

Collaborating creatively with people you don't know can be difficult and risky. What chance of diversity?

Original title: Diversity – how can we (freelancers) develop collaborative relationships with new and diverse artists?

Especially in larger scale, relatively expensive work eg outdoors, there is high pressure to succeed. Under these circumstances, it can be difficult to include new collaborators, especially where they don't have experience of working at scale. What ideas do people have for how to move forward with this?

I involve a mixture of people, combining people I know with people I don't

How do you find the people you don't know?

Putting a call out, word of mouth, getting recommendations from people I trust

Have an R&D phase, involving new collaborators, working at a lower risk

Working around a theme and then looking for artists who are interested in similar themes / ideas

rePRESENT

Going to see work, especially created by BME artists, chatting afterwards, engaging with some difficult conversations with people who may have had different life experiences to mine, listening to their perspective

Building relationships with people who have connections with more diverse networks and then getting their recommendations

It's a good idea, to clearly articulate your interest and approach

There is a delicacy around (the embedded) power structures, there can be anger as a result of people's previous experiences

Can the anger, the conversations, come into the art?

What drives the quest for diversity?

Telling stories from different points of view, increases the relevance for more diverse audiences

Be frank about and mindful of difference. Name it. Create safe space for genuine dialogue

A danger of exoticism or a perception of tokenism

Working with new, less experienced people – you need to be prepared to change the project, to be flexible, to make the roles work around the people and team you have

Meeting new practitioners – doing open auditions, skills sharing, casting the net wide

Stans Café ran workshop sessions that enable performers to show who they are

How might we do this for the wider creative team?

Practical lab – an exchange of practice

Trust your gut feeling

Frame it so there's a way out for all

Is it about how you articulate, and defuse, the power relationships involved?

Big egos, people who are very experienced, good to balance who leads different parts of the process / collaboration – so the structure is clear at any one time

Need to differentiate collaborators from collaboration, be clear what is the relationship proposed

Good idea to maintain a reflective space as integral part of the process / project / relationships

Will need to build in the extra time and cost to enable this additional dimension

Funding perspective: we are looking for development, 'stretch', people working with new artists and beyond their comfort zones

Yes but – collaborators need to have the opportunity to build on what we have learnt together, in order to push or 'stretch'

Risk is exciting!

If you believe in yourself, you can create something magical

Working with people from different cultures and backgrounds gives you a way into new experiences, scenes, events

In Birmingham, there are different arts 'crowds' who don't normally meet. This is an obstacle to diversification.

"It's a Bristol problem too"

Birmingham has a tendency to 'neatness'. Maybe, need to be more messy

Programming – Birmingham is a festival city, everything sits in its niche

There is a Festivals Group. What does it do? Its invisible?

It's a massive relief to know that, if it all goes wrong (in a new collaboration), it's fine, everything will be fine

Stages of group development – forming, norming, storming, reforming (performing)

There are similar themes and tensions for interfaith activists

Go somewhere you haven't been before where people are different to you, where you don't 'fit in'
– PLEDGE?

To be interested in our responses, to acknowledge the difficulties and the emotions, it's useful

Use your less busy times to educate yourself, go and see work and meet people from different backgrounds, learn eg deaf awareness

I try and link up people, to make it happen here, to help build more diverse networks

American model – if two people equally qualified for the job, select the person from less advantaged background

Stage Directors UK – Diversity Working Party – looking at HR Practice

Orit Azaz