

BA: Hello.

MA: Hi there.

BA: Welcome Megan Armishaw. Did I say that correctly?

MA: Yes, Armishaw

BA: So I am Ben Ash, here again today with Megan Armishaw for the second in an experimental series of learning about growing podcasts together, kind of loosely around...yeah, many things, I think, but partly as a way of also just kind of getting to know each other a little bit again as we reconnect in this particular time that we're in; and, yes, what we've been up to. Maybe it might be worth just talking a little bit about what we've been up to today?

MA: Yes.

BA: We are beginning to look at the 30th anniversary through looking into the archive, and most of that has been done working remotely at home and coming into the studio. Today is a Friday. How's how's your day been so far, Meg? What have you been up to?

MA: Ah, it's been really nice. Yeah, this is my second time in the studio this week after what feels like forever at home. It's just such a weight off the shoulders to be in a space and feel like you're really doing...work [*laughter*] and to see everyone. So today's felt really special, actually. So we came in and just did our warm up this morning and then we've been working on, sort of, separate little projects this week in relation to past works - which we just, sort of, all shared our insights and what we've been up to - which, weirdly, felt a little like we were at our own private art gallery.

BA: Yeah!

MA: It was much more of an experience than I think I'd prepared myself for. It felt really special.

BA: Yes, it did. I was really struck by...by that myself. And yeah, really, particularly by what you have been working on and how you chose to share that. Would it be...I mean, I would enjoy hearing you, kind of, describe what you've been doing and how you... how you got to the decision to share it with us in the way that you did in the building that we're in.

MA: Yeah. Umm...Well, I chose, with Liv [Olivia Edginton, fellow company dancer] to look at the piece, a really early piece, called 'Between The National And The Bristol', which was choreographed by Sue Davies - we think in '94, but it could have been '93.

BA: I love the way that -

BOTH: - we don't quite know.

MA: Yeah, I mean, most of the writing in relation to is like reviews from touring in 94. So, it's possible it was made in '93 and toured a lot in '94.

BA: Yeah,

MA: Umm...And we just basically chose a piece of material from the work that we were excited about, that we wanted to learn a bit of. And that was, like, our practical way-in to just, sort of, taste the flavour of the style we're working on. And then, we also did quite a lot of, kind of, collating information - so, looking in different archives online, and we're planning to talk to people face-to-face or zoom-to-zoom -

BA: Zoom-to-zoom.

MA: - zoom-to-zoom. But we haven't quite got to that point yet. We're just, sort of, collating questions in relation to -- umm, kind of, the main aim is to build like a resource for people who might want to restage it in future, if that's something the company's looking into.

BA: Yeah, and how did it manifest today in the way that you shared it?

MA: Yeah, so we have both been working on a duet, but separately, because we've been in separate groups this week. So, we've been working on the same duet, but learning different roles. So we've done the same amount of it -

BA: But with the absence of the other.

MA: Yeah, exactly. And...I think we were...We didn't really have a plan for how to share it [*small laughter*] -

BA: Right, no...

MA: We just wanted to be able to see each other. And we were in a setup where we could - but outside in the corridor. It's quite an amazing building here, actually!

BA: It is, isn't it? Yeah.

MA: So there are, like, platforms. And you can see the staircase going up. So umm...the corridor has like these separate little islands.

BA: Yeah.

MA: And we just chose, like, an island each where we could see each other and try and do the material together at the same time and sort of know where each other was within that...

BA: Yeah.

The distance between those, sort of, two islands between stairways across which you can see each other is quite big.

MA: Yes, yes!

BA: It feels like a sort of Olympic swimming pool-length away or something -

MA: *[Laughs]*

BA: I was really struck by that when you kind of piece... I guess, performed the material that you've been working on in synchrony, but with this big gulf of space between you. Very striking -

MA: Yeah.

BA: - And also slightly -

MA: poignant -

BA: Yeah, poignant! It spoke to that, kind of, divide in the group - yeah, you know, through the necessity of working in smaller groups with social distancing and stuff that we're...we're doing at the moment. Yeah, it was really striking. It was 'a thing'.

MA: Yeah. It wasn't planned as 'a thing' *[laughs]*. But that's always when it comes up, isn't it?

BA: Yeah.

MA: It was interesting to...to do it like that, because it felt like you can't see...you can't see the details you want to see -

BA: Right.

MA: Which is the same as working for video...or being on zoom, or, like, you can't... you're, sort of, stretching yourself across the distance to get information that you want and it's -

BA: Yeah.

MA: it felt like, 'Oh, yeah, this is...this is our time right now' *[laughs]*

BA: Yeah

MA: Yeah.

BA: Yeah, we've spoken a little bit, maybe a couple of days ago, when we were last in the room together a bit about...I think it was a couple of days ago, but it could have been earlier today - about when you're, sort of, looking at a video...or some work that you don't know yourself - about how you, kind of, have to at a certain point, maybe, get on board with, kind of, making decisions about what it might be...

MA: Yeah

BA: - so as to get inside it somehow. It could be inhibiting, because there's so much information that we don't have...

MA: Yep.

BA: How do you...how do you step inside enough somehow for it to become you or something?

MA: Yeah. Yeah. It's...it's...yeah - Charlotte was asking a similar question after we showed the little bit that we showed - like, in relation to like, 'what did you...how did you move forwards with, with making decisions?'

BA: Yeah

MA: And I was saying that, actually, from the video, lots of the detail - it's hard to grasp - but within the choreography of it - the directions and facings and stuff were so clear, that actually you could sort of say, 'Well, if it's on that diagonal then my body, kind of, just has to do this, that's the only option!' *[Laughs]*.

It made it, umm...Also, I think their weight is so clear.

BA: Right, yes..

MA: Their use of weight is...you can read their way through the movement on screen, which is...

BA: Right, so that feels like you could really go with what you *could* feel -

MA: Yeah, that's it, actually.

BA: To, kind of, get on, get on with it.

MA: Yeah, or like, 'Okay, I think I know how that feels to do something like that, so I'm just gonna try and get the sensation of it', and maybe that's half of the information or...

BA: Yeah.

MA: Yes, it was fun.

BA: It was really, really, really great to see and to feel it, in a way. Um, yeah, so as a group, lots of different things happened today in in our sharing and as part of that, you know, I've been going into this...looking at this piece of choreography that was made - I think, for the 20th anniversary - called 'Looking Back' by Rachid Ouramdane. I'm still not sure how to say the choreographer's name...

MA: I don't know either!

BA: And I said that when I spoke with Kat [Hawkins, PhD researcher working with Candoco currently] a couple of days ago on the first of these! Today I did, yeah, I shared some kind of materials that I've been exploring in relation to his work in the space, which was some live sound, as well as some spoken word and some, sort of, film images - although my media stalled at that point - and some movement material, which was a some, kind of, loose score, improvised score... But it was just so great to be able to do that with the company somehow, even though we were sort of divided into these slightly different spaces, it felt umm...it felt like coming back together after this period of enforced distance working remotely, which hasn't been straightforward or easy in many ways, I think. Well, certainly for me.

MA: Yeah...

BA: I mean, I joined the company in September after, sort of, a stalled staff, and I know you've been here for more...more time, but six years or something?

MA: Five...

BA: Five years.

MA: Well, probably coming up for six...

BA: Lovely. I mean, how have you found like, this recent, sort of, period? You know, since we started back in September, what was it like for you across this period?

MA: Ooo...I mean...It's been lots of things.

BA: Yeah.

MA: [Laughter]...It's been amazing to...I still actually can't fathom that we have made a piece of work during that time...or, you know, almost all the way to having a piece of work. And that was so, sort of, intense and um...all-consuming that it feels almost like a separate bubble to everything else. That feels like a separate experience that harks back to how we worked before the pandemic.

BA: Right.

MA: And...although it was layered with all of these, these rules, like we all live our lives by now [laughter]...

BA: Yes!

MA: So it doesn't, in that way... I guess, in that way, it doesn't feel finished, because it doesn't feel like we've fully realised what the piece would be without those rules. And I think that's how it's...meant to be in the long run. So... But to be able to have the structure of that and come in every day and feel like you're really working and, kind of, crafting something felt like a...I just felt really lucky to be able to do that. And also -

BA: I agree.

MA: ...felt really nourished by it.

BA: It was extraordinary.

MA: Umm, so that was really brilliant. And then, you know, I'm also really appreciating the space, um, the space to sort of, be in research with yourself, I guess, and what you're interested in.

BA: Yeah.

MA: ...And to have your own path in that. And also, I feel like there's more space at the moment, because of how things are in the rest of my life to, sort of, interweave my interests a bit more. It feels less like I come to work, and then I go home and have hobbies that I do at home - like, it feels like an opportunity to really, sort of, um...question where those things overlap and how they support each other.

BA: Sounds good.

MA: I'm enjoying that.

BA: Thank you.

So, one, one topic that I thought we might, kind of, touch on in this, in this situation, is to do with terminology, really, but it's more than terminology...You know, I'm quite new to, to this context - and I mean, not that that means anything particularly - but the term *inclusivity* seems to be quite central to Candoco as a company and its ethos and practice. Umm, and I'm quite, quite aware for myself that even in terms of languaging around disability, ability, disabled abled, inclusivity they're kind of, I sort of feel like I want to get to know them more so that they are more part of how I am and how I understand where and what to do. And I just wondered if we could briefly touch on this term, *inclusivity*, in relation to our work on text, maybe...but particularly around, how do we experience it working and failing?

MA: Yeah...

BA: I mean, maybe it doesn't need to be, like this context, per se, but it could be in relation to Candoco... You know, how important inclusivity is to you - how do you see it working and failing?

MA: Yes. I mean...it's a complicated word. I feel like we don't have any words that are less complicated, or um, I think, for me, when I think about working with Candoco, I just feel like our...or, when we're in the studio together, or working on something, I feel like...the foundation of that is that we want to work together and we want to feel like we're working together and producing in a productive way. And so, I think, that's my relation to working inclusively - it's actually working in a way where we feel like we're communicating clearly and we feel like we're moving forwards or, or pushing this thing that we're carrying together, forwards. Um, and we're all doing that together. I think that's my, my relationship to it. But it changes day to day, it's like every situation is different. And... Yeah, sometimes it doesn't feel quite right or sometimes it feels great - and that's like a daily thing. And I think that's also part of working in an inclusive way. It's not like it's going to be precious or perfect all the time...

BA: Or solved...

MA: Or solved! I think the grit of it is actually the work part. And... It's the exciting part, really!

BA: Yeah!

MA: But it's hard. I mean, it's hard to talk about.

BA: It is!

MA: I still don't have a clear way to talk about it. And I don't know if I ever will have.

BA: I mean, I hear that. Similarly, yeah...it's sensitive and forming...

MA: I think it's so dependent on context and people involved, that it's not really definable as a... for me, it's not definable as like, 'Oh, this is it!'

BA: Yes.

MA: Because maybe that's it today, but that's with this particular person, or this group of people...and tomorrow I'll be doing something totally different and that might not be the same...or that feeling might be different.

BA: Yeah.

BA: Okay, thank you for, for going, going in that direction. In terms of *feeling* - one thing I've

noticed is that you're holding your collage...

MA: *[Laughter]*

BA: Yeah, just to, kind of, put that forward again, because maybe it's the first time that somebody is hearing this - what I've asked Megan to do, as I'd asked Kat as well, is to spend a bit of time before today in view of touch, and to make a little collage, a process of making a collage at home - with the, sort of, memory or sensation of touch being a, kind of, primary... primary thing that you held an awareness of; about that bringing together. And I think, you know, touch is something I've been extremely aware of as being absent within our work environment and possibly for many of us within the context of the COVID pandemic and the lockdown for people who've been living alone. I know that you live with your husband, I live with my family, but in terms of meeting in work, we've really not been able to meet in touch in a way that might be more, kind of, just expected as something that dance breeds, in a way.

MA: Yeah.

BA: You know, I see touch as both giving and receiving, kind of, leaving and giving an impression; or taking an impression, giving the impression... So, with that, Megan, could you tell me a little bit about what you got up to and what you've got there? Maybe could you begin by describing what you've got?

MA: Yes. Sure. So I've got a collage, which is made from three different colours of cards - it's on an a4, blue piece of card and then it's layered with purple pieces of card and brown pieces of card that are ripped in different, sort of, shapes...and layered in a way that they're not, like flat stuck to the...

BA: No, they're 3D.

MA: I got a bit carried away with the 3D and like, started doing that thing that you do at school at the end of project when you're like, 'Oh, I'll just add a bit more and add a bit more folding...'. And then I just decided to stop because I felt that would make it even more like a child's piece of artwork than it already is.

BOTH: *[Laughter]*

BA: Mmmm...yeah, the contrast in your colour choices is quite clear and the brownness - almost like packing paper colour - with this purple and blue. It feels like there are these different kind of regions within it, different areas...

MA: Yeah, I mean, when I started making... So firstly, I used what was available to me, which was a pack of multicoloured card, which I bought for my nieces and nephews years ago, and it's been in the bottom drawer for a long time. So that's where the colour choice came from. I pretty much instantly knew that I just wanted to rip it all up and became...some of the bigger shapes



were just, like, shapes that tore nicely or I liked how they ended up. I didn't have much say in that, which I was enjoying - like, not having...not being able to predict what shape something would be. So, some of the bigger pieces that are laid down are in relation to just liking the shape that they created. And then, in thinking about touch, or...I guess what I'm missing from touch when making it, I made these sort of little wads of layers of smaller pieces that actually have some kind of...ummm, weight and resistance to them, I guess, you can press them and they press back. So there's a couple of those and then, there's like some sort of more spirally...I don't really know how to describe that bit *[laughs]*.

BA: I mean, they kind of almost feel like, sort of, peelings or something, or like, kind of, leaves that are, sort of, spreading and crossing out from each other or something...

MA: I was thinking about how - when I was making it - how like, in dance... I mean, it's quite a specific language, touch in dance. And how like, it's really like...it's very... it's almost in a loop. It's unending. And there are spirals in the way we, kind of, come together and leave. And that's really understood in the way that we function as bodies - that can come together and leave each other and that it doesn't necessarily need to be logical from the outside to be logical - 'logically felt'.

BA: Yes.

MA: Yeah, so I guess these were, sort of, reminding me a bit of, of that sensation of being able to spiral away from someone or,,

BA: Right.

MA: ...into someone.

BA: Yeah, lovely!

How was it? Did you, like, get frustrated? Did you enjoy it? Was it...

MA: Oh, I enjoyed it! I love... I mean, I love making things with my hands, I am a bit obsessed with just making...

BA: Did you only use your hands?

MA: I only used my hands, yeah. But I get into this place where I'm not really, like, I don't care what looks like...

BA: Really?

MA: I just like instick something else on and just turn it upside down or flip it round or... So I enjoyed being in that, like, just impulsive...impulsive place. *[Laughs]* Also knowing that you wouldn't mind what it looked like either. *[Laughs]*

BA: I just think - this is an experiment so I don't really know, like, what to expect or why to expect anything from it...and i really like being in that position, like, I don't know what's coming and that's just an opportunity to, kind of, try and be with your experience and to hear you share that - I just think... It's really...quite, very satisfying for me. I should probably make myself one as well.

MA: Yeah, I recommend it.

BA: Well, I, kind of, have... I mean, I do, you know, not, like, I don't do collages and stuff, but I keep wanting to reference things I've done because it seems to be the only way for me to make sense out of things at the moment, which is partly what I've been doing in looking at Rachid's work is to, kind of, connect through moments of excitement that, in a way, reference my own history or my own experience. I did have some research where I literally worked with bits of paper - I didn't make collages, I cut shapes - I ended up calling it 'Paper Shapes' and I used to just, kind of, really get inside - like you're describing - reorienting these different kinds of pretty classical geometric shapes like triangles and squares, spheres...

MA: Yeah

BA: And as I went about doing on the floor it just gave me this logic in my body about how I needed to, kind of, move my body around it. So it was very, like, hands and eyes, but at the same time...my body was just, sort of, in different places in the space with it. So I definitely have a penchant for mucking about with bits of paper!

BOTH: *[Laughter]*

BA: Not that I was good at that, though, but in terms of being good or bad... I often like to, sort of, preface things, like, if I'm going to do a practice or share that within, let's say a class context, to, sort of say, you know...what would it be if there wasn't a right or wrong way of doing this? You know, good and bad... And, of course, it's we're always (probably) evaluating things in terms of, maybe, what *feels* good or not, maybe... I don't know... But we spoke, I think, on Wednesday or Monday... It must have been Wednesday, because that was the only time we were together before... - about, you know, that situation where you go for an interview and someone asks you what you're good at; 'could you tell me what your favourite thing is?'

MA: *[Laughs]*

BA: Those skin-crawling moments. Well, I'm going to try and reference this situation that we came across when we were working with Jeanine [Durning] where we were doing this score - called 'Experts', which was something that we were invited to, like, start before you're ready; get inside and, you know, just commit to being 'expertly good' in this thing...

MA: Yeah.

BA: This is, like, a bit of a riddle and umm, after doing one of those sessions, I think Joel said 'You know, if I was to meet my maker now, like, I could get quite happily get down on the floor and roll around for them with, like, nothing to hide and nothing else to do'.

MA: Yep.

BA: And I was quite startled by that, because it, sort of, went around the side of it - somehow, it, sort of, didn't feel like he was saying, 'Hey I'm really good at this thing!', because culturally it's not...it's not really okay to say 'I'm really good at [something]', but he did it in this sort of way that came in from the side. So, you know, if you were to, like, meet your maker...or whatever... -

MA: *[Laughter]*

BA: What could you say, like, 'Yeah, I'm just really comfortable being able to be this way in front of you, or there's this thing that I can do, that I am, that I feel really comfortable doing. I feel strong in it etc.', what would that be? How would that be?

MA: I mean, it's still a hard question for me *[Laughs]*

BA: I know.

MA: I'm trying to come at it from the side.

BA: Yeah.

MA: Do you know what? I'm really looking forward to next week where we'll be learning phrase material from 'Set & Set/Reset'.

BA: Yeah.

MA: I'll be, sort of, leading that with you guys. I just feel like every...it's not like a thing that you can achieve, but it's a thing that you can deepen... and deepen and deepen and *keep* deepening. And, like, it always will be that. The more I... Every time I come back around to it, I feel more like, yeah, I wanna, I want to share the information that I've gleaned from this - um, which has actually been, like, extended. It's not, it's not just housed in my experience with the company; it feels like it's coming from other projects that I've done outside of the company, interests that I have - so it feels like I have something I can bring to it that's not just my Candoco experience of it, which feels nice.

BA: Yeah. Lovely. I'm looking forward to that.

MA: Yeah, me too. Yeah. It feels like every time round is just an option; there's like, another option to try something...playing...try something new...or not - it's all useful and invalid - and to

lean into that as well.

BA: How have you been working in 'Set & Reset/Reset'? Because you've, sort of, touched in at different points...

MA: Yeah, a long time. I think... Actually, it was the first... We did a really long tour when I first joined the company, we did the STEPS tour in Switzerland, which was, like...20 performances. So, that would have been five years ago now.

BA: Right.

MA: And that was 'Set & Reset', sorry - 'Set & Reset/Reset' and 'Notturnino', which are like my two favourite things ever, put together - and we did it for a month, 20 performances...

BA: Wow! It's quite a lot.

MA: Yeah, it was incredible. And then...we've come back to it on and off since then. We've re-staged it once more since that cast, for sure - um...

BA: Yeah. So, it's you're kind of history - time -

MA: Time with it... Yeah, for sure. But I think I'd also learnt the phrase in like, a workshop, in workshops before...I joined the company...or, you know, movement from another Trisha Brown piece. So, yeah, it feels like I've been in relationship to it for a long time.

BA: Yeah, thanks for sharing that. It's a, sort of, welcome way to feel about something, I find... to have been in relation to it for a while.

MA: Yeah.

BA: And I think, if I heard you correctly, something I resonate with from what you were saying - from my own experience - is when the thing that I'm concerned with working in, or as a practice within the work, suddenly then feels like is, is this place that, it's almost like it begins to wear out into other aspects of my life where I feel them, kind of, being included, or, like, the line bleeding over a bit. I find it quite an exciting place. It feels like things are, sort of, consolidating in the way that they're understood with each other or something like that, which is a welcome feeling sometimes.

MA: Yeah...for sure.

BA: So thank you, that's really great to hear and exciting to hear about. I'm really looking forward to getting into that with you next week.

The last thing that I wanted to touch on before we draw this to a close is the other, kind of, little task that I asked you to consider before we met, which was almost like a riddle. Like, what if you

imagine being in a situation where we're meeting and somebody asks you a question, or they open the door for you to speak about something - and you feel like, 'yes, I'd really like to - that's perfect for right now because actually, I really would like to talk to that'.

You don't need to tell me what you imagine the question was, but maybe you might talk about what came up for you?

MA: Do you know what? I couldn't make a decision!

BA: You couldn't?

MA: I couldn't do it! I thought about different things. And then, this thing kept getting in the way of like, maybe that's not relevant then? Maybe Ben doesn't want to hear about that?!

BA: Oh...I know that space! Yeah. I can't decide.

MA: I can't decide... And I did think, actually, after this morning - I'd really love to talk about what, what happened today because it felt great, but I feel like we did that at the beginning and I'm really happy that we touched on it.

BA: I see.

MA: But also, that was partly, like, the avoidance technique I had for what I wanted to talk About. I do feel like, I guess in relation to this thing of, like, touching other parts of your life or noticing the overlaps, like... So, my husband, Louis, he's just started an online permaculture course. And whenever he's not doing it, I just log into his, like, steal a computer, and I'm just, I can't get enough of it. I just...it's really...I think to be learning something new at this time feels like really what I need. But also, the language of it - I find a lot of parallels with the language that we use.

BA: Yeah.

MA: So I'm finding that exciting at the moment.

BA: Yeah.

MA: And that's what I'm doing when I'm not doing...

BA: ...this?

MA: This.

BA: Great, lovely. Thanks for sharing that. And, you know, thank you for agreeing to help me learn about these kinds of situations and how to go about them; and being so up for spending some time with me today and, in a way, give me the chance to meet you more and get to know

you more in this period of coming together to work. So, thank you Megan Armishaw.

MA: Thank you.