

Lizzie 0:13

Hello, everybody, and welcome to the Change of Perspective podcast. I'm your host, Lizzie Lovejoy. And today we are talking to Kate. How you doing, Kate?

Kate 0:21

I'm very well. Thank you, Lizzie.

Lizzie 0:23

It's great to have you on. So I just wanted to ask you to give yourself a quick introduction. Let us know who you are and what your role is.

Kate 0:31

Yes, thank you. My name is Kate Danielson. I'm director of the Weston Jerwood Creative Bursaries, which I've been working on now for about the last 10 years. I'm also a freelancer and I do a variety of other work in, in, in producing and running programmes, but other organisations as well.

Lizzie 0:52

So do you have a specifically creative background that led you to work in this job area?

Kate 0:57

Oh, not really. I mean, I've always been interested in theatre, particularly, and visual arts. I went to the theatre with my family a bit when I was young. And, and I went to university to study languages. And it was a Scottish university. And what I haven't worked out is, in your first year, when you arrive, you actually have to study three subjects. And so I got there to matriculate French and German. And they said, you have to choose a third subject. And Art History was near the top of the list, so I chose Art History. And it was a fantastic course, much more interesting than French and German. And I then changed

and did my degree in Art History. I've never, you know, had a creative practice. But I've always been interested in how creativity is encouraged. So yeah, I suppose I've been just a natural producer and supporter of others to create.

Lizzie 1:57

What area of Art History drew you into it?

Kate 1:59

Oh, I'm not even sure if I get as specific as that. I mean, I suppose it began with painting, but actually, architecture was what, and furniture design was my real interest when I was there. I was at university in Scotland, as I said, and, and sort of arts and crafts, architecture. And you know, we were just surrounded by amazing stuff there. So yeah, I'm very catholic, I think is the word in my tastes. Anything, you know, music and visual arts and theatre and architecture. It's pretty wide actually.

Lizzie 2:36

I must admit, architecture in Scotland is absolutely gorgeous. I've er, I'm wearing a St Andrew's hoodie right now that I stole from my friend because

Kate 2:43

Oh well that's my university!

Lizzie 2:44

I remember going to visit her before the lockdown and getting to explore the ruined castle, the cathedrals and all that around the area. It's absolutely gorgeous stuff. I can see why that would draw you in. So what led you down the specific route that you've gone down? Because obviously you're focusing on producing, especially in terms of like creating diversity within the arts community? What, what drew you to that?

Kate 3:09

It was seeing first-hand the bad side of artistic practice. I was producer of the Cheltenham Jazz Festival, back in the noughties. You know, I look back at it now, and I'm just appalled at a lot of our practice, then. Where we were so focused on getting the show on the road, and we had such a lack of funding. And I mean, the, you know, the unpaid work that we required from people. I mean, it was appalling, absolutely appalling, when I think back a bit, but we were so so in that specific situation at the time.

Anyway, so when I left there, when I was at Cheltenham, Jerwood, supported us, were one of our funders at the Jazz Festival, allowing us to do some really fantastic work with emerging jazz musicians. And it was an offer from them to be involved in the creation of this new programme. So I suppose in the back of my mind was this understanding that really needs to be a better way of doing things because not only did we require far too much of the people who work there, it had quite a bad effect on me at the time as well. So when I was invited by Jerwood to join forces with them to create this programme, it was like yeah, it was like this extraordinary moment of realising that it could be better, we could do these things in a better way, we could treat people better, we could find a way of making sure that everybody had access to this amazing creative workforce.

I just loved it. I loved doing this job from the moment I started it, which is why I'm still here 11 years later, and being able to do something incredibly positive, that made a real difference to people's lives. And particularly individuals, I've always been very interested in people, individuals and supporting people's careers. I produced theatre, fringe theatre in my 20s. And worked exclusively with people at the start of their career. So first time playwrights.

Lizzie 5:25

So moving to a slightly different topic, but also something that connects, you are the first and possibly the only guest that we're going to have on that's not based in the northeast. And that's, a huge part of that is because obviously,

you do so much amazing stuff, and I really wanted to talk to you. And the only reason that I like know anything about you is because Jerwood, Jerwood Arts has funded my job, it wouldn't exist without you guys, and I wouldn't have been able to get a start in my career.

What I wanted to ask was what it's like working with so many different people from so many different areas, and what it's like working with all these different locations, and what are like the strengths, what are the challenges that come along with that?

Kate 6:07

I suppose, because this programme was set up at the beginning to, to look at what the barriers were to access to jobs in the arts, therefore, it was always going to be a very nationwide programme, because what we needed to do was to see what the challenges were and the barriers were in lots of different situations, not just geographical, but also in different art forms and in different types of organisations. So anyway, the geographical element of the programme was always really interesting to get a wide view about what the, what the challenges were. So we worked really hard to get this sort of jigsaw of fellowship all over the country. And in rural situations, and in metropolitan areas. I suppose it's always been, it's always been the ethos of the programme. And it's just brilliant through the, through the programme to get these insights into what it's like working in different parts of the country.

And, and also knowing that following the sort of progression of fellows after they leave the programme, you know, they have, a lot of them have just zigzagged all over the country, you know, worked, started the thing in Scotland gone to Wales, gone to Northern Ireland, gone to London, you know, it's a small, we're a small country, really, for people to find opportunities that are right for them, a lot of people do have to relocate. And therefore I think the benefit of this programme is that, is that fellows get to work with other fellows in parts of the country that they, you know, know nothing about, and hopefully are able to share their experiences in their part of the country.

The strengths and weaknesses, I suppose I've always, I'm more, much more aware of the strengths than the challenges. I mean, I, I can't imagine this programme and the benefits of this programme without having that range of geographical experiences. It's very much part of that introduction to an industry and what it's like in different parts. Um, I suppose the challenges are always about, because the programme is about creating this cohort of fellows, you know this peer support network of 50 fellows across the country, that is really challenging when people are all over the country, and they're in different, doing very different jobs having very different experiences, you know, the connection between them is, is being part of the programme. But apart from that, you know, they have a, you will have a year in which to get to know each other, and it's challenging being in different places.

But I have to say, you know, because it's all been Zoom, and online in this edition of the programme, in some ways, that's been a real benefit, I think, because people have had to get to know each other online. So those who are based in more, you know, rural, and, you know, further away like the Isle of Skye or Belfast, I don't think have felt disadvantaged by being so far away from the rest of the fellows. So I think that has been actually, been actually a benefit this time because I would say in the past, there has always been a bit of a you know, the London fellows for example, or the, you know Birmingham or Manchester fellows have always been able to establish more of a bond with each other because physically they were closer.

Lizzie 9:32

Do you think that's a reflection of the industry as a whole, the fact that certain areas are able to be more connected to others, and the kind of work that gets shared around?

Kate 9:42

Oh, God, yes, I think definitely. I mean, this morning, I've just been reading the PEC, which is the Policy and Evidence Centre, that's right, are publishing a report actually, Social Mobility in the Creative Economy, Rebuilding and Levelling Up, question mark. Anyway one of the things they talk about in this is

that place matters when it comes to socio economic diversity. So it is much easier to get jobs in metropolitan areas in the creative industries.

So I think we're all beginning to understand more that place matters a lot when it comes to levelling the playing field. And so yeah, it's a really important area for us when we look at the sort of holistic range of opportunities available, and the barriers too.

Lizzie 10:33

A little bit off topic, but I was just wondering, what was the first job or project that you were involved in, in the creative industry?

Kate 10:39

It's slightly bonkers, actually. So I was born in America. So when I finished university, and I had no idea what I was going to do, I thought, well, one thing I do have is an American passport. And so I took myself off to America. And my first job, which I got because I had a British accent, was working with two female producers on Broadway. So having no experience of the theatre at all, I landed this absolutely epic job working on Broadway. And that was my introduction to the creative industries. And it was solely because of my accent.

Lizzie 11:14

Did you find working in America was different from working here in the UK? Like a lot?

Kate 11:19

Was it different? I suppose I didn't have anything to compare it with. Because I hadn't worked in the creative industries, you know, I was 22 or something, so in some ways it was brilliant because I had no expectations, really. But it was in the sort of late 80s when the Brits were arriving on Broadway in er, and

Cameron Mackintosh, his shows were just arriving, Les Mis, Phantom of the Opera.

I don't know, I can't really compare it because actually, when I came back four years later, I've actually never worked - is that true? - yeah, I've never really worked in British theatre. I mean, apart from doing fringe theatre of my own, I've never worked in that sort of, you know, venue as such, so I don't have a lot to compare it with.

Lizzie 12:05

It's fascinating, though, because you help provide so many opportunities for people within the country. So you must understand, like the inner workings of it. And so it's fascinating to have jumped from location to location and still be working with that and making that thrive.

Kate 12:18

I suppose it maybe, as I said before, I'm so interested in working with people. And maybe that's more important, or maybe you just, maybe you just accumulate more knowledge of, you know, organisations and places, then you realise. It's quite introspective this, doing this podcast.

Lizzie 12:39

The next question, I want to talk to you a bit more about socio economic diversity, because obviously, it's very key to your work. And it's very key to me, as a person from a working class background, who identifies as a working class creative. Obviously, we've talked a little bit about what made that important to you, and the experiences that you had working with different people.

So I guess I want to know a bit more on your thoughts about the fact that working class people are 80% less likely to gain, quote, unquote, professional jobs, and will earn less than people from middle class or higher backgrounds.

What do you think about that? And do you think this is gonna change anytime soon?

Kate 13:22

Well, that's the million dollar question, isn't it? I think it's so entrenched, so many of the barriers, so many of the challenges and so much about getting into the creative industries is is is circuitous, you know, I think, most interviews that one hears with people in the arts show that they've gone, they've come come at their careers in such different ways. You know, that sort of accountancy or legal or those other professions where you go from A to B, or it just doesn't happen in our industry, and therefore, trying to unpick where the barriers are, why are people from certain backgrounds with certain experiences not getting through to the next stage? You know, it's all so hidden.

And so there's a lot of amazing research going on at the moment to look at what those barriers are, and to look at, and then to look at why is it so important? And that idea that these amazing jobs that as you say, make people feel so amazing when they do them, that that there are these sort of really tight bottlenecks that you have to get through in order to open up those opportunities. It is heartbreaking, opening up people's ideas to working with people that don't think like they do, that don't have the same cultural references as they do.

I mean, it's just it's like these sort of light bulb moments working with people on this programme [Jerwood], where they realise that they have been, they think they've been incredibly open in their recruitment and they think they've been incredibly open in the workforce that they employ. But when you drill down about the criteria they use for who they select, it's just an absolutely fascinating process of peeling back the way people think about who's right in the roles. It's just fascinating.

And I suppose having done this work for a while, I've had, again, these amazing insights into that, the energy that comes with working with people from so

many different experiences, and that is so incredibly energising to me, I feel incredibly passionate about the social justice angle of it.

And I suppose for me, in our own personal basis, people have an image of you, you know, that you're this or you're that, but it's often not right. You know, I think people have this sort of, you know, we read other people, don't we, in a way oh, I know, I can tell where they're from, you know, but in fact, we all have these extraordinary things that make make up us. So I think I've always experienced, I've always been different to my peers, you know, I've always had a bit you know, from coming back to Britain with a with a - actually, I had a Caribbean accent when I arrived in Britain, aged eight - and always trying to sort of fit in, and so I can really understand that feeling of, it is imposter syndrome. I mean, I still get imposter syndrome now, and I still get that feeling that somebody is going to find me out. And so I completely understand. I understand that the sound that feeling of yeah, feeling like I'm on the outside looking in quite a lot at the time.

Lizzie 16:46

That was very fascinating. Just the idea. I don't know whether you find this, I feel like people don't think other people have imposter syndrome. And everyone thinks that only they've got imposter syndrome. And you look up at other people who are at a different stage in their career, and you think, wow, they've, they've got this on lock, and they know they've got to on lock. But that's like the one thing that we all have in common probably is that none of us feel like we're secure right now. And none of us feel like we know what we're doing. We're just doing our best.

Kate 17:14

Exactly, exactly. And maybe that's a great feeling. Maybe that's what keeps you know, I've always thought, well, I'll get to that point in my career where, oh, I'm comfortable, oh, that's nice, you know, oh I can do all of this, you know. And you just sort of bat it backwards and forwards. And it's just not like that. I certainly I haven't ever experienced that sort of complete comfort where I feel

completely in control of what I'm doing and, but maybe that's not the way, maybe that's not the way we're built. I don't know.

Lizzie 17:49

I think it's interesting what you said about accent as well, how you change accent to try and fit in with different groups. Because I think, I mean, that links very well into working class-ness, is if you've got a very strong colloquial accent, for most regions up North there's an assumption made about your level of education, about your level of understanding and I know that I've adapted my accent. It sounds much more RP than it probably should because of, yeah, because of trying to fit in and force that change. So you had a completely different accent as a child. And did you find that when you got into America, you, like as an adult, that you felt you had to change it again? Or did you have to like, dig even deeper into like an RP English accent?

Kate 18:41

It's funny, I know I suppose being there, you know, in New York in the 80's I got used to being you know, being the British person. It was quite extraordinary to begin with you know, people would sort of turn and look at you when you spoke in a British accent and so I felt like a sort of, not an outsider, I mean you felt kind of special with your accent. And then whenever I'd come back to visit in England, everyone would laugh at me because I sounded American, or actually Irish, the odd thing is that British mixed with American begins to sound like Irish. So people used to think I was Irish.

So I suppose there was that sense of again, understanding that accent was important, you know, it definitely got me my job. And it definitely got me noticed and then coming back I felt a little bit, yeah, I felt different because I I my American bit sort of pulling at me again, and I still get that from some people saying, you're not British, I can't I can't quite tell but you're not British. You know? Yeah, I'm sure we all move around in our accents a bit but I definitely remember as a child, you know, I had an American accent then I had a Caribbean accent, and I remember feeling how important it was to change that really quickly in your new situation, so that you fitted in.

Lizzie 19:55

I'm going to slightly change the subject but it still links on with it because I think it's interesting what you were saying about how you almost cling to that, and it becomes a gimmick of its own. And so this is a bit of a tough question. And I don't know if you've noticed this lately, but it's the fetishisation of being working class. And of being working class in the arts specifically. And it almost being a gimmick on its own, of people being like, ah, yes, we have, you know, the working class artist in this area.

And lots of people wanting to be considered working class which from, from my perspective looks really weird, it feels really weird to me, that someone would really want to claim it, and create art based on that. So I guess I want to know what your thoughts are on it, if you've noticed that as well?

Kate 20:42

I suppose, I mean, to be honest, it's not something that's really been talked about, you know, so I suppose we're all in kind of new territory here, aren't we, because in my career up until becoming involved in this programme, you know, class and socio economic background was just not really talked about. So people, you know, chose to disclose what they wanted to. People opening up to discussing and finding a language and I suppose the truth is, it is very hard, you know, academics been working long and hard on this to try and create a sort of structure and a way of measuring your background, you know, so to look at social mobility where, you know, essentially is your life path, your career and your earnings - is that all predicated on your background? Can you, are you created by your background, essentially? Or can you move from whatever your family background was to be in a completely different socio economic group? That's what social mobility is.

In part of this unpacking of it all, this definition of what is working class, who is working class, do you get to define your class? You know, so for example, in this measuring of socio economic background that we've been involved in with the Social Mobility Commission, and the toolkit and stuff, which I'm sure we'll

talk about in a moment, you have to ask people to define their background according to things like the profession of their parent or carer, when they were 14. And people, it's hard to define that. And often people want to say, can I, I need to self-define. I can't, I can't choose one of these nine options, for example, that just doesn't work for me. But of course, if you're trying to get a picture of a whole, having lots of people self-defining is, is no help to an academic. You can't, you can't create stats based on, on self-definition, that you have to ask people to choose one of these categories of types of jobs. Yeah. So we're working with this sort of individual experience, and how do you feel, how do you identify? And with this more general, how do we create statistics about, you know, class in the arts.

So I suppose at the moment everything's up in the air isn't it, everyone's sort of, you know, talking about how they feel, how they understand it, how they identify other people, how do they define programmes and awards and support for people who have faced barriers? And then, of course, you've got, you know, what they talk about in social mobility is, is, is if you're going to have some people being socially mobile, upwardly, you're going to have some people being socially mobile, downward. And therefore, you're going to have people saying, well, it's not fair that now the awards, you know, you offer for people in that category, because I'm this category. And does that mean that I won't get those opportunities anymore?

So I suppose you're always going to want, you're always going to find people, you know, so example with this programme, you know that the criteria about how to identify when people are from different social economic backgrounds, you will always have people looking at these fellowships that are on offer. And they're brilliant. I mean, there's some of the, you know, most of the opportunities that the hosts offer are amazing, so why wouldn't people try and squeeze themselves into that category when they aren't already? So I suppose it's kind of human nature, if you see something that you want, you will try and identify with that. But in order to establish facts about what's going on in our industry, and how do we change it, then we need the stats about what backgrounds, what class people are in at the moment so that when change starts to happen, you can identify what worked, what didn't, is there change happening? Or have actually the stats not moved at all?

Lizzie 24:45

It's such a tricky one to define.

Kate 24:48

Out of interest, had you seen that question before you saw it on, in your application form? Had you had to answer that question for any other application?

Lizzie 24:57

No, no, that was the first time. I've seen it since in different things. And I've seen it since on the other side of the table when I've been involved in recruitment now.

Kate 25:06

And was it a bit of a shock?

Lizzie 25:07

Yeah, definitely. It was nice, actually, though, the idea that it was being considered because it was one of those things where it felt like everyone had always ignored that that was another factor. And I mean, in the UK, social mobility is really hard. Like moving upwards is one of those things that just doesn't happen. It's really difficult to do. I've found in the UK, you can get those two qualifications. And they'll be like, yeah, but so does everyone else in the country. So you stay where you are.

Kate 25:32

And what are your cultural references. And if your cultural references aren't the same as mine, well you can't get into this job anyway,

Lizzie 25:39

I must admit, I've found everyone seems to know each other, is something I've realised. The more you get into it, there's the same sets of people that you must have to show, show your work to and if you don't know them, it's a lot harder to move anywhere. And I don't know if that's other people's experiences, I just know that that's what I've felt.

I've been very lucky actually, in the Tees Valley, it's this very supportive community within the Tees Valley of trying to help everyone grow. There's a lot of trying to share opportunities. And I don't know if other areas are like that. But it's been really wonderful, especially like going through Middlesbrough and Hartlepool. There was so much in Middlesbrough and Hartlepool of being like, okay, we've got this creative opportunity and we want as many people as possible to be involved, everybody get in on it.

Kate 26:23

It would be really interesting, talking about that sort of, you know, moving around the country to, to work somewhere else for a bit and see if it's like that in other places, or indeed, whether your experiences there could be useful elsewhere. I mean, maybe other areas of the country haven't been able to build that sort of network. And maybe that's a sort of really, something really valuable you could bring to another part of the country, or maybe you'll work out that actually you're a north east creative, who wants to stay and make your mark in that part of the country, rather than move around elsewhere, taking that sort of practice elsewhere.

Lizzie 27:01

So I guess getting back on topic, you mentioned briefly about the toolkit, which is the next topic that I was gonna ask you about, cuz you developed this for organisations to help them make changes and increase socio economic diversity and just understanding of the backgrounds people have come from. Have you seen changes happening within organisations and individuals? And you know have they been very positive? Have they been difficult? What, what have the changes been?

Kate 27:34

Oh, interesting, the very nature of doing something like that is you don't tend to see what the changes are, because you kind of, you create it, you put it out there, it's on our website, it's available to people, people say, oh, god, that was uh, you know, that was really useful. And it really, you know, we really, you know, redid our recruitment practice based on that, but I don't obsessively look at online, you know, job descriptions and job packs to see. But I suppose the way, where I have seen the most change is working alongside the 50 arts organisations, the host organisations in the programme, working with them before they put their job adverts out to change the way that they wrote the packs, the way they, you know, constructed the interview process and their selection process. And I mean, some of those changes were really dramatic even from sort of the first draft they sent us till up to the final one and, and you know, for some organisations, it took them, you know, three months or something.

The single most important thing you can do is 'Who do you recruit?' And, and I think that was really interesting, cuz I think for a lot of people, and you're now in that role, and I've been in that role of recruiting, and sometimes it's, it's rabbit in the headlights, oh, God, we need somebody, we need them really quickly. Let's grab that pack that we used for that other job. We'll just change the job description a bit, get it out there as quickly as possible, put it on Arts Jobs, you know, quickly. Send it to everybody we know. We've all done that. But of course, if you stay doing that, you will always attract the same type of people. And there are biases in there that people haven't considered, multiple biases.

If we can, if our toolkit and the experiences that we've had through our host organisations, can help people across the sector to look again at the way that they do their recruitment, I think that would be just such an incredibly valuable learning that we can share with the whole sector to try and change, change the makeup of the people that get into the arts. So I do see changes and then, and then there are always these oh, no, I can't believe it. You know, you suddenly see this job pack and you think, oh my god did they learn nothing. And I think

that's again, just people sometimes slotting back into their old ways of doing things because they run out of time, you know, they're under pressure they're, you know. So I think what we have to do is just keep presenting new ideas and new ways of doing it.

And, you know, sometimes people don't need some wholesale, it just needs some little entry points, little oh, oh, you can do, you can ask people to send video applications, you know, I keep getting that. Oh my God, I've never thought of that. How amazing, you know, or, or where you actively say, instead of just saying, you know, we welcome applications from everybody from all backgrounds, blah, blah, blah, you say, we are aware as an organisation that we're, that we have not, we're not representative of our communities on this job, you know, we're really keen to change that. And, and we'll do everything to support, you know, you to make the very best application you can, so being transparent about why you want to encourage other people to apply is very different to just saying, we're open to anybody.

So that was produced back in summer 2019. We're just about, we're working with the Social Mobility Commission at the moment, they're publishing a new toolkit at the end of this month or beginning of October, which is about, for employers, again, in the creative industry. So it will be like an update of our one. And then we will publish another one next year at the end of this edition of the programme where we share the experiences of the hosts and fellows and give more insights into what works and what doesn't.

Lizzie 31:34

I mean, I feel like I've been very lucky with the organisations that I've worked with, and that they have actively wanted progression to happen. And it's been very visible, fascinating to see how things are evolving and which things are being taken in. And how long other bits will get - well, how long other parts will take to really be into the Zeitgeist?

So we're gonna move on to our last question now. I would say this is a, this is a tricky question. What is your favourite project or piece of work that you've ever worked on?

Kate 32:07

That is really hard. That is a really hard one. I suppose if I'd go with the first one, when I was thinking about that, on my walk this morning, having read through your questions, and the first one that came to me, and maybe that's the one one has to use, rather than thinking about it too much, because I've, yeah, also, I've been working in Gloucester for about the last sort of six or seven years, which is on my doorstep. And there are so many great things that I've really loved in Gloucester, but I can't think of, there isn't a specific one, it's been the whole sort of process.

So there were, the one I came up with was when the last year that I was at the Jazz Festival in Cheltenham, I was responsible for getting this amazing musician called Eartha Kitt, who was a part of my childhood, my family used to play her records. She was this absolute legend in my childhood, and I had an opportunity to bring her over from America to be at the Jazz Festival. And at that point, I think she must have been about 85. And she came over, she was absolutely extraordinary. And she didn't like women. So after all this stuff I'd done for her, she just didn't even acknowledge me when she came to Cheltenham. She only liked men, but she was, she was absolutely extraordinary. And I think that for me was yeah, it was just an extraordinary thing where this sort of legend of your childhood comes together with reality. And there she was on the stage in Cheltenham.

In fact, we did a video of it. And she sadly died about six months later. And this was the last film of her, and there she was at 85, you know, she could get her leg up, right up in the air, almost touching her head. She had this extraordinary gravelly, sexy voice and it was a magical experience.

And and yeah, so it's amazing what being in this job can give you that sort of ability to to, you know, do something that is your dream. And yeah, so Eartha Kitt has got to be up there I think as one of my favourite specific projects.

Lizzie 34:27

I think that does it for this episode of the Change of Perspective podcast. Thank you very much, Kate, for being part of this. It has been delightful to talk to you.

Kate 34:37

Thank you very much, Lizzie. I've really enjoyed it. I can't believe how introspective it's been, but it's been amazing talking to you. Thank you.

Lizzie 34:44

Thank you. Goodbye everyone. Speak to you next time.