



#Getting Back Outdoors

Meeting notes: Artists

Online session 03/07/20

Mark Tillotson – [Markmark Productions](#) (Small Scale)

Description: Markmark Productions are an outdoor arts and performance company. Started in 1991 out of Bretton Hall, Lecoq and Gaullier training. Perform at around 100 festivals and events a year mostly in the UK.

- The key for success outside will be adaptable creativity.
- Outdoor Arts is arguably the most adaptable performance arts sector. We are used to the uncontrollable elements of performance. We are used to adapting creative approaches.
- We are very also used to adapting to very different audience dynamics and structures - they change every site/every gig/ every performance (Often 2-3 times during the space of one day)
- Without realising it – the outdoor sector are experts in audience models & these Audiences will be a very important aspect in how performance culture re-emerges.
- We are also as a sector, experts in adapting creative material and practices - if the audience & environment is going to change so rapidly then the material will.
- There is no other performance art that has to improvise quite as much as us (material, space, weather) – we are used to unusual circumstances.
- Although theatre spaces won't open up for a while (2m rule in place for a while) – venues still need to do something – they have to go outdoors as indoor risk is too high
- Local authorities are keen for communities to re-engage with public spaces. We have our first post lockdown gig on Monday
- Markmark have worked extensively on evaluating the risks - had meetings with bacteriologists and public health England (results of which she is happy to share – also thinking about adapting codes of practice
- We can create a new genre for - socially distanced street theatre. Theatre to stay clear of. Characters to be avoided. Walkabouts to walk away from.
- Let's propose a challenge to programmers/ bookers - the possibility creating a festival of socially distanced theatre. We can all create theatre to avoid.
- We should be positive and realise that the outdoor arts will have to lead culture for the foreseeable future. If we can adapt our performance models, our shows and demonstrate safe practice then we will hear everyone laughing again.

Mark & Sarah Worth – [Highly Sprung](#) (Mid-Scale)

Description: Leading physical theatre company making work for and with children and young people. Creates outdoor & indoor performances that tell stories through movement, gesture and dance. Stories inspired by humanity, science, and the complex world around us.

Also trains artists in physical theatre and runs projects in primary and secondary schools here and across the world.

- Taken the Physical Fellowship online – every morning & eve there's a livestream, workshops for young people. Been challenging taking things online which have historically been live.

- Asked question: How Covid-19 secure are our performances? Urban Astronaut is very Covid secure already – but what does long term covid security look like?
- Doing a project with virologists at University of Warwick & Coventry
- Touring around Urban Astronaut – what adaptations are needed within show but also security within team.
- Looking at operating with two different teams – if one got ill then the other would be able to step in to give consistency / prevent drop outs. Not the most cost effective approach – but a secure way to ensure tour-ability.
- It is a company's collective responsibility to look after the people they are working with & the people they are working for (audience)
- Rigorous approach to daily costume cleaning – reduce risk factor. Day to day safety of reh room – change outdoor clothes to reh clothes. Not wearing same clothes day before. Creating protective bubble
- Looking at risk assessing going back in to reh room – blended rehearsal. Utilising digital platforms to allow members of the team (i.e understudies) to join via Zoom and reduce bodies in room. Not ideal – but hasn't prevented connection with performers.
- Dancers work in close different – but do we need to create socially distanced dance? But not losing artistic identity/ integrity – this is a challenge.
- Thinking about durational performances – allows audience to walk past & not congregate.
- Audience control – PVC picnic blankets for audiences to sit and then wipe, barriers to block audiences in 'pens'

Speaker: Julian Bracey – [Cirque Bijou](#) (Large-Scale)

Description: Cirque Bijou make contemporary street circus shows for stadiums, festivals and events, indoors and outdoors, anywhere in the world. Big spectacle shows with 1000's of people is their speciality.

- In Taiwan when Covid-19 kicked off – they were wearing masks, contact tracing, hand sanitizer all the way back in Feb!
- Planning a big hire-wire show in Bristol, possible through partnerships – partnering with a large greenfield site (operated by petting zoo!) – they have parking, digital ticketing service – they have the infrastructure. Will include socially distanced community dance
- All of this is working because of pure collaboration – working with staging company, audio company on a profit share basis to kickstart something. Primarily want to see it can work before thinking about if it can make money.
- Not making the experience scary for the audiences is important – not wanting an event to feel like a police authoritarian state.
- Working in bubbles – if you have three performers then they only work with each other.
- Rotation system when thinking about rigging – color coded harnesses. Minimising contact as much as possible.
- Important to develop a culture in your company where its ok to say 'I'm not well' – this is more important than ever.
- We have to do best practice EVERYWHERE – we are such a visible industry (photos on social media)
- Working on a smaller scale is easier in the immediate – keeping content going
- Kitchen Circus – a hyper local show (street theatre in their street, going into people's house) – not possible live but carrying on digitally. Working with a digital partner to produce this.
- R&D for a show – driving a chip van down the A66 to collect stories of Covid-19!
- Care of duty to audiences in venues – staggered exits & entrances, socially distanced seating,

- We should recognize that this is really hard – lack of advice from central government. Local Gov's have a lack of confidence in greenlighting events.
- Flexibility & being able to react at speed are key – as is collaboration. Let's all work together to make it work.