

Insights: Traces Through Time
Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House
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1:44 Dr Cathy Sloan: Good afternoon and welcome to the Linbury Theatre at the Royal Opera House and to this Insights: Traces Through Time. My name is Doctor Cathy Sloan and joining me today for this Insight will be Fallen Angels Dance Theatre and New Note Orchestra. Both companies performed last night here in the Linbury Theatre to a sell-out performance of their production Traces Through Time. Today we have the opportunity to hear from both companies, where they started and what makes their performances so special. About both: Fallen Angels Dance Theatre are pioneers in delivering exceptional dance theatre experiences for people in recovery from addiction and those living with mental health conditions, where they are accepted, valued and reach their potential. New Note Orchestra is the first recovery orchestra in the world. They are committed to producing their own quality music through weekly improvised sessions led by Music Director, Conall Gleeson. Both multi-award-winning companies are unique in providing a safe space for those recovering from addiction, whilst harnessing the transformative power of the arts to aid recovery through community, connection and creativity. To lead us through the first section of this Insight, please welcome Ruby Wolk, Senior Ballet Manager for Learning and Participation here at the Royal Opera House; Paul Bayes Kitcher, Artistic Director of Fallen Angels Dance Theatre; and Conall Gleeson, Music Director of New Note Orchestra.
[applause]

3:25 Ruby Wolk: Thank you very much, Cathy. Hello everyone, and welcome Paul and Conall back to the stage. Thank you so much for being with us again. I know you were performing here last night, your production of Traces Through Time. So really grateful that you're back here to talk to us a bit about the processes and practices of your companies. Paul, can I start with you? Tell us a bit about how Fallen Angels Dance Theatre came into being.

3:48 Paul Bayes Kitcher: Sure, yes. My name's Paul and I'm the Artistic Director at Fallen Angels Dance Theatre. I'll just tell you a little bit about my journey. I started dancing at the age of four. I went to the Royal Ballet School for five years. Then I was at Central and Rambert, and my first professional job was with Scottish Ballet where I danced for four years and then Birmingham Royal Ballet where I danced for eight years. And then I ended up in treatment, rehab. I'm also in long-term recovery. And when I first started getting into recovery we started to explore my own personal journey through dance theatre. And I remember we did a performance at the Lowry. I was dancing in it at the time and there was a lady in the audience that came to see it and she worked in a rehab, and she said, "Would you like to come and teach in the rehab?" And I was like, "Wow, this would be amazing, I'd love to." But I was thinking, "What am I going to teach them?" Because obviously I can't be teaching them ballet. So we started to look at cross-art forms, because I wanted to take these people on a really positive journey. And in the treatment centre you get somebody that's just come out of prison, you get a 70-year-old alcoholic, you get a girl that's just come off the street. So very kind of diverse people. So we looked at paintings, we looked at creative writing and anything creative that they could draw off their own experience. And then the guys wanted to perform, so they performed. And I remember one of the performances at the Lowry and one of the guys - he's here tonight actually, he's been with us 12 years, he's now a trustee on our board - he'd just come into the rehab and the first time he performed there was a lady in the audience and she just came up to him in the interval and threw her arms around him and just burst into tears. And I was like, "Wow, I've never seen anything so powerful like that." But one of the stories I always tell is, we got some more funding from the Arts Council, and I was working on a duet. I remember planning it, and I was going into the workshop with these professional dancers, and it was

like swimming against the tide. There was no flow. I remember going home to my wife and saying, "There's something not right." And I remember teaching the same rehab the next day and there was a guy just got out of prison for armed robbery, 17 years, heroin addict, in and out of prison, skinhead, quite a volatile character. And he showed me this painting on his phone, and it was one of the most beautiful things I've seen. And you know when you see a piece of art and it really speaks to you, it took my breath away. And I was like, "Wow, who did that?" And he was like, "Oh, I painted that in prison." And I was like, "Would you mind if we start working from it?" Because it showed there was pain and chaos, but there was a pinprick of light, the way he was looking up, it was like Christ being ripped apart. It was really powerful. So we started to work from that in the group and it was an amazing session. Then I said, "Do you mind if I take this inspiration and start working with some professional dancers?" And then it was like swimming with the tide. We created this duet called Sacrifice and then a week later I took it back to the guy that had never been in a theatre before, never mind connecting with contemporary dance or any kind of dance. And I remember he looked at the screen and just broke down in tears. And I was just like, "Wow, that was really powerful." And I thought, if he can connect with something then-- that was like the birth of something for me. I always tell that story, because it's really quite poignant.

7:12 Ruby: Can you tell us a little bit more about the creation process of Fallen Angels? How do you make the work?

7:19 Paul: I believe addiction is a physical and mental illness and we do a lot of work on the mind like therapy and recovery meetings, which is fantastic, but not necessarily on the physical. So we've devised a way of working over the years that we've been working, that is how we get into the body and out of the mind. So we do certain breathing techniques about letting go of yourself and letting go of fear. Because being a person in recovery, we use on fear because we feel disconnected. So what breathwork does, it kind of gets us into that moment so we're not projecting into the past or the future. And then we feel very kind of centred and then they start to move, and you can literally see the residue of trauma kind of being released in the space. So it's dance but it's a movement meditation. And we do this stuff in prisons as well, and it's really powerful when you see somebody move from within, from the soul, there's a certain power in vulnerability. We always nurture vulnerabilities as strength and there's a real connection. Yeah, it's pretty amazing when you witness it at first-hand.

8:32 Ruby: Thank you so much, Paul. And Conall, can you tell us a little bit about New Note Orchestra? How many are there of you? Where are you based? What's your process of working?

8:41 Conall Gleeson: Yeah, for sure. The New Note Orchestra is based in Brighton, and it consists of between 15 to 20 performers, and we meet on a regular basis, mostly on Tuesday evenings. It was established in 2015 by Molly Mathieson and I went to an early performance at the end of 2015 and was blown away by the powerful connection that the orchestra had with its audiences and its ethos of recovery and wellbeing, and how it was attaching the notion of wellbeing and recovery to the making of music. So I approached her with a project proposal between my institution where I work over at the University of Brighton, and we established a project together. And that was so successful that I couldn't leave New Note, so I've been with them ever since. And since then we've been developing different kinds of projects. We've worked with choirs; we've worked with film. So we're continually developing our practice and the opportunity arose recently to work with Fallen Angels and that's been one of the most amazing and rewarding experiences we've had.

9:59 Ruby: Fantastic, thank you. And I believe you're now going to demonstrate for us a little bit of the way that you create work and have worked together. So can I welcome back

to the stage the dancers of Fallen Angels Dance Theatre and the musicians of New Note Orchestra. [applause]

10:23 [music and dance] [applause]

15:16 Ruby: Thank you very much dancers. That was wonderful to see a glimpse of that improvisatory process that happens at the start of that creative process. Conall, I'm now going to hand over to you to tell us a bit about New Note's working practices.

15:30 Conall: Thank you. As I mentioned at the very beginning, New Note meet on a weekly basis. It's an inclusive orchestra, so typically we invite in people who have some music experience, some advanced music experience and then others have absolutely no music experience. So we work in a way that all those persons can come and participate in music-making. And one of the first things that we always do is prepare people for a listening experience that precedes the actual making of sound on an instrument. So we often begin with a meditation which is calming people, calming the breath and developing a practice that begins by breathing exercises that extend into listening into your environment around you. It's very important, as a musician, that you develop the skill to listen to the sounds that are around you, because ultimately, as a musician, you're not just making sounds but you're responding to the sounds that you hear about you. So once we've developed our little meditation, we often move into an improvisation. And this is the point where we ask people to swap instruments, do something new, play an instrument they haven't worked on before. Or also just to explore the instrument that they're playing to find new sounds, find new colours, new timbres with their instruments. This is a very open way of working and developing creativity. And at that point we're looking for people to just create small little melodies that we might combine, or rhythmic figures that we might join together. And one of the melodic ideas that came out of such a workshop is a melodic idea that we've incorporated into the piece you've just heard, and it's just made of three notes. And it's important when we're working with New Note that we're working with small melodic ideas, three- or four-note little patterns that are very memorable and that therefore you don't need a music notation skill in order to play. I'm just going to invite Roger on guitar to give you a demonstration of the kind of three-note melodic figure that we utilise quite frequently in our music.

18:00 [music]

18:19 Conall: And it's very important that when people come up with little figures like that, they have the opportunity to play it alone so that others are listening. And that's a key part of playing in a band, or any musical orchestra at all, is this ability to listen. But also, at the same time, someone else might have developed a four-note rhythmic idea or melodic idea. And in this piece that we just heard, we do in fact have a four-note melodic idea, and I'm going to ask Alex to play that.

18:56 [music]

19:17 Conall: And one way that we build the pieces is we start combining these melodic ideas together so that they're heard simultaneously. And I'm going to ask James to play those two figures, a three-note figure and a four-note figure, play them at the same time.

19:37 [music]

19:59 Conall: And you can see that two very simple melodic ideas combining together creates something more than the sum of the parts, creates something very rich and intriguing and it draws the listener closer to you as a performer. But in fact, that's not what's

happening in this piece of music. We take it a step further in the piece of music that we performed so that we have a three-note and a four-note, but rather than heard simultaneously, we interlock the four-note pattern and weave it through the three-note pattern. And that sounds a little bit like this.

20:39 [music]

21:03 Conall: And it's a very powerful moment when people who have developed little motifs are encouraged to join them together and something new, an emergent property emerges, and that's a very rich and rewarding experience as a musician. And for someone who's new to music to suddenly feel, "Wow, I'm making music, I'm a musician here," this is a really powerful moment in a person's wellbeing. And also, for us it's a powerful moment in their recovery as they begin to shift in identity from being someone who's an addict to being someone who's a musician. And that's a very powerful narrative that we drive through in all our practices in New Note Orchestra. We do the exact same kind of model of working with rhythmic patterns, so we're exploring different rhythmic patterns. And again, over the years we've developed a kind of a core or a signature rhythmic motif that we use again and again in various different transformations. But in its essence, it's a long note followed by a short note, followed by a long note, and it goes a little bit like this.

22:10 [rhythmic clapping]

22:14 Conall: So long, short, long, long, short, long. And we've developed a piece of music that builds on that rhythm. So I'm just going to ask you to play the beginning of the Big Social.

22:39 [music]

23:29 Conall: And as you can see there, we're working with this rhythm like that [claps]. And at the end of it we added in two extra notes [claps]. And actually, we configure and reshape that rhythmic figure by extending or expanding that idea. And in fact, we have one particular extension that we use also quite a lot. Matt, could you play the Evergold music figure?

23:59 [music]

24:06 Conall: So we're going to play a final piece here where we combine all the elements that we've heard so far, so the three-note melody, the four-note melody, combined with this rhythmic figure that we use. And also, just for your ears to pick up on, we're also combining different keys, so we're not playing in one key, but we're playing in two different keys. So the point is that through very simple means we create complexity in our sounds which make the sounds rich and rewarding. And also it's a challenge to get these right within a rehearsal period, and that working toward a project is something that helps stimulate the development of a project.

25:00 [music] [applause]

28:34 Ruby: Thank you so much Conall and the musicians of New Note Orchestra. That was such an interesting insight into the process. So back with me now is Paul and two of the members of Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, Jo Freeman and Tom Denbigh. We're going to share parts of your recovery journey with us today. Thank you so much for being here with us and sharing this. So can I start with you, Paul, and ask how do you map the recovery journey through Traces Through Time?

29:04 Paul: Well, it starts in isolation, because with mental health and addiction it kind of wants you on your own, and then eventually it will kill you. But in recovery, just because you come into recovery, things don't just light up straight away. And it's through challenging times in recovery that we actually grow. So in the piece you can kind of feel that it's not a kind of plain sailing thing. And some of the structures that we use - the reason why I wanted to work with New Note - was there's a piece in it called Astral's Journey, which you're going to see in a minute, and some of the layers in that really kind of speak to you physically. And the whole thing about the recovery journey is it's a spiritual journey. And Tom really inspired me one day in lockdown. He wanted to learn some ballet. And I was like, "I'm going to try and put it in recovery language." So we looked at the structures of ballet, the pathways. For instance, the position écarté means to pull apart, and what does it mean when we're kind of pulled apart in mental health and recovery? And if I say open, and a lot of stuff that you saw in the improvisation there is how does it feel when you kind of open your heart and kind of let go of fear. So there's a lot of healing that takes place through the whole journey.

30:33 Ruby: That's beautiful, thank you. And Tom, can I come to you now and ask a little bit about your own recovery journey and how being part of Fallen Angels has impacted on that?

30:42 Tom Denbigh: In 2019 I had a bit of a breakdown, or breakthrough, and it took me back to my early recovery days where I felt useless and helpless and felt that the family would be better off without me and that sort of thing. And after a lot of reflection, I realised that I'd lost myself and I needed to do something for me. I was a member of the Tate Liverpool, and I hadn't been for a long time, and I decided to go and have a look at some art and see what was on. And when I went on the website Fallen Angels Dance Theatre were there for a week. So I went along for about three days I think it was. I got involved in the warm-up and spoke to Paul, Claire and other dancers and decided that I'd like to join. I asked Paul if I could, and I went along to my first session in the Bluecoat in Liverpool. And I cried all the way through, virtually. I'm not sure whether it was the music, the movement or the atmosphere. I don't know what it was, but I knew that something had been released in me that other things hadn't, as they say. And I've been going every Thursday since that first event and I call it my Self-Care Thursday. I do something for me. I enjoy the dance, I enjoy the music and it helps me in my recovery. I have to look after myself mentally, physically and spiritually. So mentally, as Paul has already said, when we're performing and dancing, we're out of our heads and into our bodies. And if I'm into my body doing some exercise then I'm looking after myself physically. And spiritually, as a group we help each other. We've all got to live life on life's terms, and it gets tough at times, so we can help each other. And that's what I get from Fallen Angels Dance Theatre. Thank you, Paul. [applause]

33:05 Ruby: Wonderful. Thank you very much for sharing. Jo, could you tell us a bit about Traces Through Time, in particular. How did that connect with you?

33:19 Jo Freeman: So I've been a professional dancer for about eight or nine years now and I've never experienced the amount of raw, authentic expression that I connect to within the group and that they have shown me. I've been so blessed to be a part of this process. And Traces Through Time, as Paul said, really is a journey of that recovery. And I think it is relatable, not just to those who suffer from addiction but also those who suffer from mental health or have had grievances or other difficulties to battle with. There's a constant up and down wave that you ride, and I think Traces Through Time really embraces and embodies that. It's been a really kind process for myself to be able to feel validated, to be able to feel like my story can be heard, and that it helps others in the audience. When we've had feedback it's been really powerful and really shown that it doesn't matter where you are on your journey of life or of recovery, if that's what it is, self-expression can be really powerful and can really help people feel like they are worthy and that they have a place and a purpose. And that's definitely what this whole project has brought to me, and I've heard from

so many others as well and the orchestra. It's been absolutely amazing to work with such genuine individuals who love what they do as well. So it's been an amazing process. Thank you, Paul. [applause]

34:51 Ruby: And just more question for all of you. You mentioned earlier vulnerability, and Tom, you talked about the sense of support for each other and that authenticity in the space. I wondered if any of you could tell us a little bit more about what that sense of support and vulnerability brings to the performance for you.

35:17 Tom: I know that before we start a session we have what we call a 'check-in', and we talk about what's happening in our day. And there'll be people in the group that are having a bit of a tough time. And there's a lot of hugs. When we're dancing together, we end up in a duet, maybe, and that comes out of the dance. There's an energy in the room that is generated by everybody wanting to help each other and the love that is in that little family of people. So that spiritual side and support is what I really enjoy, and I like to be able to put into that. And when I need it, it's there for me as well.

36:12 Ruby: Amazing. Thank you. And Paul, how do you balance the challenge of creating a performance like this, to be performed at the Royal Opera House and around the country, with continuing the healing process. How is that process and the product balanced?

36:31 Paul: I think the most beautiful thing is what happens in the rehearsal space when you see people going through – like Tom talks about - breakthroughs, because it has been challenging, working to counts and learning material, especially if they're not used to it. So there's something really holistic that happens when people start connecting from within, from the soul. And with the movement meditation that you saw earlier, the improvisation, a lot of that is kind of threaded through as well. And I will say it's been beyond my wildest dreams, being here at the Royal Opera House and performing. It's been a 12-year-old dream to come back here and see these guys perform last night, and with New Note Orchestra, it's just been absolutely incredible. One of the best days of my recovery. And it's just really powerful when you feel a community coming together. The most important thing for me is the grassroots and the connection, what Tom talked about when we're together, because we all understand each other and I believe that dance doesn't have a language barrier, the sensitivity of it. And when we start connecting with movement, there's something that happens, like that kind of ripple effect. And it's 'we', not 'me', and the first thing of recovery is 'we - we can do it'. I know in my own recovery, I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for people like Tom and my recovery family. So I'm forever grateful. The team marries together, if that makes sense.

38:06 Ruby: Thank you for sharing parts of your stories and for your generosity and being with us today [applause]. I'd like to now welcome back to this stage Conall and two of the musicians from New Note Orchestra, Alex Mazonowicz and Adele Vida. Please join me on stage now. Thank you for being here with us. And we're going to hear a little bit now about how being part of New Note Orchestra and making music has impacted on your own recovery journeys. We've heard a little bit about the impact of the dancers and the power of creativity and performance to aid recovery. So, Conall, could you tell us a bit about what this means for New Note Orchestra?

39:00 Conall: This project, Traces Through Time, has been transformative for New Note, for a number of reasons, but partly because of the sheer ambition and the scale of it. And right from the outset, myself and Molly, the founder of New Note Orchestra, we said that we wanted to put quality of performance and artistic integrity at the foreground of what we do. And it sits alongside our ethos and our mission around supporting people in recovery. And we wanted to point out that often for people who are in recovery, either they have a low expectation of themselves or society projects onto them low expectations. But the

opportunity to engage in a project which is so ambitious, which has such high aspirations for every single person involved in the team, is key and part of our agenda to destigmatize addiction and to celebrate the power of recovery.

40:07 Ruby: Thank you very much. Really powerful. Alex, could I come to you next? Tell me a little bit about how being involved in music has helped your recovery.

40:18 Alex Mazonowicz: So when I drank, I drank because I was lonely. I didn't know how to process my emotions and I wanted something bigger than myself. I felt so isolated. I felt so apart from everything. When I put down a drink, those feelings were still there. But when I'm doing a project like New Note, I'm part of the community and working with people, people that I love and people that are of the same mind as me. It's bigger than me. Art is bigger than me, and art is a thing that I want to create. And art transcends all those problems that I had and helped me to process my emotions and it helped me engage with the world.

41:03 Ruby: Amazing. Thank you. And Adele, just building on that idea about community and support, could you tell us a little bit about what that means to you and New Note?

41:13 Adele Vida: Yeah, absolutely. One of the biggest problems for an addict of my type is that feeling of disconnection, the idea that everyone in the world knows something about life that I don't know and that I'm left out and, like Alex said, I have to use or drink to press those feelings down. But with a firm basis in recovery, because I'm in two 12 Step programmes, I've got a solid enough recovery to then reach out further. And being in this community, among people who know and understand what that's about, I can be encouraged to go further and express myself better and more authentically, playfully, we're playing around with music. I thought other people were musicians and I was just the listener, but now I'm a musician, it seems. And I can take part in all these things, and I can use it to express things that probably I couldn't express any other way. So it's a huge new adventure in my life but it's also firmly rooted in recovery, because the people here who give me the opportunity to express myself in that way, understand where I'm coming from. I couldn't join a community group where everyone went to the pub. Well, I could join a community group where everyone went to the pub afterwards, of course, but that wouldn't be healthy for me. This is healthy, it's uplifting, it's joyful, it's rewarding. I wasn't going to get to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden any other way, was I? [laughter]

42:55 Ruby: Wonderful. Thank you so much, Adele. And thank you all of you for sharing. So to conclude these conversations we're now in for a real treat. Please welcome back to the stage both companies, Fallen Angels Dance Theatre and New Note Orchestra, to perform Astral's Journey from their production of Traces Through Time. [applause]

42:53 [music and dance]

41:50 [BREAK]

52:50 Cathy: Now we're going to talk to both companies about the process of creating a production alongside journeys of recovery. Next to talk about addiction and recovery through creativity, joining me is Kevin O'Hare, Director of the Royal Ballet, Claire Morris and Paul Bayes Kitcher, founders and directors of Fallen Angels Dance Theatre, Molly Mathieson, founder of New Note Orchestra, and Conall Gleason, Music Director of New Note Orchestra. So please join me in welcoming them here to the stage. [applause]. So having listened to the incredible stories that have been shared so far, and we've witnessed and experienced the performances from these two companies, we're now able to consider some of the themes and questions raised in the wider context of the arts and to consider the power of creativity to support recovery, homelessness and mental health issues. So to start

with, I'm going to ask Claire and Molly, you've helped to found these organisations, so what I'd like to hear about is, what is it that helps push you forward? What is it that motivates you to keep going and developing the work of these organisations?

54:10 Claire Morris: So I'll start. I'm really going to lead on from what Paul was saying earlier about founding Fallen Angels, the first project that we did. When we completed that project we could see transformation and the power and the impact it was having in people's lives. But then the participants, the performers, turned round to us and said, "OK, what's next?" So then of course we responded and 12 years later we're still here. So it's very much about we make a difference, but we also have a responsibility. That's what drives us forward. We've got a responsibility to the people that we serve. We are registered charities, and we don't take that lightly. We want to support people to recover. We don't want to just end the project and then-- what? So we build these communities, we build projects and workshops, and we aim to sustain their activity. In challenging times it's not always possible, however that's all what we aim to do.

55:17 Molly Mathieson: Yes, just to follow on from that, everybody's on their recovery journey. In each project you're moving people along that recovery journey and you're moving people through their artistic practice. And so the orchestra has grown in terms of its musicianship, in its craft and the confidence of the musicians. So each project tends to get bigger and bigger and the ambition kind of grows. And I also think we should mention funding. Partly we think about projects that are going to resonate and we partner with people and venues that we know that we can kind of keep going with the work. Because sometimes you want to stay static, you want to just kind of go, "OK, let's do the same thing, it's working." But obviously that kind of momentum of funding and ideas come with us pushing ourselves forward. So there's lots of variables. And also, personally, I think we do it because it's healing, everybody's healed through the process and the creative endeavour of coming together and making the work. So from a sort of sole perspective, it's really rewarding.

56:33 Cathy: So it's interesting what you say about funding and working together. I wonder, what is it that collaboration does, collaborations like we've witnessed today? What does that contribute both in terms of what you're doing in your own organisations, but also the impact on the wider arts community?

56:50 Claire: I mean, as you've heard today, we've had a great time collaborating with New Note Orchestra. But I think what's happened organically really, like how our organisations have organically grown out need, out of art-making and creating, also the arts recovery has grown. So nationally we all came together through the pandemic because we could, right? Over Zoom we connected with each other and so we started to notice and make those collaborations. And I think you've heard a bit about that, how that evolved already. And that seems to be growing. So then it's inspiring. So our Angels are inspired by the musicians, the musicians are inspired by the Angels. The group in Portsmouth, the group in Plymouth, we're all starting to interact. And it's like piers and it's exciting. It's like a world that people have stepped into that they never knew existed when they were in their darkest times. So now in recovery, it's exciting, it's thrilling, it's thriving. What next?

58:10 Molly: There's an ecosystem that's actually being formed, that was formed in the pandemic, I think as well, wasn't it. And so, to keep that ecosystem alive, everything is bigger than the sum of its parts because you're feeding into this ecosystem. So when we have an ambition and we want the art to be really good, that creates a standard for everybody to aspire to as well, and that's really powerful, I think. And everybody realises, "Oh well, I'm in recovery, I can get there, I can do this." And suddenly that's possible. And that's a joyous place to be, isn't it.

58:48 Cathy: I like the word ecosystem and I assume you're also making reference there to this sort of emerging addiction recovery arts movement that both of you are very involved in the founding beginnings of, that's now moving and moving on. So I'm going to open up to everyone here. What do you think is the value of this sort of work in the arts in general? Because we've talked about an ecosystem of a very kind of niche field, but what's the importance of this being shared with the wider arts community? Who'd like to say something?

59:23 Conall: What I'd like to say is making music, or even more fundamental, making sound itself, is very primal to all of us - and also moving in a way - is very primal, it's something that we all share, and it's a need that we all need to engage with. And what happens often is that when we have the opportunity to take those primal, very fundamental needs and to frame them within an artistic framework, which is a higher level of thinking, a higher level of engaging with the world, what's happening to the person is that you're bringing the fundamental elements of a person, and also the more sophisticated higher ends of being. You're integrating them together and that is developing the wholeness of an individual. And part of developing the wholeness of a person or a community, you're developing their recovery, their sense of wellbeing, their sense of purpose. So much meaning can be drawn from articulating the fullness of your person. And I think that's a really key element to what we're doing.

1:00:41 Cathy: Thank you, great. Kevin, so why do you think it's important to invite organisations such as this to perform at the Royal Opera House?

1:00:50 Kevin O'Hare: Well, I think it's vital, really, to the work that we do here, and I think it comes in so many different strands. So if you take last night, of course that was an incredible, unforgettable night here at the Royal Opera House, to see the orchestra and the dancers together, creating a beautiful piece of work which, no matter what stories were behind that, it was a great piece of work to come and witness as an audience member. So that's one thing that's brilliant, to connect with an audience here in London and to really tell that story. But it's so much more than that, really. Like Paul was saying, the work in the studio is so important, the work you're doing when you all get together every week in Brighton, those moments are so important as well. And if we can help with that as well, then that's really what we're meant to be here for. Because we're a National Opera House, we're not just for professional companies that work here or just London. We work across the country. And what I love about this is it isn't just a one-off that we thought would be lovely to do. We've been working for quite a long time together on different projects and bringing Fallen Angels down to London, meeting people, sharing knowledge, sharing ideas, and I think that's really important for both these companies but also for us as well.

1:02:32 Cathy: So in terms of sharing knowledge, in the broader world of ballet and in the arts in general, it's increasingly appreciated that mental wellbeing support is just as important as physical fitness. So what sort of insights do you think organisations like this can bring to that world, in terms of thinking about what support is available in the arts?

1:02:53 Kevin: Yeah, it's amazing, isn't it. Because of course people in both companies are doing this as part of their recovery, which is really important and great for their mental health. We're looking at it the other way, in a way, the pressures of being a professional dancer and what that entails and how much work. And it really is a lifestyle that is so all-encompassing that you need help where you can, and we've found that over the years. In the old days when Paul and I were dancing, you were lucky if there was one physiotherapist to help you through. Now we have learned from so many different worlds, especially sport, how much support we can give to our dancers, so whether it's physiotherapists, strength and

conditioning, Pilates, all of those things. And then for a long time actually we've had a sort of performance psychologist, but in more recent years, of course, we've learned through talking to people like Fallen Angels that it's imperative to help with your wellbeing and your mental health. And so, we're constantly looking at that, constantly growing our support for the dancers. For instance, now when young dancers come from the school, it's quite a thing to come from, a very closed, intimate world that is a ballet vocational school, and then you're let free into a big company like ours. And so, helping them through that very challenging time is really important. So over the last few years we've been really putting in work to make sure that we can set them up for success and set them up for a life that is really right for them, individually. And interesting that one of your musicians talked about being authentic, and we're trying to get everybody to feel authentic in the work that we do.

1:04:58 Cathy: Yes, it's really interesting how there can be that two-way knowledge of those who are in the industry in one particular sense and certain types of training, and meeting those who have lived experience who are then using creativity as a sort of therapeutic process. So on that theme, Paul, you and Kevin met as dancers and we've heard a little bit about your journey through setting up Fallen Angels, but tell us a little bit about your work with Kevin in terms of leading up to today.

1:05:32 Paul: Yeah, Kevin and I, we were at school together. He was two years above me.

1:05:36 Kevin: I'm the older one.

1:05:37 Paul: I'm joking, he looks a lot younger. [laughter]. Yeah, so we've known each other for quite a while. And what I love about Kevin is he's been really open with our company. The Royal Ballet have been so inviting. They've invited us down to dress rehearsals of Woolf Works and it's that ripple effect, because a lot of our people that we work with, they've never been in a theatre before, never mind connected with ballet. And so the stories and the narratives and the music-- everyone's listened to Max Richter, we use a lot of that stuff because it really resonates with our dancers. And yeah, sorry, what was the question? [laughter]. Sorry I get moments when I'm-- yeah.

1:06:17 Cathy: Tell us what sort of work went into the collaboration between you and Kevin to get to this point today.

1:06:25 Paul: I think the first performance we did was in the Clore Studio quite a few years ago, like 12 years ago. Because you [Clare] said to me yesterday morning that this is a real dream come true, being on at the Linbury. And I remember Kevin came to see a performance that we did at the university with New Note, and it was just three pieces, so it was in the early stages then. And Kevin was like, "Well yeah, Linbury." and I was like, "Wow, this is incredible," because I didn't expect it. So I was kind of really overwhelmed with gratitude and just to perform on this stage and have so much support as well and feel valued. That's something that really comes across. And the Royal Ballet have just really, really looked after us. Basically everything we asked for, Kevin's like, "Yes, yes." So yeah, just forever grateful. And as I said before, the guys performed on this stage last night and that's something that they will remember for the rest of their lives. These people have come from isolation, not being able to wash, not being able to get out of the bed for days, wanting to die. And then, yeah, I just get overwhelmed. So seeing them on stage, it's quite a powerful moment. And the same with the orchestra as well. We really feel that connection. And it's the unspoken word, because we know what it's like not being able to kind of get out. And you don't see a way out and then you come into recovery and it's very scary and then beautiful things like this happen. I mean, it just blows my mind, absolutely blows my mind. So I'm forever grateful. Thank you, Kevin, for this opportunity and I love you to bits. Thank you. [applause]

1:08:21 Claire: So I'm just going to chip in. Because around 2014 we were setting up Fallen Angels as a registered charity. At that time we were invited to go through a process of mentoring at the Royal Opera House for our organisational development and it was called ROH Links. So it's not just been about on the stage and coming to experience this for our participants and our dancers, it's also been organisationally for our organisation. So myself, in particular, just looking at structures, looking at becoming a charity and a lot of policies, procedures and all the sort of back stuff that nobody will ever hear about, until today. And that's what I sort of went through with Kevin and the team at that time. And that, again, really boosted us. And of course, when we're talking about Fallen Angels, just like New Note, and we're talking about our work and our ambition is for high quality, so we want to be on those professional stages. We think that our work and our aesthetic is valuable and valid for everybody to receive. So having a relationship with the Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera House helps us to tell that story.

1:09:44 Cathy: Which leads me nicely to my next question, thanks Claire, which is about this tension that we have, particularly in performances that are applied or work with people with lived experience, of that tension between process and product. And we know the importance of both. But maybe if I go over to this side here, maybe would you like to tell us a little bit more about your thoughts around how do you balance that tension between process that's got a therapeutic effect but a high-quality performance?

1:10:19 Molly: That's a really good question. And it's a huge question and I think we could talk for hours about this. I mean it's something we talk about a lot, that juggling, that balance between making sure that the experience in the room is therapeutic, but we don't set ourselves up to be therapists. So we know that there's a therapeutic process that takes part, but everything is back into the music. So there's a support system that happens around the orchestra and within the orchestra, but fundamentally we're there to produce the music. And so we tend to kind of use that as a focus, I suppose. And then, in terms of kind of the ambition around it, well Conall takes often some ideas that have happened in the improvisation and then composes the pieces of music, and then we just rehearse, and we would take that really seriously. We expect people to turn up, people do turn up. We expect people to graft for the performances and they really do. And then we supplement the music sometimes with supporting musicians. And that's a constant kind of conversation around how many musicians do you bring in, and they have to have the right ethos in order to come and support us as well. They're there to musically support so they bring in a sound that maybe we can't create within the orchestra. Have you got anything to add, Conall?

1:11:55 Conall: I'm not a music therapist, but I've lots of experience being a musician, and I would say let the sound do the healing, let the music do the healing. And we create an environment for good music to happen. And the act of playing together, the act of listening together, building a sensitivity to the sound that you make, but also a sensitivity to sounds that those around you are making, and finding a way to respond to the sounds that other people make is the wellbeing element of it all. That's the bit that Paul talks about when people discover themselves and just go, "Oh wow, I can do this and I'm feeling in a way that I've never felt before." It's the sound and it's the music that's coming through that. And we create a structure for that to happen. So we create projects so that we've got a common goal, everyone's looking in the right direction. And then, as Molly said, we really work hard to achieve that ambition, to reach the standard that we set ourselves.

1:12:56 Molly: I was going to say that I think the really important aspect is that we build towards performances, and if you take out the performance element, you've got music therapy. We had no interest in doing music therapy and being in a basement, because that's where a lot of people are when they're in the early stages of recovery, they're going

into meetings in the bottom of the basement. And we were like, "We want to put this on stage." And I think having that thing where you're moving towards a performance changes the dynamic totally in terms of the work because everybody gets it, everybody wants it to be brilliant. And so you're having the therapeutic moment but, as Conall says, you're working toward that common aim. And that's really powerful, to have everybody that you're working with wanting that same outcome.

1:13:48 Cathy: I'd like to introduce to all of you to whoever wishes to speak on this, but building off of what you said, the word 'vulnerability'. And I know the word vulnerability can be a bit of a bugbear of mine when I'm teaching theatre and performance. It can be a loaded term. There's certain preconceptions of the negative connotations. However, in the work from your organisations, what we see is vulnerability being transformed into something else. So I wonder if any of you would like to speak on that. What you do around kind of renegotiating what that is in terms of a word, an experience.

1:14:30 Paul: Yeah, I'll just say something really quick. What pops to mind is, I remember doing this project in prison and there was a couple of guys that were in there for life, serious characters, you know, you looked at them and you were— right? And we created this duet. And they were like, "Stop calling it a duet." And I was like, "Well, pas de deux, then." And they'd never done any movement before, but they had this amazing presence, but they also had this vulnerability as well. And when you see those layers of vulnerability and strength together— because I think something about vulnerability that's a real honesty. And when you're in meetings, and for you to get well you have to be honest and open and you have to go to those places and reveal stuff about yourself that is quite challenging. And when you see that in movement it's just so powerful. And I suppose in music as well, when you hear a sensitivity in the music and it's got a vulnerability, it does something to your body. As a ballet dancer you're working for strength and resilience and that's beautiful. And then on stage you can show that sensitivity. But in the stuff that we work with, we work with the sensitivity first. Over to you, Claire.

1:15:49 Claire: No, I absolutely agree. I think you said that beautifully, Paul. I was just going to reiterate what Paul was saying really, that we say that vulnerability is an asset. So if we work with professionals and with our recovery community, the combination of them coming together, you have this transference of the vulnerability to our dancers, professionals, so it's like an equality in the space, we're sharing this moment together and I think you'd see that in the performance.

1:16:31 Kevin: What I was going to say is that it's interesting what both companies are saying, is how they start the rehearsals and how they start each session. And I think that's something, again, when you're talking about learning both ways, that's something we can learn from, and how you set the rehearsal process up so that people feel safe to be vulnerable as well, and I think that is really important.

1:16:56 Cathy: There's something there about vulnerability in general in the creative arts, that to perform or to offer something creative is in a sense a vulnerable act.

1:17:10 Claire: It's about the audience's experience. I think when people open up and show vulnerability, I think really what Paul was saying about what happens in the space translates to an audience and they feel it - what Molly was saying - in their hearts and their souls. We don't need a language barrier for that. That vulnerability, we've all felt it, we all know it, we've all been to a place.

1:17:35 Molly: I think also when you're working in recovery arts is that people aren't scared of being vulnerable and it becomes a really powerful force then. In order to recover, you

have to be vulnerable. You've gone to a very dark place. You've also got to have that introspection. So you've got to ask those questions about why did it happen? What were those kind of internal things that meant that I was in this place and what were those external factors? So you're doing that analysis on yourself. So often people who we're working with have done that self-analysis and that's a really big gift to give to everybody else is that they have that self-perception. And what comes with self-perception is a vulnerability, and that's something that I think the recovery arts can teach everybody. Those tools to get well, those tools to be a better person, to be the best you can be. And we're dealing with that all the time. It's magic.

1:18:38 Cathy: So perhaps alongside the word vulnerability could be the word strength?

1:18:42 Molly: Totally. Absolutely. You have to feel safe, and you have to be strong in order to become vulnerable, don't you.

1:18:50 Cathy: Indeed. And so, moving on with this conversation, it seems fitting to think about how does this kind of work then disrupt the stigma? Because again with this word 'vulnerability', to talk about addiction there is again presumptions and stigmas around that. So how does this kind of work disrupt the stigma around addiction and what it means to be in recovery? Who would like to talk about that?

1:19:16 Molly: We're on stage. I mean, being on stage, partnering with the Royal Opera House and allowing us to show our work and taking it seriously is a really big part of that.

1:19:32 Claire: I was just going to give an example about feedback that we get at Fallen Angel is that people often are quite surprised when they see normal bodies on stage. So it's like, "They look normal." And you're like, "Well, how do you imagine somebody who's recovered from addiction to look like?" So often in the news headlines you see an addict, you see negativity, you see a certain image that comes into your mind of what that person might look like. And you saw people today who look like gorgeous, normal people. And that is really important. One of the things I was reflecting on today was that Paul and I did a performance with Fallen Angels for an international conference on drug policy. So there were people from all over the world who are writing drug policies. And they saw this performance of Fallen Angels—

1:20:36 Paul: They didn't want to speak to us at first. They were looking at us like this--

1:20:37 Claire: Oh, at first they were kind of like, "Ooh." Or they thought we were going to do salsa. They weren't sure. But afterwards they came up and they were really overwhelmed and amazed. And one lady from Brazil was hugging people. And it just struck me, I thought, they're writing policy about people that they've probably never met. They've never had a face to the people in their countries that they are hoping to support. And I thought that's so powerful.

1:21:25 Cathy: So what's the future? We've talked a lot about the power of this and what it's contributing in general to the arts, but also in terms of the people that you work with. But what's the future? What do you want to see happening next?

1:21:42 Claire: I mean, I can tell you what we're going to be doing next, to start with, to get everybody going. Royal Opera House, Royal Ballet have invited us to do a creative exchange programme. So we're going to be reconvening together, which we're delighted about. Again, that thing of not just finishing something, knowing there's something to work towards, which is beautiful. We're going to start in April and we're going to be performing at the Paul Hamlyn Hall at the end of June. So do keep in touch, we're back. And the creative

exchange, the idea that the Royal Ballet are supporting us with, is to just move forward our relationship and our creative relationship, how we'll work together, how we can move forward, how the dance can speak to the music, the music can speak to the dance. So we're really looking forward to that.

1:22:42 Conall: I think there's opportunity for the creative arts scene to develop and grow, to widen out that conversation, to share our learning with a broader community, with other arts networks. I think there's a lot of work there to connect up all the different recovery art networks, to build a manifesto, to put an agenda together which informs a national movement. And then that in itself, communicating out to reach the general public and other key organisations in society, I think that's a big thing for recovery arts in general that probably needs some working on that we would like to contribute and, of course, we are contributing to.

1:23:30 Claire: A hundred percent. So I know at Fallen Angels that, like the world's first recovery orchestra, we're still the only dance company that focuses nationally on this work. So we want to share our practice. We want to find ways that we can share our practice and we would hope that there would be dance groups - in fact New Note has set up a dance group in Brighton inspired by our work, there is Moving Recovery, Outside Edge Theatre in London - so we'd hope to see Moving Recovery, Fallen Angels Dance Theatre in every area.

1:24:09 Paul: What I would love is, and I'm going to suggest it. I mean, I really love the prison projects that we do because some of the people in there— sometimes the harsher the environment, the more impact you can have. And one of the stories I remember, one of the first prisons we went into was Lancaster Farms, and it was a young offenders prison. There was a guy in there called Tom, he was always on basic for fighting. And his key worker said, "Have you got Tom in your group?" and I was like, "Yeah, he's always at the front, he's always engaged." He was like, "No, that's not Tom, he's a nightmare." So I said, "Well, come to the session next week." And there he was, he had this amazing flow about him. And I gave him my number after the project and he rang— well, I gave him Claire's number [laughter]. And she was, "He's not coming to live with us, is he?" Because that's happened before. And Matthew Bourne had an audition for Lord of the Flies, and they wanted non-dancers to go along. So we got him an audition and we had to fill in this application. And one of the forms was 'What does dance do to you?' And he was like, "Oh, it was great." And I said, "Well let's dig a bit deeper." And he said, "It's given me a real purpose." And he had this real quality about him. And I wanted to go to the audition with him on the Sunday— but he got down from 100 to 50, 50 to 20. And he went on his own because I was working that Sunday, and I know how hard it is to be institutionalised because when you come out everything is very loud. So he went on his own and he was at the final audition with his number on in front of Matthew Bourne, the panel and everything. Just incredible. And those guys they were asking me, because they heard I was a ballet dancer, they were like, "Can you show us some ballet?" And I was like, "Are you sure?" And we started doing things like port de bras and stuff and showing them jumps. And there's one guy that had me in a pressage - he was in there for life as well - and he had his hands on and I was just like— you know. And the governor came in, I remember him saying - because there was guys from Manchester, there was guys from Liverpool - and he said, "They don't speak to each other on the wing, the gangs and stuff." He said, "What's happened with the movement, within 20 minutes you've had them interacting and kind of talking." So I'd love to do a project with the Royal Ballet. But that's the next dream.

1:26:18 Cathy: There we go. Now you're under pressure there. I won't force you to answer that question just now. [laughter]

1:26:23 Kevin: That's why I find it hard to say no. [laughter]

1:26:28 Cathy: Well, I think that's a really lovely story to wrap up on and I want to thank everyone on the panel here who've contributed your insights to this discussion. But sadly, it's time for us to wrap up today. So I want to thank all our guests who've joined us here today for Insights: Traces Through Time, Fallen Angels Dance Theatre and New Note Orchestra. And I want to thank all of you in the audience who have listened here in the Linbury Theatre and also to our audience online, wherever they are around the world. I hope you've enjoyed this Insight, and goodbye.

1:27:04 [applause]

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