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Respondents: Ben Oliver and Penelope Saward

**INT: Welcome to the Ramps on the Moon podcast. I'm Michele Taylor, director for change, and I work to elevate the place of disabled people in the mainstream cultural sector. In this second series of the podcast, I've chatted with some brilliant disabled actors as well as non-disabled allies from arts organisations who, with the support of Ramps on the Moon, are embedding anti ableism into the work they do. Each episode makes sense on its own, but do go back and listen to the earlier episodes if you haven't already. Join us as we change the world. Welcome to the Ramps on the Moon podcast. Today, I'm talking to Penelope Saward and Ben Oliver. Penelope is a producer at The Production Exchange and Ben is an actor's agent at The Production Exchange. And I'm going to start right there, because I want to know more about The Production Exchange and also both your roles in that company. So, Ben, could I come to you first? What is The Production Exchange?**

Ben: Sure. The Production Exchange is a charity which was established in 2013. We provided artists with pathways into the performing arts industry, with the hope of enabling them to forge careers that are sustainable and fulfilling. We accomplish that through two separate strands of our organisation. Firstly, we are an artist management company. So, we represent over 90 artists, actors, directors, writers, designers, musical directors and we secure them paid employment opportunities functioning just like any other talent agency. And then we're also a production company. So, we develop and produce theatre. And through that, we provide employment and skills development opportunities to a wide variety of creatives. Some who are represented by us, but some who are not represented by us.

**INT: That sounds like an awful lot. Because you’re not a big organisation, are you?**

Ben: No. It's us two and then our founder and artistic director, Colin Blumenau. So, there's three of us. But I suppose because our client base is so large, the imprint of the organisation can be can be large as well. Because, you know, every time that a client is working, the imprint of the organisation grows and develops. So, it is a lot. The workload is a lot. But yeah, it’s manageable.

**INT: Manageable. I like that word. And Ben, what’s your role then as an actor’s agent?**

Ben: Sure. So, I work within the artist management division of the organisation. So, I represent about 30 actors on that list. So, my job is solely with the actors. I work with them to in essence find them work. So, that can come through a variety of different formats. But yeah. So, sourcing them employment opportunities. When that employment has been sourced, then negotiating deals, negotiating contracts, ensuring that they're working in the best possible environment and they're getting paid fairly to do so.

**INT: So, you’re really important to these actors.**

Ben: Yeah. It is important. I think I have a really- Which I can come back to if you like. But I have a really solid justification for agents existing. Because I think sometimes, you know, that there’s this kind of stereotype of agents being these kind of like monsters that we see in kind of like Hollywood movies and stuff. But actually, they're a really vital part of our industry. And to me, they're a really vital part of an actor's life. Going back to our charitable aim, ensuring that their careers are sustainable and fulfilling. It’s not just about the work. It's also about everything that comes around that. What happens when an actors not working, which let’s face it, can be more not working than they are working. So, it’s important they're supported at all times, not just when they're in work.

**INT: Yeah. I’d love to come back to that in a bit actually. Thank you. But let’s come to you, Penelope. What’s your role at The Production Exchange?**

Penelope: I am producer with The Production Exchange. So, as Ben mentioned, the majority of my brief is about supporting the development and production of new work. For us at The Production Exchange, that's particularly thinking about socially conscious or socially engaged original works at the moment. And alongside that sort of being a production company and supporting every part of that process through development, through to general managing and production. It's also about an artist support, artist development offer. So, in keeping with our mission I suppose, if that isn't too loaded a word to throw in at this point. In terms of supporting creatives to both do good work, but having sustainable and fulfilling creative careers. A lot of what we try to do within our development practice is offer that sort of mentorship development. So, creatives at every stage of their career are supported in gaining the skills and networks and community to really follow their inspiration and their creativity in the pursuit of doing just inspiring, entertaining pieces of theatre.

**INT: Wow. I love the way both of you have opened with I know why I do my job, it’s really important in the sector. And I have to say that you're both on the Ramps first cohort, which is about to come to an end. And so, I met you about a year ago and I've been so impacted by your positivity around this issue, this work of disability equality and anti-ableism which can get quite heavy sometimes. But I love how upbeat you both are about it and I really want to ask you both about that. Is that simply who you are as people? Or is there something- What's the cause for optimism? Because I know that for example Ben, you have a number of actors that you manage who are deaf and I know that you both have a real commitment to disability equality and anti-ableism. So, talk to me about your causes for optimism. Penelope, let me come to you first.**

Penelope: What a lovely thing to say as well. Thank you Michele. I will take that on your behalf as well Ben. I think if I may just go back a tiny step, I actually started my career as a fundraiser before moving into becoming a producer and all that that also involves. And there is something that at a very simple level, it's been that this is a great big fortune to actually know what can happen when people come together and give whatever support they can in something they believe in. And again, not wishing to sound too trite or sort of cliched, but being open to sort of all offers and openness and that sort of collaboration in its sort of broader sense I think is something that is really quite remarkable and powerful. So, I suppose that's something that I have continued to sort of return to throughout my career, no matter which job title I might be wearing that day as it were. And I think there's also something- Again, it's a real privilege to spend time with creative people, be in the orbit of those who are willing to sort of reflect upon the world or offer a different perspective or a version of seeing things that may not yet have occurred to me or to us or something else. I find that really inspiring in that sort of so often in my career, that's been an offer that's been made with such generosity or very forcefully in a very sort of provocative way. And I think there's either a moment to gently sort of go with the ebb and flow of that or sit up and decide whether or not this is something that you want to be. Yeah. Or actually confront what you might believe about something. So, forgive me if that's a bit of a tangent. But I think as a context of where Ben and I was reflecting earlier, where we began this work and this sort of journey or this process being part of the cohort with Ramps. It was really wanting to do more of this work and actually recognising what is it to be open and available to support and collaborate with the true everyone. You know, artists that are coming from all different walks of life and lived experiences, if I can put it as sort of clumsily as that. And I think understanding even just having a tiny glimpse of what we don't know or perspectives we may not yet have understood, I think was potentially a sort of open starting point.

**INT: And I will come back to that with your starting point. So, thank you for bringing that into the conversation. A couple of things. I'm struck by your use of the words open and available. And as you say those words I realise yes, that's what it is. That's what you've brought amongst many, many other things. But that's what you've both brought into the cohort is openness and availability. And that’s of such value. And I want to ask you Penelope, does that connect with what you said earlier about socially engaged work?**

**[00:09:49]**

Penelope: Absolutely. Because I think there is a- I suppose to us, this is socially [unclear 00:09:54] if I may speak grandly on our behalf. But in terms of really prioritising or sort of focusing on socially engaged work, really thinking about what is it to be telling certain stories now and who is telling those stories and why and how. And I suppose that openness going- Understanding who we all are as potentially gatekeepers, or who we- All the lived experiences or everything that we bring as individuals, but also collectively and what we may or may not be seeing and how those stories move forward. So, I suppose in the spirit of sort of openness also as a company, as a team, I think we're also people that are curious about the world and interested. And again, if that doesn't sound too grandiose. But just really prepared to be sort of open to understanding what we might not yet have considered. And I think that in terms of there is so much going on in the world at the moment. But in terms of going actually, who does need to be heard in this moment? And if they're not yet part of that, part of how those stories are being told, how can we offer all that we are to help that? Did I answer the question?

**INT: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. Thank you Penelope. I love that. How can we bring all that we are? Yeah, lovely. Ben, what are your causes for optimism?**

Ben: Primarily, I think we are in generally at The Production Exchange quite optimistic people. I think that kind of trickles down from our leadership, from Colin, who's very playful and open to learning and new ideas. If I was speaking to people who I'm trying to convince to do this cohort now or in the future, or not even specifically this cohort but engage with this type of work, it’s that this has actually been really fun for us to do because it has been like- You know, we talk about this on a weekly basis. And to us, it feels like a little respite because we're turning away from our usual work and we're talking big, big picture. And that's really exciting because you can talk about hypothetical things that, you know, you might not be able to accomplish within that week or that day or that year. But actually, it's really exciting to talk about big plans and to imagine what you can accomplish. And also, on a granular detail for Penelope and I, like the opportunity to have a lot of day trips. We've been to Sheffield, to Ipswich, we're going to Southampton soon. Like for us, that's been such a- You know, we are a small organisation. We don't get to do stuff like that a lot. So, to get on a train and to have that experience has been really fun and optimistic for us. And then a second answer to the question for a cause for optimism is that you said that I represent a significant number of deaf and disabled actors. And for them, this work is- For them, they just want to work. And working, especially being an actor is really fun. That is such a cause for optimism, to be able to be provided with opportunities to act and to perform on screen and stage. And so, if the work that I'm doing is making it easier for them to find work, then to me that's really optimistic. Because if it's correlating to them working, then that's super exciting. And it's exciting for me as well because in general, I just love actors. So, to be working with them and to be working for them is very, very exciting.

**INT: Thank you. I'm just loving how all these kind of personal values as well as company values are emerging from the conversation. You’ve talked about openness, availability, curiosity, playfulness. I mean, just really- Not just- I suppose some people might hear those values and think they're a bit superficial maybe, a bit frilly. But actually, without those values, how can you get the deep work done?**

Ben: You can’t do it unless you’re interested in it. I think that’s because it is hard and it’s time consuming. So, unless you’re not invested in it and interested in it, then you can’t get from A to B.

Penelope: I think- May I also just add to that? I think there's something in us being a small organisation. You know, we are as a core- So there’s three, four. Occasionally you know, more join us depending on project work et cetera. But we are fundamentally I suppose at the smaller end of the scale in terms of peers on the cohort programme as well. [unclear 00:15:02]. So, there is something embedded within the way that we deliver our work, which is very much in the spirit of collaboration and working with others. We know that we are only ever- You know, our footprint and our sort of impact. There is potential absolutely in all sorts of ways. But it is something that is about working with others and sort of passing the baton on. So, we’re not trying to land grab or stake a claim on sort of this is how it’s done and we do it the best and it’s only this way. I suppose there’s also something so much in the ecology of our work and the fact that we were founded as a charity that really speaks to working alongside and in service of others.

**INT: Yeah, yeah. That’s really interesting. And actually, from a Ramps on the Moon point of view, I kind of relate to that notion of we’re not about building a kingdom. We're not about the land grab. We're about enabling others and facilitating others and maybe exposing some of what's going on as well in a way that hopefully is constructive and helpful. That's really- That's an interesting parallel, interesting similarity. Ben?**

Ben: Can I say as well that it was actually in Ipswich when we were speaking- Or rather we were having a Q&A with Becky Chapman from Diverse City and she was speaking about her work that she does. And that was a massive light switch moment for me personally, where suddenly it was like- You are right that for us our work is quite expansive and to pin it down can become difficult. But suddenly she was speaking about an artist that they'd worked with who they’d trained and developed and who had then gone on to secure a job at the national and a screen job. And it wasn't just- They weren't involved in those further opportunities, but she recognised that their impact was with that person. And to me, I was like that is what we do. We work with artists and we develop them and we train them and provide them with opportunities so that even if they go beyond the remit of our organisation, that our impact is still with them. And to me, that was just like- Yeah. Penlope can testament to that. Coming home on the train, I was like that is exactly what we do. It's working with individuals, with artists. And it doesn't matter whether what they do in future life has anything to do with us. We've had that part within their early career or within not even in their early career, but at some point within their career that then enables them to go on to do stuff in their future life.

Penelope: The flip side of that, that experience of working together with artists and on particular projects stays with us. Again, being the size that we are. So, it is a true sort of dialogue in that sense. You know, we are- Potentially one of the joys of that being the size or the scale that we are is that that sort of experience continues to reverberate and we do have the opportunity to be responsive in that way, I suppose. Because it's then about how we individually and collectively continue to go about delivering our work and whether or not we choose to take those experiences onwards with us.

**INT: Fascinating. It’s so, so interesting. That generosity. What I’d like to do is to pick up on something you said a bit earlier. Casting your minds back 12 months to when you were about to join the Ramps cohort. What were your hopes? What were your expectations of your time with the Ramps on the Moon cohort? And also, how would you have characterised where you were at TPE with regard disability equality and anti-ableism?**

Penelope: I think for us at TPE, all of us knew about Ramps and Ramps work. Each of us had slightly different relationships to that work. As in, you know, all artists are represented. Artists haven’t been involved in projects before in a way that’s different. But I suppose for us, there was something about really having an ambition and a sort of desire to go we really want to do this work and to do it better. So, there’s a real opportunity to go we only know what we don’t know in the sense that we don’t know it. We don’t quite know the sort of full scale of what that is yet.

**[00:19:54]**

So, having this opportunity really feels like a sort of way to fast track and almost to sort of hopefully signpost lots of different areas I suppose of information, knowledge, practice. And bring everything really up to date as well, I suppose. Because then you know, if a lot of our information and experience is coming potentially through our artists, that’s definitely one sort of avenue. But equally to sort of be able to take an organisational perspective or a sort of industry perspective. I think there’s lots of questions around that as a how do we begin to navigate this work? Because truthfully, it feels huge in some respects. And something that is- To risk sounding defeatist, there is a version of going will we ever get there in terms of the work? But again, maybe speaking to the optimism of the organisation and us as individuals, it’s a let’s at least try to start somewhere. So, this is a sort of starting point. And I think in the year- At least a year, maybe 18 months before joining the cohort. We as a team had actually been given the phenomenal opportunity to learn BSL. All of us, very proudly I can say have achieved level two BSL. And we did that with Wheeled BSL, a wonderful teacher called Joanne Thompson. Forever grateful to her generosity in terms of- But we also did that as a team. And I think as well as getting that qualification, I think doing that work collectively, each of us has recognised what an impact that had in us. Not just in terms of a sort of professional development, but also just a sort of introductory understanding of a shift of perspective and an understanding of what that could give. So, applying and being accepted to be part of the cohort programme came from the desire for us as a team wanting to continue in that spirit. Be guided by those that are doing this work and have been doing this work and doing the work brilliantly. So, I think those are the sort of key elements I suppose in terms of our- About a year ago in terms of everything we’re thinking about. I think in terms of expectations, there is a lot. And I think is this going to be- Is it going to be a training programme where everything is sort of hypothetical and is sort of you’re given briefings on things that you should learn or processes. And was it going to be very information heavy and a bit of a sort of steep learning curve in that way. I think Ben and I were sort of prepared to do the work, but equally going was this going to be really dry and sort of factual and sort of information based. So, I think there was a little bit of- Forgive me. A little bit of sort of trepidation to go what will the actual reality of experiencing this work feel like.

**INT: Okay. We’ll come back to whether it was or not in a minute. And also, just to clarify, BSL, British Sign Language. Yeah, great. Thank you. Ben, anything different or anything to add to that for you?**

Ben: From an agency point of view, because we were working already with lots of deaf and disabled artists. That work we were doing, it involved lots of learning. I think the first client we signed, Emily Rose Salter, we signed about six years ago. So, from there there's been a steep learning curve in like how we work with deaf and disabled artists in regards to audition processes, self-tapes, access to work, managing that system. And so, we were already coming in with like- I suppose from that point of view, we were coming in with a knowledge of that side of the industry. But it all felt I suppose quite surface level is fair to say. The opportunity to learn British Sign Language felt like it was chipping away a bit because it enabled us to start having conversations with our clients. And I'll always remember that agents love to say the best part of their job is ringing up a client and telling them they've booked a job. And I must admit, it's a really fun part of the job because sometimes you get to make life changing phone calls. But with a deaf client who can't speak English, you can't do that. It has to be done over email. And so, you don't get that satisfaction and nor do they. However, when we qualified in BSL level two, I was able to send a BSL video to- I wasn't quite confident enough to FaceTime. But I sent a BSL video to a client, Kieran O'Brien, who booked Wonderboy, the Sally Cookson production that started out at Bristol Old Vic. And then immediately got like a response of him on video. And so that was just like- That immediately felt kind of genuine and authentic and really exciting for me and made my job more exciting and also more satisfying for him. So, the BSL felt like our accomplishment to work with disabled people better was becoming more authentic and becoming more genuine. But we wanted it to become more embedded within everything we do, so that every decision we made was made within the parameters of the learning. And so yeah, Ramps was just- The cohort was just an excellent opportunity to do that, I suppose. And also, to work with- It's really exciting to work with the prospect of working with other organisations. I think that's really important to say, is that as much as we were really excited to work with Ramps, the opportunity to work alongside so many other arts organisations within The UK was so exciting, especially for us. There's like a company of three to meet that alongside the RSC and the Royal Ballet and Opera and, you know, so many other amazing organisations. And to share that learning was- Yeah, that was really exciting. I remember- Similarly to Penelope, I remember the first in person session when we went to Sheffield. Very excited, slightly nervous. But also, just completely mind- My mind was completely blown by the- I remember standing over that like piece of chart paper, which we've still got in the office pinned up on the wall. And it was like just like the scope of the work. It was like- I didn’t think I realised at that point how massive the impact could be and how just transformative and just like getting my head around that. It felt like a whole new world.

**INT: In a good or in a really scary way?**

Ben: Both. It’s been genuinely a really good way. And you know, we can’t- Those kind of big picture ideas that we wrote down and continue to think about. We’re not going to delude ourselves. They're not things that necessarily we can accomplish ourselves within the next year or whatever. But I think having that kind of- Having that aspiration and having that north star, which is a term we used a lot, is really beneficial. I always remember- This is me side-tracking to being in GCSE drama and learning about- Do you remember [unclear 00:27:27]. And I remember my drama teacher hammering down to me that like you could never do what [unclear 00:27:35] actually wanted because it was crazy. But in an attempt to try and get there, you could achieve something that was in line with his beliefs and his practices. And I always think that with the work that we’re doing here. It’s like as an organisation of three, or even an organisation as big as the other ones that we’re working with, the north star is not necessarily something that can be accomplished immediately. I'm not saying that it can never be accomplished. But that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t have it as your north star and continue to try and achieve it because every little step along the way helps and accomplishes something.

**INT: I think that’s so right. And for myself, I think that isn’t a cause of defeatism. It really is an impetus and a cause for optimism, because as we get closer then we’re achieving lots of little things that perhaps we didn’t realise needed to happen. I find that not demotivating, but highly motivating myself. Yeah. North star, I love that.**

Penelope: I think that also speaks to some of our motivations as well for joining the programme was recognising what work was already happening in terms of the agency activity or the artist management side of the organisation and actually having a real ambition to go how can we replicate that or echo that on the production side and the production company. And again, noting our scale or the fact that we work in collaboration or as a sort of coproducing model to go rather than feeling disempowered or waiting to respond to opportunities, what are the opportunities we can create for ourselves? So really thinking about the work that we do in terms of artist development or professional development for artists at all stages of their careers. Going, “Well, if this is something we need to learn as an organisation, what if we make the offers to creatives as well to come on this sort of journey with us?” Actually, sort of looping back to part of the conversation that Ben mentioned earlier on about how commutative- Plant a seed and yet someone else will be the one that sort of waters the plant. But you know, how can we be involved and create those opportunities really early on?

**[00:29:58]**

And that particular production side to sort of make sure that- So much in the way that we do our work is we’re very much one organisation. There is a real ebb and flow to dialogue between the artist management and production company. So, how do we actually really root this work, anti ableism as a sort of going concern that’s held by all of us?

**INT: And do you have examples of specific things that you’ve done in the last 12 months to take that forward?**

Penelope: Yeah, absolutely. So, I think something that we were also very happy, very grateful in terms of having the opportunity to apply and achieve some funding through Ramps that then helped us with our further fundraising as well. We were really looking at how we can pilot and develop a creative practice organisation. I guess sort of a development model for early-stage production activity. So how do we look at our R&D model and keep holding the one hand of the artist development priority, but equally look at different sorts of practices. Sort of access [unclear 00:31:12] or what does that mean? And rather than it being always reliant on a particular project, actually how can we create an environment where part of that spirit of R&D, that sort of exploration is also infused with a training, knowledge sharing and awareness of different sort of practices. So actually, we are in- It's very much on my mind because we're in a planning phase at the moment for a next sort of intensive development week happening towards the end of May, during which time we have four different pieces at different stages of development that we are looking to do a little bit of R&D work on. But alongside that, we are having workshops looking at different sort of practices. So, the wonderful Ben Wilson, who we also need to give a lot of credit to making the introduction to you, is a phenomenal and incredible- We found the conversation really inspiring as someone that is a blind actor, theatre maker, audio description consultant. We found not only that conversation just that we had as part of the cohort programme just really- Yeah, really inspiring. But subsequently, Ben's been very generous and supportive in having conversations to say how can we make this work? How can we come up with a shape that is sort of both in itself as an introduction to for a cohort of creatives that are they themselves at different stages of their careers, might have different disciplines. So, we're involving writers, directors, actors, intimacy coordinators, everyone to say this is not only an introduction to this as a practice, but it's also let's look at how we could apply that to a work that is currently in development. How can that be both potentially a route and methodology for reaching different audiences or wide-ranging audiences, but equally what can it add to the creativity and the sort of originality of the piece and the storytelling? So that sort of model, that framework of having that sort of learning, a very sort of distilled moment of learning alongside potentially a more traditional sort of R&D model is absolutely something that we are now embedding in our production practice and we are hoping the fundraising continues. But we are hoping that that’s going to be a sort of rolling programme for everyone as part of our production activity.

**INT: That’s great to hear. That’s really exciting. Really, really exciting. And Ben, to what extent if at all have your expectations of the cohort been met? Good or bad?**

Ben: I'm trying to put my head back into 12 months ago, which is easier said than done. I was going in not aware, to be honest with you, as to what quite to expect. Just a genuine part excitement, part trepidation about what to expect. But genuinely, it’s been a really enjoyable experience because the people- Yourself, Michele, and Laura and Miranda leading the cohorts. Really lovely to get to know you and to work with you. So, that’s been a really lovely experience and everyone else on the cohort as well. I had a really lovely- Sorry, I'm going on so many tangents. I had a really lovely experience with Anna Niland from the National Youth Theatre. I was a member of the National Youth Theatre when I was 15 years old and Anna came into my course when I was 15 and delivered a talk. And there I was, we got sent into a Zoom room, just the two of us talking about our work. And now as colleagues, as contemporaries. And that was really special, just- Yeah. And she loved it as well because you know, to talk about the impact that National Youth Theatre had on me as an artist and as someone now working within the industry. So yeah, to have those moments of like- Just to work with people who are really at the top of their game in a wide variety of sectors within the industry has been really exciting. The learning has been- I think the most exciting thing for me which I always look forward to at each session is the opportunity to hear from artists and hear from disabled practitioners or non-disabled practitioners. You know, Penelope mentioned Ben Wilson, that connection that we had. Amy Leach, who I adore, and that was amazing. So, to have those opportunities of like just- I suppose it’s like anecdotal learning. Because it’s very easy to become overwhelmed by the big picture. But to have people like Amy and Ben to tell kind of anecdotes and to tell little stories about how they’ve embedded their work is really helpful to kind of ground it and to- And then it helps Penelope and I because we can then go back to the office and we repeat those anecdotes. And they're the things that land. They're the things that really translate. It’s harder to translate the big picture stuff and the kind of philosophies and the- But to tell, you know, this person did this and that achieved that, I think that’s been really exciting.

**INT: It all comes back to stories, doesn’t it? All comes back to stories. And that’s why this work is so exciting within the performing arts, because we tell stories. And coming back to what you said earlier Penelope about whose stories are being told and who’s getting to tell them is kind of the whole point, isn’t it? So, Penelope, what about you and expectations? Has it been a dry training programme?**

Penelope: No, not at all. I think there’s been- She says quickly. No, not at all. I think there’s been- Like Ben, I think being able to do potentially the heavy lifting of that work and the sort of brain flexing of a lot of information. But equally, then in each session being given the time both to work together as an organisation, which I think also is something that I wasn’t expecting. I thought it might be one of those programmes when you’re made to work with other people. You know, different partners. And actually, that’s something that in terms of return on investment and all those sorts of things that we’ve also offered back to the rest of the team, but also to trustees and everyone. So, I’d say there’s a very practical- Immediately in every session, there is practical application for us as a team to discuss and do the work and to think about how we take next steps as an organisation. So, it’s not- The work of the cohort is absolutely what we make of it individually. You know, as an organisation. But we are also being given that capacity within the sessions of being supported to do that work, which I think is quite different to a lot of other sort of training programmes or sort of programmes like this when somehow that is expected to happen subsequently. And actually, finding the time twice to do the work is often an excuse for it not to get done or for it to sort of fall by the wayside. So, I think that in terms of meeting my expectations, I was- In a way it was really- Yeah. I really have valued and respected the opportunity for you all to sort of say, “Well, go on then. Do the work. You’re here. You signed up to do it. Do it. On you go.” And also, just to echo Ben, I think being part of a cohort that there’s lots of different organisations and lots of different scales of organisations working all across the country as well. So, it has been really fruitful in terms of understanding the bigger picture of those nuances, but also where the commonalities are or where the touchpoints are. So, what are the things we can do together or help each other through? Even if it’s understanding where everyone’s coming from in terms of language that they use to talk about this work or if a venue is more of a receiving house than a producing house or what is it as a touring company.

**[00:40:04]**

Just constantly having a discussion that is in and of itself already reflected through lots of different perspectives has been more encouraging in terms of going there are lots of possible ways forward to navigate this work. And I think that’s something that I found really inspiring alongside everything else. In the ether of all of the sessions, there’s been a real sort of willingness to try to find a way forward.

**INT: Thank you. Time is not our friend. So, one last question for each of you. If there’s somebody listening to this working within an organisation that wants to further get closer to that north star of anti-ableism, what one piece of advice would you give them? Ben?**

Ben: I would say engage and thus employ disabled artists and practitioners and listen to their stories and engage with their stories and their experience, because that is the most fruitful and the most vital way to further engage that work. Because you have an impetus then, and that creates excitement. That creates the drive to move forward. So, engage with disabled artists who are at the top of their game, who are really good at what they do and pay them and work with them.

**INT: Thank you. Great advice. Penelope?**

Penelope: How to follow that? I think try, do something. I think that also speaks to the cohort principles that have been established at the very beginning and continued to be sort of held throughout the programme. But I think a spirit of willingness to try, and this isn’t about having all the answers or a fear of not getting everything right. To just try.

**INT: Brilliant, thank you. Two really useful calls to action to finish the conversation. Thank you so much, Ben. Thank you so much, Penelope. I really appreciate your time. It’s been a fascinating conversation and loads more that we could talk about for the rest of the day, I'm sure. But yeah, thank you very much for sharing your experiences and your wisdom with us. Thank you. Thanks for listening to this episode of the Ramps on the Moon podcast. Don’t forget to subscribe and to let us know what you think. Thanks to Podtalk, our podcast production company. Technical production and editing by Mark Mason. Executive production by Zanna Hornby.**

**[Audio ends: 00:42:47]**

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| **Key** | |
| [unclear] – unclear audio  [s/l] – sounds like  [ph] – phonetic | [overtalking] – to an extent no conversation can clearly be heard  [audio distorted] – connection issues/other noises which results in no conversation being clearly heard |