

## Horizon Radio: Bodies & Space Transcript

Hello and welcome to Horizon Radio. Horizon is a new international performing arts showcase at the Edinburgh festivals. Horizon Radio is a chance to delve deeper into the practice of the showcase artists and get to know them better.

What you are about to hear is a conversation between artists Dan Daw Eve Stainton and Jaz Woodcock-Stewart, hosted by Horizon Consortium member Kate Craddock, exploring bodies and their relationship to space. We hope you enjoy listening.

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**Kate:** Thank you for joining me today in conversation Jaz and Dan and Eve. So this is one of our Horizon Radio podcast recordings and today we're going to have a discussion around bodies and bodies in performance and bodies in space and we're not sure where we're going to end up but that's where we're going to start.

So, my name's Kate Craddock and I'm the festival director of GIFT which is Gateshead International Festival of Theatre and GIFT is one of the Consortium Partners leading Horizon. And I'm really thrilled to be joined by three of our presenting artists who are going to be showcasing their work as part of Horizon in Edinburgh.

And so I'd like you just to individually, please just say hello and introduce yourself briefly and then we'll launch into our conversation. So Dan do you want to introduce yourself first?

**Dan:** Sure. I'd love to. Okay. Hi Kate, hi everyone. I'm Dan Daw. And I'm the director of Dan Daw Creative Projects and the person behind The Dan Daw Show which is being presented at Dance Base over the Horizon showcase week. And my work intersects theatre and dance and looks at the ways I can find different ways to free my body, using theatre and dance as a vehicle to do that.

**Kate:** Great. Thank you. Dan. And Jaz. Do you want to say hello?

**Jaz:** Hi guys, I'm Jaz Woodcock-Stewart, and my show is Civilization, which is a piece I've directed alongside choreographer Morgan Runacre-Temple. And I guess the kind of headline about what it is, is that it is an experiment in theatrical realism and contemporary dance and how those two forms can sit alongside each other without interacting.

**Kate:** Great. Thank you. It's a really precise description of the piece. And Eve do you want to say hello.

**Eve:** Hi, I'm Eve and I'll be bringing Dykegeist to Edinburgh which yeah, it's a performance work kind of intersects with visual art, I guess as well and sound, there's metal sculptures in the work and yeah, I think I identify as a multi-disciplinary artist and I'm working with Mica

Levy who's the musician in Dykegeist, and I sort of wish I had a little my blurb up to succinctly explain the work in a nutshell

And yeah, but yeah, I mean, I can get a bit apprehensive about being put into an identity box of like the work is just about identity politics, but I guess you know the title is Dykegeist, and that is it is there. And yeah, and there's other things and interests behind and in that research sort of time-based philosophies and and class identity as part of it. Yeah, and that's me.

**Kate:** Great. Thank you. And thanks all for joining us today. So

when we decided to do these recordings, these podcasts, we came up with a bunch of topics and one of the topics that we were really interested in that we thought sort of connected some of the performance works as part of the Showcase was an idea around bodies and how bodies are used on stage and maybe used I'd like to go into a little bit later maybe but maybe used to sort of interrupt or to challenge or to cause a certain impact with audiences, but it would be really interesting just to hear from you all what it was about the idea of bodies that you initially responded to. What was it that sort of resonated with you made you want to be part of this conversation. So anyone can jump in. I can see you all nodding.

**Eve:** I guess it's quite a broad topic, isn't it the idea of bodies and so in a way yeah, it can sometimes feel a bit de-personalising or something like that the idea of the 'body' like without, without the person or like the mind and the feelings and all of that. So maybe I was kind of interested in thinking through that a bit and kind of what could 'body' hold or how would I be interested in framing how I might want to use or enter the topic of 'body' and probably thinking about sort of 'people' but also the strangeness of the performing body and the body being in the medium in dance and movement.

I think there's something quite strange about that being the vehicle in the performance that you're really being seen, you're being witnessed, you're giving consent to be witnessed in these in the strangeness of moving and performing and that yes, I guess that's initially what drew me to that.

**Jaz:** I love that. I feel like it's so interesting for me to hear and you talking about that Eve because coming from a theatre background I feel like the people that act as the performers are often we meet them through words and through the mind, which I think is very different to dance having worked with both dancers and actors in in my show and it blows my mind how opposite their training is and opposite the way into art making is.

And for me, I guess the kind of provocation of Civilization and why I was drawn to this chat in particular is because I think we rarely get to see actors anyway doing things without intellect or there's a lot of verbal sparring and intellect led theatre

and I was really keen with Civilization to see her body, a female body, existing and doing not much else. But I just find it interesting that from maybe more movement perspective to put the body before the person could be a negative thing or an oppressive thing. Whereas from

the place that I'm from, often theatre - sorry already the words are difficult - and it felt really empowering to have someone be allowed to be a body without the mind. And anyway, if any of that makes sense, I'll be glad to hear your thoughts!

**Dan:** Oh, yeah, it makes total sense to me and picking up on a couple of threads there around what you were saying about consent that really chimes with me because every day when I'm out in the world with my crippled body, people are looking at my body in a way that I don't want it look at, or commenting on my body in a way that I don't want them commenting on or laughing at it in a way I don't want them laughing at me. And so it's this whole thing around permission and consent and then feeling that they don't have to ask me.

And that's why The Dan Daw Show is such an important work because for me in my journey with my relationship to my cripness because I used to apologize and be meek and mild and go yes, yes, you're right. I'm sorry do whatever you like with my body, say whatever you like and I've come to the point now where I'm like, no f\*\*\* you. That's not okay. How dare you say that about my body, how dare you make me feel a loss of power. So that's where making The Dan Daw Show came. Where I was just like no I need to create a world where it is on my terms and where I do have agency, where I do have power and it just so happens that the way I find that is when I'm performing and when I'm f\*\*\*\*\* and the two moments where I feel completely free, and so that's why we're using a holding device of kink to take audiences on that journey. To go these are the things that make my body feel free and powerful because of how which not made to feel the things outside of this space.

So it was a brilliant way I could go Okay, what are the conditions that I want to for create myself and how do I want to use that to start to breathe into how I want to be in the world. And what knowledge of myself can I take from when I'm f\*\*\*\*\* somebody into when I'm catching the bus. And how can I apply that knowledge about myself any way that isn't shameful, because three years ago I would not have sat in a podcast and talked about f\*\*\*\*\*. I just wouldn't. Um, yeah.

**Kate:** Yeah, and I think that is something that connects all of your pieces actually around kind of that level of intimacy that each of you are sort of exposing in your work, or like what would be a private moment. So I know certainly in Civilization we're watching someone having what is a private moment, existing in their own space, in their own environment. We're watching a body moving through certain functions, and I know in both of your work, Eve and Dan, as well equally, we're being invited to witness as you said Eve. We're invited to witness bodies in space in ways that we we don't get to see every day, perhaps.

**Eve:** Yeah. I love that what you said as well Dan about how can you create the conditions; that you're kind of responsible for creating conditions for that space to be seen in a way that feels kind of appropriate for how you're creating a context, I guess. That really resonated.

And then I think about with Dykegeist and Yeah, kind of using the idea of constructs; kind of constructing intimacy. And the idea of the predatory lesbian, the kind of projections that get

put onto the predatory lesbian, in social spaces and a kind of sense of threat that might be carried inside my body or my presence like being aware that it can be seen as sometimes threatening. Particularly more within kind of mask lesbian identifying people.

So then I was kind of interested in the idea of a 'predator' and then when that rubs up against the very real thing of a 'performer', and the hierarchies in a performance space, what does that mean for a 'performer' to adopt like a character of a 'predator' and to come into contact and communication directly with audience members and ask them for consent to carry out tasks with me in a very slow kind of guided way. I'm really, really interested in that ethics of performance spaces.

Yeah. Something about what you said Dan there about creating the conditions. Like really what are the conditions of the space that you'd like. How to organise the room.

**Kate:** Yeah, thanks. Yeah, thanks Eve. And I think all of you have already sort of started to like unpick how your work is kind of challenging what we might see is how bodies might be used conventionally in performance or what we might regularly encounter in performance work and I just wanted to each of you would maybe sort of would be able to sort of expand a little bit maybe on that.

In terms of how an audience encounters bodies in space, Eve, in your work I think there's some really interesting ideas you were just mentioning around consent with audience and the ethics of what you're doing. Certainly in terms of proximity and what you're challenging there. Yeah and likewise all of you really if you had any thoughts around that.

**Eve:** Yeah, actually wanted to just say pick up on the thing of unconventional bodies that I think you mentioned. But also this thing I've kind of who is quite heavily, what identities are kind of heavily still underrepresented in society and kind of yeah, and also in kind of the microcosm of the performance sector.

And from my own experience, I guess in growing up and going through dance school education and they're just there wasn't any representation of kind of unconventional bodies. Whether that's disabled bodies or lesbian bodies, you know, like kind of openly Dyke, people related to dyke cultures, kind of mask presenting or even non-binary or trans, you know trans teachers. I never ever came across in the whole of my dance education.

So it's quite a big thing, especially with the sort of systemic issues in the dance industry and dance education and around race and they're kind of what it is seen as the perfect body. I think it's really an interesting thing to be confronted by coming out of dance education, which is obviously quite a long time ago now for me, but I'm still on picking all of that still unravelling what's been in the container of my body, what's been filled there and how it's been conditioned and oppressed, I guess in a way. And yes, I just hope that there can be more representation of bodies outside of a convention.

**Kate:** Absolutely, and was that something that Jaz or Dan you wanted to pick up on?

**Jaz:** Go on Dan.

**Dan:** Sure, and it's essentially knowing like we don't fit into that convention, right? So something about going. Okay. What do we do with that? How do we how do we like, like... We're already queer anyway, so f\*\*\* it. Let's take it as far as we can because even if we don't we're going to be on the outside anyway. So for me, it's about just clocking that and clocking the freedom within that oppression and clocking the joy within that oppression and going, wow. I could you know, I can find joy even though even though the patriarchy is creating a system where they think that we can't. But we're f\*\*\*ing are.

And to me that is glorious. And so it's in the knowing that and what we do with that and how for me, how I can take an audience on that journey. And explain to them my place in that and their place in it, and helping them to realise it without ever telling them what to think about the world and how it should be, because that's not my place. Like I've got ideas that's never my place to indoctrinate people.

And there's one look at the start where I introduced the show and I introduced what's going to happen because we acknowledge through making the work that kink is a very scary thing to a lot of people. So we needed to explain what was gonna happen. So they felt safe and so they knew they were in a safe space. And to do with representation there's a line in the work where I say, 'Chris is here so that those of you who are like Chris can see yourself represented on stage'. And it's about acknowledging that they may be already comparing Chris' non-disabled body to my disabled body. And acknowledging that in a you know, in a kind way, and it was also going, yeah, I get that you don't see my type of body on stage a lot, but that's okay. Of course you don't. I know that. You know that. Let's acknowledge that in this place and start shining the light in those darker spots that we all know is there but never like to talk about.

**Kate:** Yeah, I think it's brilliantly articulated Dan and that's clearly a really powerful moment and opening, you know, that sort of introduction to the performers on stage with the audience. And I think that was kind of one of the things I was really wanting to just ask all of you a little bit more about I suppose was that relationship with the audience and the ways in which you're inviting audiences to engage with bodies and the function that bodies have on stage, as it were.

And to kind of really, I don't know maybe have a very specific impact or cause an affect with an audience. I know like Dan you were talking about, we're not here to indoctrinate people absolutely, but we're inviting people to to think and respond and to feel perhaps. So it'd be great just to hear a little bit about how you think, or whether you agree with me, that all of you are using bodies in ways to interrupt the space in some way. Or to interrupt with an audience if that means anything to you?

**Jaz:** Yeah, I'd say. I've always sort of thought, we've got two actors and three dancers and it revolves around the kind of naturalistic journey of one woman. And I've always just thought the most political thing you could do in regards to women anyway is to ask an audience to watch a woman exist in her three-dimensionality for a long period of time and just... it's a

very gentle request I think, but obviously in terms of the representation of women - and by all accounts our woman is a white, cis female – but even in that group I've just haven't seen it. I haven't seen.

I feel like there's something, yeah, the kind of political request to an audience, of which may or may not be men, to watch a woman cook breakfast. I feel like there's something about saying we're human beings or something. It sounds really cheesy. But um, the every...

I loved what you said Dan about how we hold f\*\*\*\*\* and getting on the bus and I feel like for me that's the gesture at the heart of what I'm interested in and generally in my work interested in holding two truths that feel it irreconcilable but are happening, you know, within, could be happening within minutes of each other, you know, you f\*\*\*\*\* and you get the bus and that they're just such wildly different human experiences that just don't make sense to me. But also that's happening, that experience is universal to every single one of us. And yeah, I just yeah really enjoyed that.

**Eve:** Yeah something I just picked up on there was like the messiness of a human being and kind of like the clashing and contradicting stuff that happens that, you know, it's just, it's never like coherent and that's something that I'm quite interested in choreographically as well as conceptually, and how like within the world of Dykegeist as I see it as something that kind of transforms over time over the duration of the Performance Event.

So people walk into this world that's been built that is like very loud speed garage that Mica's made, this kind of banging track, and I'm kind of looping these choreographed sequences that link. They're a combination of kind of clubbing gestures mixed with Northern soul. In Northern South I think it's called a two-step, might have got that wrong, and it's very bright. So you sort walk into this. Something that kind of speaks to a club space in a way and audiences often dance and get quite sorted of hyped and they can be anywhere around the room.

And then there's almost the performance, the identity of the performance gets kind of flipped on its head with a very clashing section to that one. So I'm quite interested in how things can be put next to one another without them needing to be coherent or necessarily needing to make narrative sense. And so yeah, then there's a kind of interlude where Mica and myself kind of change we sort of unzip, very, very slowly unzip, parts of each other's clothes and the kind of transformation process and I become this kind of Predator creature that prowls around the room and with these very melodramatic kind of like sports sunglasses that indicate the idea of adopting a character, which to me is this kind of the character of the the 'Lesbian Predator', which has appendages that make me into a kind of sci-fi spider or something.

So I'm playing with the idea of becoming threatening, but obviously it's ridiculous and I'm wearing like a strap-on belt that has no dildo, and there's something very vulnerable about how I go from being this kind of quite protected persona in the club that's inviting the audience to objectify me in a certain way where I'm performing these looped choreographic sequences to suddenly being in the audience space very intimately and yeah, I mean, it's

magnified through wearing these contact mics and my shoes so I become this kind of Terminator with every step and then the interactions that happen with the audience are very, they're very, very carefully considered.

Because I think it's really sensitive if I'm gonna... I think it's a big responsibility if a choreographer is going to work with like audience participation. So I never want people to feel that they have to do, they have to, that they have a huge responsibility if they don't get on board, they're gonna like ruin the show or something like that.

And yeah, so I've put a lot of thought into how it can be possible to decline those invitations and the things will go on and that's part of it, it's part of why it feels like you're watching something very live being figured out. So those interactions are kind of initiated through with a whispering dialogue between myself and the audience so that people around that person won't hear what the request is or hear what the conversation is so they wouldn't know if I'm even asking them to do something or if I'm telling them an anecdote or something like that so that it can become more simple to decline an invitation.

I think it's very difficult if you don't want to become, you don't want to be part of the performance, usually you become the most visible person in the space. So I was trying to make, yeah sort of... Creating the conditions to safely being able to decline was really important to me. I've gone on a bit of a tangent there around consent but it's really important to me I guess, working ethically.

**Kate:** And it's important to how you experience the work as well. And yeah, like I think that's what was also getting out around sort of proximity I suppose, in terms of what you're inviting audience members to do and how you're invited people to work with your body in the space.

**Eve:** Yes. It's a clunky negotiation as well and like part way through, it's very simple things that I might be asking people to do, you know staying maybe in contact and crawling or moving or however getting from A to B, but I'm aware we're being we're being watched carrying this thing out. So I make it kind of really okay during those interactions. Like I'll lift up the glasses and check in. I'll make sure I'm seen checking it. You know, it's really important that like I say kind of, it's fine if you want to like sit down now, you know, how is it going?

I know it's a weird sort of thing, like making it very... Yeah, I think humour is an interesting part of those relationships in intimacy.

**Kate:** Absolutely. Yeah, I'm aware we're sort of running out of time, but Dan I wondered if there was anything about that as well that you want to respond to or anything you wanted to say in response to that?

**Dan:** Yeah. So consent and care is very much to the heart of our work as well. And we thought a lot about how we hold the audience but not too much, and setting this clear outline from the start. You're free to leave and we genuinely mean that, you are free to leave if it's too much. That's okay.

And we're kind of like, we're tightly gripping the audiences' hand at the start, but then over time we slowly let go. So then by the time we get to the final stages of the work, the audience to kind of, they've become voyeur without realising they've become voyeur because we've stopped checking in. Because we've made it clear that if it's gets too much for them they'll leave.

So it's kind of say playing with those two modes of the audience being very seen in the beginning by me and Chris. To then toward the end, not so much and where we're letting ourselves get lost and the audience is letting themselves get lost in us, and letting themselves desire us, and want us and then getting confused by that because why do they want to f\*\*\* somebody who can't do what his buttons? So that's weird.

And so a lot of, the kind of, yeah a lot of, shifting of goal posts kind of happened during the work, but the audience knows that that shifting is going to happen because we've said at the start that that's the way it's going to be. So that establishing of that contract is key with the work.

**Kate:** Yeah. And I actually can't wait for you all to be audience for each other's work as well in Edinburgh and to experience this because there's so much cross over. So yeah, and then I want us to sit down and have a beer together and talk about it again. Have the same conversation again.

Yeah, but thank you so much Jaz and Dan and Eve for your time and for joining us today and offering so many wonderful insights into your work and into your practice and I look forward to us all picking up the conversation again, once you've experienced each other's work.

**Jaz:** Yes. Thank you for having us.

**Kate:** Thank you.

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