like a lot of things might have been fabricated and it felt like a stream where I would relive my pain and my trauma over and over again, as opposed to processing this trauma and dealing with it in a way where I can heal and where I can move on. Those options that were initially presented to me didn't feel right. And so I just waited a little bit. I was like, no, this doesn't feel good for me. And, you know, I was getting pressure from my family and peers and people being like, you got to do something about this. And I wasn't ready because it didn't feel, nothing felt right. And then this amazing thing fell into my lap, a gift from the universe. It felt like an opportunity to heal. It felt like an opportunity to process this experience, this negative experience that I had, and to turn it into something where not only I can heal from it, but where other people involved could also heal and evolve from this experience. Yeah, it felt like it was less about the outcome and more about the process of us finding ways to communicate with each other and to talk about what happened. And yeah, it just felt better because, I connected with it because it felt like a healing experience and a healing opportunity, which is really all that I am after. That's all I want. And I think part of my healing is the organization and the company healing as well. And learning and growing from this experience that I had in their culture and in their community.

B.K. Chan [00:04:47] Right. That makes sense, especially in light of the work we've been doing together, that it really does feel like we've been trying to move towards healing versus like, what happened. It's talking about what repair is necessary. How do you heal. And so I'm curious in that process, what parts of this process has been particularly helpful? What works for you?

Participant [00:05:15] Well, first of all, I feel like this is my process and I'm designing it. It feels very like it's accommodating to me and to my needs. So I bet it's unlike any other process. You know, I think that's the most magical thing about these experiences, is that they are for the person and they're for the experience. You know, that's been really amazing. It makes me feel important and it makes me feel respected and like my experience was real. It was... It's my reality. And this process has made space for me to believe that, actually, and to make space for myself and for this experience that I had, that has taken up a lot of space in my life for a long time. So that's one thing for sure. I think that another thing that has been amazing is like the pace of the project, the pace from the beginning until this point has always been... It's been what I needed and it's been at moments slow, and at moments a little quicker. But that pace, again, it made me feel safe. It made me feel like my needs were being taken into consideration. There was no pressure, like when things were feeling overwhelming. We could step back and I could take time. And there was no pressure to get things done by a certain date, which for me, feels very overwhelming sometimes, especially when dealing with grief and with trauma. And I feel like the pace offered me the space to find clarity in my thoughts as well and things that are important to me and that pace has been really important. I know that we're not on a super time crunch or anything like that. And so having that has been really amazing for me. That's something that is working really well. And to yeah, to slow down in the midst of processing and strategizing and making plans. There's also been time to sit with things and to let them heal and to see how it feels in



my body to make some of these decisions or do some of these things. And so that pace has also helped me find the balance and find that ease that I need as well to be okay with digging into such deep and difficult stuff. So that has been really amazing for me. Another thing I feel that has worked really well is the Wellness Wraparound Fund. Yeah, it's amazing. I'm not sure that I would have had the resources to get the care and to receive the care that I have received without this fund. You know, it makes me feel very secure and very supported because I don't have to worry about how this is going to affect me paying my rent or like, how it's like, do I choose healing or do I choose this other thing that's really important. And, you know, having that Wraparound Fund creates the space for me to just focus on that, to heal and to feel like I have resources to dip into there. And so that's been amazing. It's also amazing that it's like the Wellness Fund, again, is like I'm able to do what I need to do with that money. So it feels like very comprehensive in the care that I'm receiving, because it's not just one type of thing. It's like, oh, this works for everybody else. So this is what you need to do. But it feels like I have the freedom to access different types of care, which this experience for me has always been more than like a mental or experience. It's felt like my body has needed healing and there's been like my spirit and that kind of stuff. So it's... Yeah, while talking to... talk therapy has been really amazing and helpful, it's also been helpful to have other modalities of healing my body because I'm holding onto a lot of trauma in my body. Yeah, it's been amazing to design my process and to have resources to try things and then be like, that doesn't work. Let me try something else. And just to have that wiggle room to find something that feels right and that ultimately it's bringing me to a place of more balance. Stability. Yeah, that kind of thing. Mm hmm.

B.K. Chan [00:09:56] And as you are, you know, reflecting on our process so far. Are there certain things that, you know, if you were to advise on how processes like this could be even better. Are there things that you would change? It could be anything. Things that don't really work or connect for you?

Participant [00:10:18] Honestly at this point. Like, I don't. I feel like what we've been doing has been working, although I feel like a big part of our process and our journey together is about to... it's coming and it's going to unfold. And I imagine that there, there's going to be a little bit more turbulence and a little bit more negotiating. And I imagine that those things and navigating through that are going to come. I feel like to this point. This experience has been more than I imagined it to be. So I'm very happy about my experience so far. Yeah, but I know we're not done yet. And I know that there's still a lot of process to be done. So I don't know if I really have an answer for that yet. I want to say thank you. And I want to say, you know, for anybody who's considering doing this or using this method that I think it's amazing. I think that what is the best for me is that it extends beyond me. It goes beyond the trauma and beyond like the surface of the thing that happened. And let's talk about this thing. I feel like it reaches people. It reaches the community. And there's this experience. There's this offering of space to, like, reflect and go a little bit deeper and think about deeper than the surface and think about like, what are the things that brought us here? What led up to this moment? Not that just that moment, but years prior. And how if we don't reflect on this and if we don't take this as a learning experience, how is this going to continue to happen and to affect these institutions and these companies that I believe are really



important as well. So I think it's a really good way to offer space for everybody, and not just me as the person who's feeling like I was harmed, but also gives space to the people who were around while it happened and to the people who I feel harmed me and to the systems and strategies that I feel like supported that harm. So I think it just goes beyond, just reaches out. And it goes a little deeper than just the thing, the seed of the thing. I think that that's amazing. And I don't know that I would have gotten that experience anywhere else. I don't know. But I know that this definitely... yeah. It just goes beyond me. And I feel like a collective healing experience is kind of what we need.. As an industry, you know, as individuals... And as an industry. It's like we need to transcend these things. And the only way we're going to do that is if everybody steps up and everybody opens their hearts. And yeah, it's something I've learned is that it's like that moment just when you feel like you want to close everything off and you want to protect yourself, that that's when you gotta open up and that's when you got to vibrate a little higher and create space for that, for more love and healing. And yeah, that's kind of all I want to say.

B.K. Chan [00:13:47] Thank you for your words and your time and for, you know, like all the the energy and the risks that you take to do this for you and for your communities. I think it's been a huge learning experience for me, too. And I often actually feel the urge to like, fix. I'm hoping that I am being helpful am too reminded that actually slowing down is is part of, quote unquote the fix or the resolution. So thank you so much for bringing yourself to this project and all the things we learned from it and how that radiates from there.

Participant [00:14:29] Thank you. I'm you know, I'm able to be brave, I think, and strong because of things like this and people like you all who are empowering that. And yeah, I think it's a group effort.

B.K. Chan [00:14:45] Beautiful.

Meg Saxby [00:14:48] Thanks for joining us for episode two of the TransformDance podcast. If you'd like to hear more about the context of dance, tune into episode one. And if you'd like to hear more in-depth reflections from our facilitators, tune into episode three. For more information on the logistics of how we made this project work, what the budget was like, what the timelines were like, what process steps we took. You can see a written report on the Generator website at generatorto.com/transform-dance. Thanks for listening.

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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