

DRAFT APAM–WIRE #8 | Summary Notes
Frank and Fearless Relationships in the Performing Arts
Thursday 16 July 2020 17:00 AEDT

Speakers:

CB: Candy Bowers
FC: Farooq Chaudhry
KL: Kee Hong Low
RM: Rachael Maza

Panel Host:

SH: Simon Hinton

APAM Host:

MB: Melanie Burge

Welcome & Acknowledgment of Country

MB: Good afternoon everyone, thank you for joining us today for APAM Wire #8. I'm Melanie Burge, Associate Producer at APAM. I am a white woman wearing glasses with curly hair.

To begin I would like to acknowledge the custodians of land on which I live and work the Wurundjeri and Boon Wurrung people of the Kulin Nations. I'd also like to acknowledge the traditional lands this digital platform reaches and extend this acknowledgment to First Nations people with us today and elders past, present and emerging.

We have a fantastic line up of people speaking today around frank and fearless relationships in the performing arts. Housekeeping: 90 mins and questions in the last part of the session, please use the Q&A function. Over to Simon.

Introductions

SH: I'm Simon Hinton, I can see through my window, the distinctive escarpment here, the Merrigong. We sit on the unceded land, the land of the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal Nation. I am a short round faced fellow, light skinned face and a beard, khaki t shirt, in front of a picture of the theatre. The [Merrigong Theatre Company](#) of which I am Artistic Director/CEO, we manage a range of artists programs as well as the theatres here.

I will briefly introduce our panellists, then they can introduce themselves.

Candy Bowers (CB) describes herself as a radical mischief-maker born of South African political refugees. A true multi-hyphenate, Candy is a writer/ actor/ director/ comic/ lyricist and visual artist.

Farooq Chaudry (FC) is a leading light in the world of dance: co-founder and producer of Akram Khan Company.

In Hong Kong today, **Kee Hong Low** (KL) one of the world leading directors, currently Director of Programs (Theatre) at [West Kowloon Cultural District](#).

Somewhere in rural Victoria, Australia is **Rachael Maza** (RM), widely known for her range of acting, directing, and dramaturgical experience across the Australian film, television and theatre industry. Rachael is Artistic Director of [ILBIJERRI Theatre Company](#).

CB: I'm Candy Bowers, currently on Wurundjeri country and grew up for a while on Dharug country. I'd like to acknowledge my grandmother and mother. I am a mixed race, gender fluid human being. I'm wearing a chocolate brown top, fringe earrings and behind me is a bookshelf featuring black radical visual artists and poets and my rubber tree plant. It's an extraordinary time to feel stuck and global. My life has changed from cities to virtual life, and I'm writing between three writers' rooms, two in Australia, one in the US. My practice moved from one that was purely on stage to the screen just last year.

FC: I'm Farooq, in London right now, 60 this year, wearing a t-shirt with Muhammed Ali on it, my idol. I'm co-founder and producer of the [Akram Khan Company](#). Over the 20 years I've worked with the company I've been developing an optimal framework where we can produce the very best work. Relationships have been critical in getting into the international market. We've been very exposed in the current pandemic, losing money, resources, and potentially some relationships. I also started my own company Skye Blue Productions, primarily to support dance artists of colour who work in different styles, and have been working with these artists for the last few years. My partner is from Taiwan my eldest daughter is mixed race, my second daughter is adopted from China. I am compelled to find a common narrative in my life.

KL: I'm Kee Hong Low, currently in Hong Kong, always in black and a happily married gay man. I'm actually sitting in front on an intense Zoom library background. I moved to HK about 7 years ago – I'm originally from Singapore. We are a unique performing arts organisation in West Kowloon.

RM: I'm Rachael, my mother is Dutch. My mum and dad met in far North QLD. My father would then move to Melbourne and establish the first black fella theatre company, then to Sydney to establish the National Black Theatre – so I grew up in the world of theatre. I am joining from one of the mobs of the Kulin Nation and would like to pay my respects for the place I am privileged to call home. I'm wearing glasses and have curly hair that is going well and truly grey. I have a long line of family working in the performing arts and I am now an artistic director of a theatre company ILBIJERRI where for the last 12 years within theatre for black people it was about creating a platform for those that were practically invisible. It was a couple of decades before we would have the Mabo decision to acknowledge, there were people here. Theatre for me has always been a political tool and it is the way we tell our stories and we are re-writing the narrative. 3 out of 4 Australians have negative opinions of Aboriginal people which is no surprise to some Aboriginal people. I see my job, to shift the narrative and change the negative stereotype by replacing it with – what an extraordinary, sophisticated culture the Aboriginal and Torres Strait people are to have survived for many years.

Conversation

SH: Thank you all. The topic today with APAM is frank and fearless relationships in the performing arts and so with this online space we want to have a frank and fearless conversation filled with respect. We have a great group of leaders with us today, so I wanted to frame the discussion around leadership.

The current global crisis has brought in some underlying sector issues they are blindingly obvious now! This situation should pause us to consider, if this is a possible state to return to? We need moral leadership in our sector and what our role could be is the frame I would like to suggest.

We will talk about the relationships between different people in our sector but keeping this framework about what this moment represents for us with leadership in our sector and society. I will ask the panellists to talk about how this global crisis has highlighted strengths and weaknesses in working together in our sector?

KH: All of us – with the COVID situation – all of us are subject to something equal, it does not discriminate but our backgrounds and situations are different in how we are able to respond. With the pandemic it has highlighted within the arts and cultural sector those with no institutional structures supporting them. In early days, there were discussions on how we would survive, where will the next meal come from? We are now discussing new opportunities and how we move forward but there are so many of us who are in very dire situations and different governments have responded differently with rescue packages but with arts sector it seems we are always on the lowest priority. We are dealing with opening and closing, and lockdown and it is so important to think about the issues that have brought us here in the first place, obviously we are all in a situation of extreme crisis across the world. We were talking about ecological problems for a while, but the pandemic has

focused how problematic those discussions were and it is critical we acknowledge and reconcile our relationship with the land and each other.

One of the things we have been circling our heads around is that we don't have solutions, but we have focus upon the question of the power, of our relationships with institutions, artists, audiences and as curators we need to understand what does this mean in this context. People assume we have a lot of resources, and what does this mean when we address what I just talked about as a curator, we need to rethink the decisions we make every day and have frank and transparent conversations with the different people we work with as leaders, we make decisions on our own. We are not fully aware of the spectrum of the voices on the ground that need to be on the table with us, we need to dismantle the traditional hierarchies that have created the problem in the first place.

SH: One thing you mentioned there was how the virus does not discriminate. That is correct in a medical sense the virus is a reality but what we talk about a lot in our industry is that context is everything and the context in which the virus meets you in terms of governance and your conditions makes a huge difference in the effect of the crisis on us as individuals. People in our sector are in different contexts. Farooq you run a small dance company, how has this affected your company?

FC: It has been a fascinating moment in time the last few months. For us it was first about, how do we deal with the immediate knock-on effect on our business model. We reacted quickly with crisis planning to protect our futures. Secondly, it revealed how creativity is important for the spiritual health of us all. As the crisis began to pass it was easy to be complacent when trying to survive, but getting off the treadmill of our busy(ness) we could look at the question 'are we doing enough?'. As a touring company, we looked at going to places and staying longer instead of popping in and out on an import and export transactional model, as to make our touring more impactful. Also, the ecological issue – should we stop making big, fancy shows and look at ways of being more sustainable and to strip work back to a simpler more pure form? This could further allow for a more meaningful impact when we tour around the world as the arts, we are important to people in so many ways.

One of the most important things to come out of this was the Black Lives Matter movement and asking ourselves again 'are we doing enough'. I am also on the board of the Tate and at the moment many cultural organisations are doing the right thing of changing the easy bits by bringing in diverse artists and work from all around the world, but if you look at the running of the organisation, we realised there are many short-comings and failing when it comes to diversity and racial equality.

People behind the scenes from diverse backgrounds need protecting and nurturing and so as an organisation we are saying we need to improve ourselves? I find that this is a moment for real change, it is not just a moment to survive, we can't assume things to be normal, we are an established company and we can't be careless with our influence. We examined our ethics and moral responsibility and we had a meeting with our staff to discuss how we preserve the importance of the emotional relationships we have in our company. With a small company of 10 people it has been a really valuable moment to recalibrate our offer and values without changing the integrity of our touring model. Being in lockdown, finally, has made me realise that I miss human beings. People go to watch the arts to be with other people and it is so necessary to preserve the power of the arts and what our British Secretary of State called, 'the soul of the nation'! We have to look after our souls and be open to criticism and re-examine our values.

SH: Picking up on something there, Rachael, certainly a time of difficulty brings collegiality, but we are also going into a time of a greater lack of resources. How do you make sure as a company/artist how the things that really matter don't get lost when these resources are even harder to find? How do we ensure the things that matter are foregrounded?

RM: Agreeing with everything you're saying Farooq. What a time to sit back and start to question things and have dedicated time for rethinking, recalibrating and realigning 'why did you get into this'?

In regards to your provocation Simon, the sense of doom that is constantly overhanging the arts, in regards to living in a country that doesn't value the arts and has slowly been chunking away at it – the cuts at the ABC, Federal minister taken 'arts' out of his title – it's unbelievable.

This time is an extraordinary time to have a total rethink. I came to this company hell bent on placing black theatre, that is self-determined and made by us that has historically been taken by white people telling our stories. I have been creating the stories that take that space, to stop the constant undermining of the talent in our community that's categorised by this Western gaze.

There are some incremental shifts, great conversations that have happened, some ground-breaking, though small steps to move forward as a sector. Building relationships with the sector such as working with you Simon and with the Australia Council, so some things are happening.

We're about to turn 30, it's a coming of age, a time because of COVID, because of Black Lives Matter, to slap ourselves in the face. We were created and born out of the determination to tell our stories, by our artists to reflect our image to our community, jump forward 20 years to now – what is the reality, touring for a majority white audiences, I mean, that's a great space to take, to talk to those fellas but it can't be at our detriment. The work has to be for our mob first. This is an extraordinary time for us to think there may not be a sector – all of the companies are thinking – how do we work without theatres and audiences? My initial response to theatres going digital was one of huge resistance!

Theatre is living, compared to digital, theatre is living, in the moment, an extraordinary thing that happens. I am constantly reflecting on our show *Jack Charles vs the Crown*. An audience gets to sit in the same space, breath same air of an Aboriginal elder who is a member of the Stolen Generation, you cannot skirt away from the fact that he is the real thing.

I've struggled with how you pivot into digital realm. Not dissimilar to you, Farooq – let's strip it right back. We're going make it in community, by community, the first realisation of that work – it needs to be where that story lives and comes from. It's liberating, let's get theatre, strip it back, get rid of the touring sets, rather than going digital. We're having those conversations as well, but we want to take it outdoors, to community. In answer to Simon – it's enabling theatre that is affordable, is doable, is accessible and relevant. It starts to make a lot of sense.

SH: I have to say as someone who runs venues, if we can't use those spaces and there are no audiences – what do we do? But that is not the end, what we do is not put shows on in theatres for audiences, it *is* something else and how do we get there? I love that you are thinking about what that means in terms of community and taking that back to where it begins and when that work, as an example, *Jack Charles VS the Crown* meets the white audience in Wollongong. That is important.

So each of us in the panel have faced this crisis with a company and institution but we are aware, in the industry, the most shocking weakness in our sector is that artists have been left vulnerable. Candy, I am interested in your perspective as an independent artist?

CB: Sure! I think there is so much going on... there are so many things, I think wow, for those artists that engage with mainstream – for the first time they are realising what it is like to work in independent spaces, but also, how undervalued the independent sector is. There was a chat I was listening to about the dredges of this industry and how we give so much and for an industry which brings in \$110 billion we have to remember it is carried on the shoulders of the first time comedian that sells their car to be in the comedy festival or the group of uni students that put on a show at Fringe Festival and by those who work three hospo jobs to be a practicing artist. For those that I know who work in the arts, all of their adjacent industries have been shut down, so every part of their practice has been shut down.

But also, we are very resourceful people, we know how to come up with stuff with not a lot. I think that in my experience of travelling the world and doing a lot in adjacent industries now, more than ever – the arts leadership should look to social innovators and cultural mischief makers that have had to move around and make stuff happen, instead of folks that have been safe and secure, we should reach out to those that haven't. There has been some tough stuff going on where it's been very clear that the arts are this white monoculture and so are the people who run the funds.

I wanted to point out this interesting thing, with applications changing in wake of the pandemic, the funding bodies were saying– 'we just need to give people cash to make what they want to make'. The criteria just shifted, meanwhile the whole time up until now it has been an obstacle course to get through. I extended my hand to those in my community – particularly those from a culturally diverse background and I offered my help for those to get money for some projects. The funds ranged from \$4000 – \$10,000 really the 'start-up' stuff, the number one thing I walked away with was how people of colour feel alienated from those processes and the way that it works is the reason why we don't see a technicolour arts community in our sector and a lot of those seminars of how to do applications were run by white people. Now is the time to reflect what we want in the sector in the future.

I was asked to do a reading for a play *Orange Thrower* by Kirsty Marillier. I was asked by Kirsty to read a role of an African/Australian woman. It was the first time I was able to read a script which was not a generic African woman but actually specific to my cultural background. So, what I started to wonder is if there is a focus on audiences that don't traditionally feel comfortable in these venues and spaces that live online and there is this digital explosion going on, are we going to see a more Netflix approach to theatre?

We don't only go to theatre to watch a show, we go to see each other but it is difficult when no one else looks like you. I thought how absurd it is, that my community the African diaspora feel so disconnected when art is such a big part of our culture in where we have come from – theatre, arts and performance. So, there is an opportunity to ask these questions in a way that doesn't have a box office imperative or face white fragility.

I was really interested in how, Farooq brought it up, the black lives matter movement happened, and I have been asking for years if people of colour matter in the theatre, does black work from the UK or America matter? And this moment, it is a painful thing that it took another death to begin to unpack some of that and reflect what is happening here with our own First Nations people. All of this is entangled for people of colour. Leadership comes through, up and around with all that is immediate and theatre in Australia doesn't feel immediate compared to how it does in Edinburgh or South Africa which feels current and actively represents black queer artists, trans artists. I have felt like here we are really far behind. With the pandemic everyone has had to go online, and the gaps feel like they are shrinking but we are wondering what is the new audience and we need outliers, conscience outliers who have been on these streams for some time to reveal this. We are in risky times right now, to double-down is not the correct response and I see companies moving from fear rather than fearlessness. If you need fearlessness, I can recommend some folks. Why would you double or triple down – in a time when you don't know what is happening next?

We don't know if these outbreaks will hit our elders, or whether Melbourne will go into another lockdown. While things are up for grabs, it will be a great time to take risks, rather than the opposite.

SH: Let's explore that thread, what fantastic observations. There are two possible responses. One comes from a place of fear and trying to plug up a sinking ship with this idea of survival for the old business model, what exists already and the other comes from a place of 'well, so much has to change – why not these things as well'?

All those things we thought were difficult – your example of the funding applications was brilliant – the fact that those changes could be made, says one, people were aware that it

was not simple, and it excluded people through deliberate gatekeeping and two, that it could be changed.

CB: In a way, someone like me, the ease at which these things could happen – I think F***ing assholes! For me, when I see three out of four people have a negative idea of Aboriginal people we all know these ideas comes from the stage, the screen and the media, who is good, who is bad, etc. The dramaturgy of mainly having black women in aprons across Australian stages at any given time – there used to be a joke about a black woman playing a maid all the time. Those concepts dramaturgically are the decisions I would like to have bigger conversations with artistic directors about, dramaturgically; do queer voices matter? Do black voices matter?

I am able, as a writer, to make changes now, I have never understood why theatre companies want to embed such problematic representation. When are we going to invest, in Australia, actually invest in new voices, bigger voices and people who haven't had a chance yet? As a person who judges a lot of playwriting and musical theatre – I see these great concepts but they are not well wrought, why don't we take the money to invest in their craft and mastery. We are so concerned about putting something on but often, the work hasn't even been given the ability to breathe.

When you talk to people about disability action in the arts, they are asking for what everyone in the arts is asking for, more time to create the work instead of sweating over what we do next, we should think about what the offering is going to be for the next generations and how do we make our money and ourselves. I know many artistic directors who can facilitate art, but they spend their time facilitating a program, what if we forget for a minute about that outcome.

FC: Thank you Candy, my mind is in overdrive now – so many things you said were quite extraordinary! When I started working with Akram 20 years ago I felt the industry was more about the artistic "voice", but now it's about the show. It's the product of the commercialisation of the sector but we did start with the voice – we need to hear new stories, not just the same old narrative.

It's the opening of the mind to accept a new vision of the world and art. In our pathway through life the voice is more important than the product, that's what art is about. The arts industry is a high risk industry, we put our lives and bodies on stage to be judged and deconstructed, to create inspiration we need to retain a level of risk. Has that risk been diminished and compromised by the need to get the show up there and a box office imperative? We need to go back to the bedrock of practice and integrity – the only way to protect risk is integrity. Somehow, we've got lost between what we need and what we want.

And on necessity – I was speaking with people about a program in Switzerland, giving artists of colour the opportunity to produce a program of their own work that comes out of their necessity – a necessity for each of these artists to say something. Time and time again – the idea that whiteness is not a colour thing, it's a power thing, it's a social construct. Like all great powers they want to shape the world in their image and therefore their stories and that is what we are trying to resist now. We have to have the courage and patience to take ourselves apart and rebuild ourselves. Building in all the stories and pathways to be reflective of our modern world, this includes our funding processes, the approach is very different in different cultures. They're set in a mindset for those who know how to do it. We need risk, integrity, the know the difference between what we need and what we want, and we have to come back to voices and not just shows.

SH: I want to pick up on one aspect. In this crisis moment there is an idea to get money out to artists quickly, while that was important in the immediate sense, much of that activity has still reinforced the sense of artists on the outside of the structures of our industry and they are supplements of support or permission to make work. How can we place artists more central to the structures of our industry? How do we place artists into decision making, governance, could we do that and just haven't?

KH: This is a central question for me. When I started thinking about a new platform I was inspired by practice thinking, and specific terms, the methodology of queer communities.

We started talking about things with the verb of queering, I started to invite artists who can be in that conversation with us. I'm working specifically with Silvia Bottioli (Das Theatre Amsterdam), as curators we do not just curate a festival and just repeat, we wanted to find a way that institutions can work together to come up with multiple trampolines that other people can jump on, then jump on other trampolines down the line so there is a ripple effect. We invited 3 artists to challenge the way we think as curators, to expand how we wanted to think about this platform. When I mentioned speculating futures, this is what we have to do right now. Are with thinking about risk in vocab and in terms we've been using now? If we think about voices from the margin, we're still talking about the centre and the margin. Our lives are intersectional, and we need to recognise this right from the start. When I spent my time in Australia recently, my work was about exploring threads with the thinking and knowledge of the First Nations people. The holders of knowledge spans beyond what is currently talked about. The moment we don't bring or allow other communities to define the rules of the game, then I don't think we're attempting to change. One important criteria is what do we mean about collaboration? A play is a negotiation around each other. For me, how we think about it is we empty ourselves and allow the other person to fill us. We cannot just understand each other but constructing something we don't know what it is. Especially for a large institution faced with pressure of achieving XYZ.

When theatres are shut your mind has to work at speed to address these and take apart these structures now. There is no normal to go back to and we don't want to go back to what we have come from, they have failed us, the Government, institutions, failed us, now is the time to wrestle the bull by its horns and expand the way we want to and must work moving forward.

CB: Speaking of intersectionality and the lack of it across leadership or even in admin across Australia. It is difficult when you're a from an intersection, queer and a number of identities, it's hard to constantly have to explain yourself but there is a sitting audience who want to see and hear about it. Even when I think of COVID and my mother...there's an Indonesian tradition when making theatre to ask the elders what's important and that is the theatre that's what the theatre becomes about.

I am aware that in Italy they lost an entire generation of people and I wonder – my mother could do with a phone call every day and if that person was a playwright and that person wanted to document the stories of that category? There are so many possibilities to be an essential service if there's one thing artists know what to do it's to connect. I often wonder why people are caught up in what the venues are going to do, but there's this vital thing that we can do, all the things I believe theatre is about. It feels that now would be the time to think of a way to be the theatre company who believes in serving their community. It seems to me there's an opportunity to speak directly. My work has always been with young people from queer and other backgrounds, those people are feeling really isolated right now.

I met Natalie Ibu from leading British black theatre company [tiata fahodzi](#)... We did a British Council mentorship together and they have a Friendship Program. Rather than talk about audience development they talk about becoming friends with people in their neighbourhood to connect with them. There are a lot of things theatre makers could do right now. Also mental health – there is so much we can do. If we have a social movement that runs adjacent, if it's possible (as I know not everyone is a socialist but) for theatre to become what it was, what does that look like.

SH: Rachael, I would love for frank and fearlessness to talk about the programming around First Nations Work and what does self-determination look like, how do we reach that?

RM: I have been thinking about our trajectory of black theatre. We have had a long history of white fellas making black theatre but now we are talking about it and there was an understanding in the sector, if you wanted to tell a black person story, you need to have a

consultant on board. The creative team, then would cherry pick what they want out of the advice to get their 'black tick' of approval and we have fought for the idea of having black people in company, so we need these steps. We are still fighting for this space of – if there is a production not made by black fellas, it is not a black production. There were still works being toured that were not made by black fellas – why are we still struggling to make that important distinction?

There has been some great work happening around how the work is presented and engaging with the community, welcome to country, inviting the elders, having a gathering with the community those sorts of things have been extraordinary. But recently touring *Black Ties* our recent production partnership here with [Te Rēhia Theatre Company](#) all black creative controlled we were coming up with issues along the way.

A couple of our Maori artists were having a cigarette outside their hotel and they were pulled up by the owner of the building abused and told to move on because he assumed they were street people, it was horrific, and the other thing, Sydney Town Hall – there were security belts that turned up as we were going in. We have fought so hard to make sure there were tables set aside for our mob to go and sit inside and then there was a scanning belt... like, wow! No one thought twice about it, because it wasn't there when we were rehearsing, I said 'that doesn't need to be there, you just need to give people warning' Creating safe touring for our work is hit and miss constantly you think you have made a step forward and then there is another thing! But there have been some extraordinary conversations and really grappling with, 'what is this?'

Listening to Candy, is this a chance to deconstruct the way we think about theatre and who it is for? A lot of my thinking has been about how do we infiltrate the system and how we fight for space in that domain? I am hearing the provocation, we need to think about the whole way we operate differently, I don't want to work in a white man company I want to spend all my energy making art and working with community, I am not interested in fighting for that space. You cannot have this conversation about changing the system if you can't see the problem sits not with us, but with the whiteness that doesn't see itself, as white as centre, as dominant. Until, you know that scenario, holding up a photo with person of Asian decent and to point out the Australians – they won't pick the Asian photo – their picture of Australian is white – it is in the DNA of this nation, it is deep and internal. We can't ignore that gaze and what we are conditioned to, it's in the media, it's taught in the schools, it's on the stages – everywhere.

CB: If we could bring intersectional queer and black thinking into theatre spaces it would mean you would see this theatre happen more. At the moment all we have culturally linguistic and diverse people encouraged to apply but encouraged how, who is on the panel making these decisions, are these people diverse? Also, in touring a lot, I have toured my kids shows and one woman show, touring was built for white, straight men.

An incident occurred in which I had an abusive ex-partner, I had to get a bodyguard for that one show and the touring partner hadn't thought about that need. Nobody had ever considered, 'what if' a female in a company needed protection, and they didn't handle it well. What I realised is that nothing was built for people other than a man, you only know, when you are faced with it, the inequality. When touring regionally there is no culturally safe protocols going on for someone like me, or other First Nations people, we aren't really catered to.

Only able-bodied people who are a part of the dominant central norm can feel comfortable as they don't have to think about what isn't central to them. As a company, engaging artists who you usually don't see, who are in those statistics of being in danger, or who can't walk through the door, if you think about that first, we begin to change the mentality and the centre. The centre can be multcentred and we have to address patriarchal white supremacy and we need to ask, who else is in there thinking and speaking of for and rearranging the furniture and comforts so that we can all feel comfortable in those spaces and theatre representing the world we want to see. To lead the Australian mentality to a place of not being afraid of Aboriginal people and heroes across the spectrum of our ever-changing country. That mentality has to change first.

SH: Are presenters sharing the appetite and desire for risk as artists and makers? Is it worth trying to engage with structures that might seem un-moveable or do we create our own? What hope is there for the appetite of institutions or should we be focused on building something new? Kee Hong, do you want to kick this off? Do you think presenters can make this change and take perceived risks?

KH: I think this is really a broad topic, when you think of institutions around the world. I am hearing from large institutions who are in the illusion of going back to normal. We will wait for COVID to 'go away' and back to the party, if you will, because they are trapped in this situation of like tip-toeing around it and trying a little bit here and there, but in the end, it is not on the owners of institutions to think and dismantle these structures but to think of the range of our lives that engage with these companies. If we all aren't speaking up, we are a part of the situation if a large institution, run by what is thought of as a 'white man', if we continue to give power to this, what if we just walked away. These institutions need us more than we need them, perhaps? Right? It is important to demonstrate what is possible and whether we start small or collect the medium bits together the voice can be quite loud but it is demanding – personally, I am of the 'let's stop taking and just do it' if you say you want to walk away, then walk away.

SH Simon: That is a great thought as a presenter, I cannot speak on behalf of presenters, there are so many different approaches but I do think there are people in that programming world that are thinking about what Candy said that this is not about doubling down on a broken thing. It is how I see it at the moment.

Whatever I do next year, I will lose a shit load of money, but I am viewing it as an opportunity, if I am going to lose \$500,000 or more what is the difference of losing \$700,000. Risk is the not question but rather whose decision it is that this is something risky or not risky to do. The thing that becomes our job inside the institutions is to try and change the way decisions get made instead of going 'should we take a risk'. But my idea of risk, is a 51-year-old idea of risk so we need to change that. That is not easy.

But Farooq, work with institution or build your own?

FC: Is that environmentally friendly to build again? Having a small company you can be ahead of the changing world I want to see them step up and take greater responsibility and instead of the noisy listening but the quiet listening and finding out what people need and what we need to not disable the past but memory is so important of the artistic journey to understand where we go is where we came from they hold onto old narratives, languages that doesn't belong in the modern world language shifts the way we understand things – to change their language is what I want to see, to stand up, to quietly listen. You can't just change one of two people; you need to change the organisation to at least 1/3 of people of colour in the organisation. I think organisations shouldn't get caught up with the utopia of the perfect business model. Could organisations instead of rebuilding, have a smaller arm of the business to respond quickly, instead of a slumbering machine that they are.

CB: I was going to say, inclusive leadership is a model idea. That model is the arts community, including them within your leadership, ensuring you believe in those concepts of collaboration and community. But truly believing it, that artists can gain some dignity and place the work on what artists have been through if you want to ask someone what it is like to be a touring artist, don't ask the business owners – ask the artists. We don't get asked often, it is a powerful hierarchy that needs to be flattened. There is talk of other ecologies across the world, I don't think that time is too far away. Work out how to share and how to make friends with us. It has to go the opposite way now; the future is black now as we know. Black past, Black future.

SH: To synthesise a few of those last comments to what Farooq is saying about listening. This is a time about supporting and talking, but real listening, as Kee Hong says, action – just do it. We have this opportunity to listen, and then act.

MB: Thank you Simon and to all our panellists today for generous and thought-provoking insights. We will return with another Wire session in August so please stay connected via apam.org.au for more details.