



## Making disability and art work

Tyson:

Hi, my name is Tyson. Welcome to the Making It Happen podcast presented by Access2Arts. In this podcast series, as a team, we are seeking to examine the roles of the producer in the South Australian deaf and disability art sector. Access2Arts is a disability led arts development agency and the peak body for arts and disability in South Australia.

Access2Arts acknowledges that we in our home are in Kurna country. We respect Kurna elders past, present, and emerging, and through them to all aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Please enjoy the podcast. Welcome to the Making It Happen podcast series presented by Access2Arts. My name is Tyson, and today, I'm here with Andi. Andi, please introduce yourself and describe what you do in one sentence.

Andi:

Oh, well, hey Tyson, and hey, to everyone tuned in. Yes, I'm Andi Snelling. In one sentence, very good challenge. I am a performer, a writer, theatre maker, and I mentor a lot of artists as well. And as part of all of that, I've ended up becoming a producer, mostly self-producing, but I also help a lot of artists make their work happen too.

Tyson:

Amazing. And how many years have you been doing this?

Andi:

So, I've been on stage my whole life, so from childhood, but don't worry, I've not been a producer in charge of other people's work as a child. So, I was probably capable to be honest, but being more a theatre maker. So, I've been doing since 2015. So, before that, I went through the traditional drama school route, trained as an actor, and was following convention a lot more by simply wearing an actor's hat all the time, being cast in plays, musicals, et cetera.

But I craved for a very long time to be making my own work. And so, 2015 is really when it shifted for me, and that's when I made my first solo theatre show, which was self-produced. And from then, I've made multiple shows and worked on lots of other shows with people. Again, wearing many hats, helping with producing, but also just lots of directing and general mentoring is a category I fall into a lot.

Tyson:

Yeah. As an artist in general, you do pick up producing skills, being self-reliant, but also down the track helping other people as well. It goes hand in hand, I think as a creative, it might not be formal or recognised formally, but-

Andi:

Yeah, that's exactly right. I would say there's a lot of times I've done things where I'd go, "Oh, that's technically a bit of producing, but it hasn't been credited as such." And I do think that as particularly independent artists, it's a good skill to have because we need to understand our art, not just from the artistic point of view, but from that real business point of view.

It's not called showbiz for no reason. There's that very important aspect of selling a work. There's no point creating a work if there's no audience for it. So, I know a lot of artists who are makers of various types, whether it's musicians, performers, et cetera, who struggle with that aspect.

But I like to encourage artists more and more to step into that because the more you get to know what's unique about you as an artist in your work, the easier it becomes to talk about it and sell it. And I just think it's a phase that every independent artist has to go through and break through those levels of discomfort, I suppose, about promoting your own work.

Tyson:

Yeah, absolutely. There's a term I came across recently called autotelic, and some artists will make art for the sake of art and might not show it to anyone. And exotelic is when you create work for recognition or to show people. So, there is times maybe in your craft where, or hobbies that you do it for the pure enjoyment, but it is a fascinating thing to ponder on as a creative that there is times where you cross between those two.

Andi:

I love that. And I have heard of that concept myself as well, and I think it's very important. And I think that even if you're creating a work that has the intention of a public outcome, there should still be steps along the way that are just for you, the artist, that are just pure joy, and whatever, and whatever mechanisms you need to have in place to get yourself to finding in development or whatever, to finding what the final message of your piece is, or the shape of it, or whatever.

Those steps along the way can be purely just for the self. I think it's a really lovely concept and very important that those two things are happening parallel, that there is art for the self parallel with if you're an artist that wants to be this, then the public side as well.

Tyson:

Yeah, yeah. It's almost serving for yourself, and then serving for the community or the audience.

Andi:

Yes. And of course, you can't serve anybody else if you can't serve yourself.

Tyson:

That's right.

Andi:

That analogy of the oxygen mask in the aeroplane, you need absolutely to put the oxygen mask on yourself first. Make sure your cup is full as an artist before you can go out and tip that cup over into the world, to use a random metaphor there.

Tyson:

Yeah, that's right. It's a creating or producing from abundance, not scarcity.

Andi:

Yes, I love that.

Tyson:

That's a tip between the cup or looking at the cup half full than half empty. It's almost a paradigm in your mind or a mindset.

Andi:

That mindset piece is such a crucial part of the game of being able to sustain as an artist. If you can get burnt out and disappointed very quickly and very easily, particularly if we're relying on external validation or we're expecting our audience is going to show up or whatever, yeah, the mindset piece is really, really important and something I work on a lot for myself still to this day, and as a very experienced indie artist.

Tyson:

What made you want to work as a producer in the disability art sector and how did you get started?

Andi:

It's a great question. So, I have acquired a disability, I think is the first bit of information that helps with this context to this question. So, me becoming a producer happened by accident because I started creating my own work and didn't have a producer. I, at the time, didn't massively know how to go about getting a producer, nor were there a lot of indie producers around, and I still think there's a lack of them.

And so, I just fell into that role and took to it actually quite easily. It was a good fit for me producing, which was a lovely discovery back in 2015. And then, during that time and not long after, I started to become very chronically ill, and then actually, left the scene for several years to... I just was deeply unwell, basically. And that was a very scary time for me to not really be creating at all.

And so, then emerging from that, I created my third solo show, which is called Happy Go Wrong, which is probably the solo theatre show that people will know me most by. It's been my most successful, has won a lot of awards and continues to tour nationally on main stages as well, which is really exciting. It was actually on at the Adelaide Festival Centre last December, which is awesome.

And so, I then just again, just fell into the disability arts community honestly through being welcomed in. And this is something I think is really important for a lot of people's journeys, particularly with acquired disability, is I always identified as like, well, I'm chronically ill, not disabled, so therefore I don't think I belong in the disability space.

And yet, the more I was hearing from the disability space, the more I was like, "Oh, but I really resonate with all that. That's my story too." Actually, the things these people are going through are things I'm going through too. So, as is typical for a lot of people entering the disability community, there can be

those couple of years of crunchiness as I call it, where you... and even now, it's still an ongoing identity thing.

It's like, "How much do I belong on a given day can change?" And so, I guess I was welcomed into that space, and then just started to accept more and more, no, I do belong here. And then, I just, honestly, collaborations just emerged organically through being in the community, through talking to people, and then starting to get opportunities.

I think, because I created this show, Happy Go Wrong, which was specifically about my journey with chronic illness. It was specifically about all of those things, questioning the medical model, questioning the medical system, even though I was doing those things, not knowing what they were at the time. I didn't have a concept of what the social model of disability or medical model was at that time.

But I was questioning and challenging those paradigms in my own ways, and I think that then meant I was putting out publicly. I was giving myself a voice and associating myself with that community inadvertently. And so, then I just met more people, and increasingly just became more and more passionate about working with fellow artists with disability.

And I've done some work with No Strings Attached, for example, in Adelaide where I have... but also, where I really, I think excel is more what I'm doing now, which is working with solo artists. And I do find I tend to attract artists who have some sort of full-on story or adversity that they're overcoming. And so, for example, one artist who's well known in Adelaide, Kathryn Hall, an incredible performer, part of the No Strings ensemble and an artistic associate there.

I've been a big part of her journey with creating her first solo work called Sheltered about her youth spent living in youth shelters in the '90s with cerebral palsy at a time when there was certainly a severe lack of empathy, support, et cetera, or having a disability and being homeless. So, I'm her director, but I've mentored her a lot as well.

That's just one example, and I think for me, just stems from my own personal experiences with chronic illness and the resilience that has to come from that has just given me this extra drive to work with other people who are also going through their own versions of that. Yeah.

Tyson:

Wow, that's amazing. How does being a producer in disability art sector different from being a producer in other artistic fields?

Andi:

Well, I wouldn't necessarily put the two as separate. I view the disability art space as within the arts. And so, whenever I'm working with an artist or whatever it is, we're working within the broader arts community. And so, it's not that I see myself as a producer for the disability arts space, I just see myself as a producer for the arts, who does work a lot with disabled artists.

But I definitely think within the broader arts landscape, importantly, I do bring or I really try to bring extra layers of awareness and attention in that broader space to access needs and to looking after artists more. I think particularly in indie artists, whether disabled or not, but probably even more so if you're disabled, you are often at the bottom of the rung in terms of adequate help, and you're often the last to be paid and things like that.

So, I would say it's more that I'm just being the same kind of producer I'd be anyway, but with a whole other layer of experience and awareness. And I'm a lot stronger now, for example, at just asking festivals, et cetera, for what is needed for myself or for whoever I'm working with, for like, "Hey, this is an access need." You may not be aware, but energy levels is an access need, monitoring that.

So, therefore, performing three shows a week as opposed to the standard expected six or seven is not something I can do. I've really noticed over the years, I've just gotten more and more comfortable at having those conversations that I used to find so difficult. And look, I still find them difficult, there are still aspects. I'm working with a major festival at the moment, and they're awesome, by the way.

They're totally amazing, and across it and on board, but I noticed within myself, I still have some issues around, I have this awkward, weird access need that people don't think of as an access need. I'm not in a wheelchair. I don't need a ramp. I visibly look like I have an invisible illness, and so I can walk into a building and people would have no idea kind of thing.

And there're still those nooks and crannies I think of the disability experience that can be challenging because it's hard enough to get a work of art up and it takes so much to get that happening. And then, on top of that, when you're asking for access needs and that, which of course, should be a given and the landscape is changing, but there's still this feeling of having to constantly ask for things.

Tyson:

Yeah, yeah. It's having the confidence with that unique Access Rider almost asking for that for a show or rehearsals. And yeah, it's fascinating. It's like, I think, a common thread a lot of artists goes through at various stages of their career, and the stages of identifying with their disability as well, becoming comfortable with it, and voicing it, giving yourself permission, and also being clear and lead by example, but there's a way to lead where they feel included, not threatened or-

Andi:

Yes.

Tyson:

Yeah, there's a responsibility, isn't it?

Andi:

It's so true.

Tyson:

We have a responsibility to-

Andi:

And it is a shared responsibility, you're right. And I think for a long time, I didn't even understand what all my access needs were. I didn't realise that because I maybe feel funny in a room with bright lights. I didn't realise for a long time I could ask for maybe not being in that room or I just didn't realise for so long. And I think that's a big part of the process for a lot of artists as well who have disability is also just learning.

Sometimes with Kathryn, we'll be chatting and we'll talk about, okay, we're going to travel interstate and do the show here and whatever. And then, something will come up, and I'll be hearing a concern in her voice, and I'll realise it's nearly nine times out of 10 to do with an access related thing, and then there's an anxiety associated with that. Will this thing be in place?

And I'll be like, "Oh, I think we are touching at an access need here." And there's that discovery. I think what else is difficult with that can be just the personal disclosure as well. I'd love to not have to disclose half the things I do end up disclosing sometimes to really high up people in major festivals that I'd really

rather they didn't know about my difficulties with bowel movements, but I have to let them know the context of needing X, Y, and Z thing when I'm on tour.

And I mean I share that now quite comfortably, and I laugh a little bit about it, but it's a real very real thing too, is that I have a lot of empathy with a lot of artists with chronic illness, disability, et cetera, and our deaf friends as well is like, yeah, there is this, sometimes just you can't avoid it. You sometimes end up having to disclose something you'd really rather not.

And in normal other kinds of professional circumstances, you'd never have to. And so, I feel for people on that because it is hard. And I think with Access Riders, it can be helpful sometimes to look at what context we're speaking with. Is it an indie venue with zero budget? Therefore, okay, what am I going to prioritise? Or is it a big fancy festival, lots of funding?

In which case, yeah, damn it, I'm going to ask for everything. And whilst I recognise that's not the ideal, we should be able to ask for everything all the time. Everyone is on a massive... society is changing around the massive learning curve altogether. There's still so much I'm learning as well about disability inclusion and access, even from within the community, constantly learning.

And so, I do try to, and I think you said it nicely before about the way you communicate and have these conversations with people. I do come in and give people a lot of leeway and understanding that you just may literally not realise this is a legitimate thing, or you may never have met someone before who's asked for this, so this is a new thing.

And often it's just that systems have been in place for so long and no one's questioned them, and then it takes one person or multiple people to go, "Oh, hey, by the way you do this, would that be more flexible, or is there room for whatever?" And often, there is, it's just that no one's thought of it or yeah, that sort of thing. So, change can feel painfully slow, but I believe there is change.

I've definitely witnessed it from my time in the industry. Change is definitely coming. People are more comfortable using the word disability now and talking about access as a concept, folks who are fully able-bodied, but just getting that a lot more and I think that's great. I just love this idea of living in a world one day where the word disability is just totally neutral, comes with no baggage, no nothing. It's kind of almost a boring everyday thing.

Tyson:

Yeah, yeah. Absolutely.

Andi:

Not to downplay it, but you know what I mean?

Tyson:

Yeah, yeah. There's still a way to go. And I think if both parties, it's like an opportunity than a burden or an obstacle. It's an opportunity for dialogue and discussion and discovery. And I think it's how it's framed, and how it's pitched, and also how it's received, and everything is a work in progress.

And as you know, the worst thing is to assume is to always ask and stuff like that. If in doubt, just check in with people. Everyone is pretty cool. It's a funny thing. People try to be polite, and stuff, and sometimes they come off more awkward than-

Andi:

Yes.

Tyson:

Yeah.

Andi:

I encounter that a lot. And I do work with Purple Orange, which is an Adelaide-based disability organisation. I do disability inclusion training regularly with whole range of different organisations, corporates, councils, state government, et cetera. And it's the most common thing that comes up is people often opt to stay silent, say nothing, hold back.

Instead of, and I'm using hands in quotation marks here, saying the so-called wrong thing. But as we both know, and something I think you're getting at here is that being polite, and not saying, or whatever, out of fear for the wrong thing, it's important to make a mistake, to get something wrong or whatever. Because I know that how someone is speaking to me, if they're coming from a place of integrity, it's fine.

It's like, yeah, let's make the mistake. Let's even make a mistake together, and let's have a discussion around it, and then the change occurs. That's how change occurs. I know from myself, that's how I change my thinking patterns and perspectives is usually when I screw something up, or say the wrong thing, or just don't realise, but use some ableist language or say something.

And then, someone is like, "Hey, the way you said that makes me feel uncomfortable." And then, I'm mortified, but that's okay. That's fine. That's change in progress and it's almost exciting, I think. So, I welcome that awkwardness.

Tyson:

Yeah, for sure. It's a beautiful moment of growth as well to go forward and imprints like a little shift in people. What are some of the things you do to make sure events and projects are accessible, and welcoming to people with disabilities, and how do you make sure these things happen?

Andi:

Yeah. So, again, I'm very much in the indie theatre sector, so the scale I'm working at is quite small. I'm not running full scale events or festivals or anything, but I am talking a lot with festivals, et cetera. One of my big focuses with access is actually embedding access into a work of art. That's probably where my main focus and passion is at the moment.

We've been exploring that a lot with Kathryn Hall in her show, Sheltered. So, looking at, in that case, more her own access needs incorporating into the show in really fun and creative ways. And we're actually breaking the conventions of theatre and what we are doing there, which makes the work not only accessible for her in a practical way, i.e., allows her to be able to do the work and do it as comfortably as possible.

But then creates a show that's very out of the box and gives the audience an experience they've never had before. I'm also currently developing a new show for myself called Accidental Radical, which has fully embedded access from day one of conception. And my main mission with that show that I set for myself was I want to prove to myself and to the world that embedding access is number one, totally doable, and number two, makes a work more creatively interesting.

So, it forces me into a creative space of my imagination, a part of my brain that I'd never be sent to that corner of my creative room, if you know what I mean. I mean, by weren't considering, how can I embed access into my work? This concept of aesthetic access, so having Auslan as a language, it's just fully integrated into the show.

It's not I'm creating a show and there's an Auslan interpreter in a black outfit in the corner in a spotlight actually totally detached from my show as if they're not there, but they are, that sort of thing. I really am challenging myself to have it all seamlessly part of the dramaturgy and the narrative of a show to the point where this show would not hold up without it.

So, this show doesn't work without the captioning, without the Auslan, without the audio description, without the braille as part of the set, without this, and that, and everything I'm trying to put into this show. And that's probably more the area I'm putting a lot of energy and passion into is in the realm of theatre. How do we embed access, not just have it as an add-on, and I'm just learning by doing, really.

I'm consulting with a lot of people. That's important too, consulting to the relevant communities. I have my own experience of disability, but not everybody else's, and I guess that's my way of doing things is just looking at how I can do it on a micro level, i.e. just as me. Humble me, Andi Snelling, how can I do it? And then, put it out to the world, and then that will hopefully inspire others to do it.

That's more how I do things. I'm not in charge of events, and festivals, and things where I bring that stuff into play, but yeah, I'm more just from, it's very grassroots, the way I work. It's very ground up in the independent theatre sector.

Tyson:

That's amazing. Yeah. Aesthetic access is, I think, is-

Andi:

It's an awesome concept.

Tyson:

It is, isn't it? And it does shift your flow state in creativity. It makes you think a bit different and leading by that design, you're also leading by example as well.

Andi:

Yes, that's true. That's true.

Tyson:

What are some of the crucial issues facing the disability art sector in South Australia right now, and how can producers help address these issues?

Andi:

That's a really great and massive question. I think I still feel like the broader community of people who engage with the arts don't pay enough attention to the disability arts space. I still feel like there's a stigma and there is this level of that's just art therapy over there, or I think that I would like to see... yeah, I'd love to see more South Australians taking disabled artists and what they're doing more seriously.

I'd love to see a shift in perspective on that as well because I still think there's a bit of looking down upon and not taking the workers as really... I don't know, quality. And I think then it becomes a bit chicken and egg because of course, there are works that aren't quality, and that's fine, and that's great. That's the case across the entire art sector.



I think everyone's so dependent on funding, still. The financial models are just so broken in the arts in Australia, it's really challenging. We're also dependent on funding. And then, if we don't make a work that somehow ticks all the boxes or gets it right the first go, I don't know. I think it's even harder for that to continue.

So, I'd love to see more people engaging with the disability arts world who aren't already affiliated with the disability arts community, if that makes sense. So, just randoms off the street going, "Oh, there's a cool looking exhibition. Let's go see it, or here's a theatre show by a disabled theatre company. Let's go see it." I just find often it's the same people at the same shows, and in the same gallery spaces, and it's a very small bubble insular community. So, I think that would be helpful for it to go beyond that.

Tyson:

Do you think it's about the community itself rebranding and showcasing it in a different way? I've seen that over the last few years with sport how there's a different progressive branding and it's-

Andi:

True.

Tyson:

... certain athletes at the front line, and that they may not be fresh faces, but they are the fresh faces of general audience, which-

Andi:

Yeah, that's true. That's true. Yeah. Again, it can be a bit chicken and egg. It's like, what can we do from within, but also what can we ask of those outside of the community to step into as well? I do think it's a bit of both. And I find it hard to say this, but it's just me being brutally truthful. I just think that sometimes there's still such a dinginess associated a lot of the time with disability arts.

It's not my personal experience of it, by the way. That's not reflective of how I feel, but it's just what I hear in the general community a lot. In the general arts community, I mean. I just hear this kind of people don't mean to sound like this or whatever, but it's still a bit patronising, and it's still just removed from wanting to engage. And so, it's interesting.

We need, obviously, theatre companies that only take on disabled actors. That's important, but then I also am curious about theatre companies that have mixed abilities, all of it is welcome and needed, but ideally, I guess we come to a world where it's just fully blended, I guess, and everyone's taken care of. Because again, they can just sometimes be... and it's so ironic because of the history of disability in the world. There can so often still be a separateness and a segregation kind of aspect.

Tyson:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Andi:

Yeah, it's still a challenge.

Tyson:

It is. It is. How do you know if your events and projects are successful regarding accessibility and inclusion? And how do you measure this success?

Andi:

Yeah. That sounds like a grant application. That's great. That how will you measure your successful outcome? I think it's because I've just had my head in Grantland lately. It's a really good question, and I think some of it can be measured obviously by checking in with my audience and so forth. You could do surveys and things.

But really, I think how I go about that is just having real human conversations with people, who've engaged with my work, but really, that's a step of the process that I begin as early as possible now. I didn't used to, when I used to do access, it's more an add-on. I didn't think about it so much.

But now, for example, with my show, Accidental Radical, measuring those outcomes of the end product, even though the end product doesn't exist yet, is something I'm already doing by having these workshop days, or I'm workshopping bits of the script. And let's just say, for example, I've had some days where I've worked with fabulous deaf actor, Adelaide-based, Caroline Conlon, shout out to Caroline and Jerry Scheer, Auslan interpreter extraordinaire.

I've had a couple of days, for example, just mocking around with them in a room looking at script development. That's a step that anyone, in an ideal situation, can be taken as part of the process of creation. So that when we come to the final product, it's not that anything is going to be foolproof and totally accessible for everyone, but it just means it's had the right voices in the room through the whole process, which means you're more likely at the end to be genuinely including because I want to go beyond just access, but actual inclusion in my work.

That ideally, I've really gone to that full length of potential that I'm able to. And so, for me, yeah, I think when people go, "Quick, create the event, create this thing, oh, shit, it's two weeks before, quick, hire an Auslan interpreter, quick, do this, do that." And also, how they engage with community that's relevant to the theme, let them know this service is available, et cetera.

And then, afterwards go like, "Oh, why didn't people from that community come? Or yeah, it's often just such an afterthought, and I get it, we're all under a lot of financial and other constraints. I'm someone who really, really, really is under a lot of constraints, but I'm still trying as much as possible during the process of creation and that to be having this... it's not just even consulting, but co-design as well, I think is important in the disability space.

We're talking about it more and more now, to have that genuine collaboration aspect happening. So that when we do get to the end stage, just the chances of it not being accessible have been caught along the way. Any gaps, anything that's fallen through my own knowledge or fallen through the cracks of what I can perceive has maybe been picked up by someone else along the way so that there's not that horrid thing, where you'll do the thing and you've just not thought about it because you don't know that perspective.

And then, someone's had a terrible experience or they haven't been able to access your work because no one has picked it up along the way because you haven't had the right voices in the room. So, I guess that's really, I'm big on that one now is thinking about it as early as possible. And we don't all have a lot of access to consulting people.

Particularly, I often complain that access isn't financially accessible. I'm an indie artist. I rely on funding to be able to embed access in my work. If I don't get that funding, then I have to do the best I can on a shoestring, and that's often pulling in favours from people, and that doesn't always feel great. But

whatever my restraints are, I just really try really hard to be from day one, questioning myself, holding myself to account.

It's important to still allow free creative flow. I'm just mentoring an artist at the moment, writing a musical with fully embedded access. She's in the really early stages of that, and she's already getting so worried about like, "Oh, I can't write anything because the minute I start to write, I get worried, but how will this be accessible for this person or that person?"

And I'm like, "Just free flow. Do the writing, do the thing, get your story out, but as you go along, just have questions. Put them in a notebook, whatever." Like, "Oh, how am I going to solve this problem, this scene really relies strongly on visuals? How's a blind audience going to going to experience that?" Like, "Great. I have no idea right now, but I'm going to write it down. It's a consideration."

There's a lot of I don't knows in these processes, and I'm just trying to embrace for myself more and more, the I don't know, but I'm noting it. I'm noticing and I'm aware. So, I will address it at some point. It's just on my radar. The answers will arrive.

Tyson:

It's almost if we could have a access and inclusion listening party with key members with different expertise or lived experience. And then, listening, I mean experiencing or depending on the medium and then-

Andi:

That's right.

Tyson:

... having that kind of chat, almost like a committee or just a feedback session, which you do see in some theatre show developments and stuff like that, which really does help the final iteration of the show.

Andi:

Yeah, I do showings. I do sort of formal sometimes or informal showings to select... sometimes I select just trusted artistic outside eyes and so forth. But even then, I'm so cautious of not like if I'm actually consulting with someone and using their lived experience, and expertise, and I'm not paying them. There're so many grey areas there.

I've got a lot of mates who are like, "Oh, we love to just sit in your rehearsal room and give you feedback for free. That's fine." And that's cool. I do it for others as well, but yeah. Then, there's those times when it's like, "Oh, now I'm getting them to fill out a survey about my work, and it feels a bit like brass, almost like as a disabled person with this stability, how did you experience this scene?"

It feels a bit wrong, and so it's just like, okay, that's all right. That's part of the process. Let's work through it. We get the funding if we can, and we pay people to be in the room and all of those things. It's always just give it a damn crack. Give it a crack. I'm trying all sorts of things out in the process of Accidental Radical. It's new territory, and it's just like I've just got to try things out, and I've embarrassed myself in the room in front of other people. That's fine. It's part of the process.

Tyson:

Yeah, for sure. And you might discover exciting things and new ways.

Andi:

Yeah, totally.

Tyson:

And it's more than most as well, that red hot go is the main thing that is the intention, isn't it?

Andi:

Genuinely showing up and giving it a red hot go, I agree. I really agree.

Tyson:

If someone wants to work as a producer in the disability art sector, especially if they have a disability, what advice would you give them?

Andi:

I think shadowing another producer is a good way to start. So, maybe you engage whatever the art medium is that you're working with, whatever you are witnessing. If there's a particular artist work you like or whatever, and they have a producer, see if you can maybe speak with that person. Get curious. Ask questions. How did you become a producer? Or what did you do?

Or did you get any training? Or did you learn on the go and that? But yeah, I feel like being able to be in a room through that process in a kind of the shadow concept of looking over the shoulder of someone hands-on in process, I think is the most helpful way to just learn. And I think it's getting an understanding of who you are as a person and producer and what kind of work you are drawn to is a really important part of the early stages of becoming a producer.

Because there's no point producing just anything because someone's offered you something and you say, yes, you've got to really... I think in the arts, it's got to have... well, for me anyway, it has to have some sort of meaningful personal connection. I can't produce a show or direct a show if I don't see the value in it myself, and if I don't believe in the work, I just can't do it.

And I know some people who do do that, and I recognise that we've all got to earn a living, so that's fine, but I just can't physically do it. So, I think that's a nice thing you can do just on your own. For the person out there who's interested in producing maybe doesn't yet have the experience, you can just start to self-observe like, what kind of art, what am I drawn to?

What kinds of art or is there common themes in the artworks of the artist I love? Like, "Oh, I love artists who are fighting for justice. I'm drawn to that, or I love artists who just tell really simple, light funny stories. I don't want any drama." Just get to know yourself, what you feel you are aligned with. Yeah, that's just a helpful starting point as well because that can then help you start to know the direction you might want to go in as a producer.

I think in Adelaide, obviously, Adelaide Fringe is such an awesome time to be able to get out there, see shows, and in the lead up to Fringe, so in the later part of the year, reach out maybe. If say, you're a theatre person, reach out to different groups, or companies, or artists. If you hear they're putting on a work and say, "Hey, do you need a producer?"

And the conversation could even just be like, "I don't have a lot of experience, but here's how you could benefit from working with me and I would benefit from working with you. We'll learn together and we'll grow together." I've had my own show, Happy Go Wrong, I no longer self-produced that show. I started out self-producing, and then I picked up a producer along the way, Matthew Briggs from Under the Microscope, Adelaide based also, incredible.

Both our careers have taken off since we started working together, and I think that's the most beautiful alignment of a producer and an artist is when you meet each other at the right moments in your careers, where you're both ready to up level, and you're both in it together, and you are really genuinely in it together. And then, that's what happens, you bring each other up in your own respective ways.

And that's what I'd like to see for producers as well, because I often think producers don't get a lot of the glory. The artist gets the review or gets their photo in the paper or whatever, and the producer doesn't often get a lot of the accolades, I guess they deserve. And so, I love it if I'm being an artist or vice versa, if I'm helping someone else with their work more in a role of mentor or producer.

I love it when we're both lifting each other up, basically. They're upskilling. I'm upskilling. They're getting more recognition for what they do. I'm getting more recognition for what I do. I really feel like it's a true collaboration.

Tyson:

Yeah. I think that's a fantastic kind of finish. It is about collaboration, and levelling up, and sharing, and exchanging knowledge, and two heads are better than one. The producer is an interesting thing in that you have to hold frame for an artist or a project and lead. Yet, hold space for the artist to elevate, and reach their potential in the project, or even hold space for them to grow to another level. And it's this delicate tango where you are not competing for the same space. You are complimentary to each other for the greater good of the project.

Andi:

Yeah. You have to feel into each other's rhythms, and sometimes you might have to be patient. Yeah. It is totally that. All of that, what you said, I agree with.

Tyson:

Well, thank you. Thanks for being a part of the podcast.

Andi:

Thank you.

Tyson:

Is there anything else-

Andi:

My pleasure.

Tyson:

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Andi:

No. I'm forever still learning, and it's an absolute joy, and a pleasure, and a privilege to just be in the industry and continue to grow and learn. And I feel like, yeah, podcasts like this are really valuable for that, and I encourage anyone listening who just has a quiet little fire in their belly, if they've heard anything today that's ignited them or intrigued them in some way, follow that intrigue. Don't just let it

Access2Arts - Making \*\*it Happen - Podcast - Andi Snelling Interview

sit. We only get one life. It's a short life, and just take whatever micro steps you need to take towards being able to do your thing.

Tyson:

This podcast was produced by Access2Arts, with support from Arts South Australia.