

>> Ben holds a bachelor's degree in jazz performance from the University of Toronto. Michelle Young has a successful track record in arts administration with a commitment to culture of philanthropy and the arts.

She's also on the board of directors of the performing arts and the network of mass culture.

And Mimi Mok has over ten years of experience in the arts and culture sector in Canada and Asia. Primarily in development and board relations. She's currently the business and development director at the theatre centre. Mimi recently completed her MBA with a specialization in arts, media and entertainment management.

Please welcome Ben, Michelle, and Mimi.

>> Hello.

>> We'll just wait a moment for Mimi. Well, do you want to start with your introduction?

>> OK, sure. Thank you for the introduction. I am Michelle Young. I'm the managing director of the school of Toronto dance theatre. We are an arts organization as well as a training institution for contemporary dance. I'd like to just give a little quick update on sort of the financial impact on our organization due to the pandemic, and so we are looking at approximately up to 25% financial impact. We don't have any earned revenue coming in.

Fortunately for our organization, we have been able to tap into government relief funds such as cues and CEBA and we're a heritage organization so we also have that TOPa and our organization has pivoted quite swiftly since our closure on March 13, and we have been able to really focus on our core programs and focus all our engagement on our core group of audience members who are students, and we sort of had some digital acceleration to deliver the remaining of our school year online. Now we're looking at the medium term viability and the continuation with no clear road map. And we likely won't be recovering chSHGS I'll talk more about later, until in the post pandemic world until 2023.

>> Wow!

>> Wow!

>> Sorry, Mimi. We started without you.

>> No worries. Just so everyone knows, I was smiling really hard ready to go. So hi, everyone.

I'm Mimi, and I'm the business development director at the Toronto. My office is in

the west neighbourhood.

Today I am joining this panel from my living room, so first of all, welcome to my home. A little bit about the theatre centre. We are a life arts incubator and a community hub and we do a lot of work to support artists in developing new works, and also, the resulting production and anything afterwards such as touring which has really picked up in the last few year. Our mission is to offer a home for creative, cultural, and social interactions to invent the future. For us, home is about our building where we operate two theatres and a café and a gallery and home is also about the people who gather in our space. In my role as business and development director, I look after quite a few things, and I like to summarize it as stewardship, cultivation and generation of resources that includes money and also people and our space. So past couple of months, a lot of challenges for us. Since we had to close our building on March 15, we lost all our regular earned revenue from the café and also from people who rent out space.

But since April, we kind of find our footing and with the government subsidy that kicked in in mid-April, we're projecting to have about 15% loss in revenue. Our challenge actually comes next year, because we're not projecting for any earned revenue at all, and our profile is usually 50% earned revenue. But instead of planning for things that we think we'll have to cancel after, we're thinking to go smaller, and drop things in as we see the possibilities come up. So you know, that's one thing that has started us on the soul searching journey really.

And then of course earlier this month, when Black Lives Matter movement came and is really asking us to look at the systems that we work in and how we've been benefitting from systems that are unjust and what should we do as institutions to try to find a way to change.

>> Wow!

We'll get through all of it this hour, I hope. No. It's such a pleasure to join two visionary leaders here in Toronto.

They're support the Vitality of two really important institutions. As you heard before, this role I'm in now, I was executive director of Soundstreams, and care very much about the Toronto arts community I'm situated in. But yes, I am working for the devOS institute of arts management which is headquartered in DC.

It's the brainchild of Michael Kaiser who is the former CEO of the Kennedy centre among other things known as the turnaround king of the arts. What I've been doing

recently is assisting many organizations as they grapple with some of the challenges that you just heard Michelle and Mimi mention. We did a round of pandemic response triage planning that was for 400 organizations across North America. I did 80 of them myself, and this is just to say that this is what we are living and breathing with everyone right now, and the challenges are really profound, and I think in some small way we'd like to unpack how we can move beyond this in the medium term and beyond in this session. I think I'll leave it at that. We're thinking about this idea here about financial sustainability.

What does it mean now? What does it mean in the future? In this environment that no one could have predicted. Of all of the scenario planning we could have done, I think it's fair to say we wouldn't have thought about surviving with the actual force of our mission, the programming is the one thing we can't do right now. It's such a profound shift in the way all of the thinking has to go. I'm seeing, you know, of course, as just mentioned, organizations that have lots of earned revenue, are being pummelled right now, which typically was kind of offy seen by and large as a great thing. You are I response from the public with your work.

You're building audiences and they're paying money to do things with you. Now we're seeing those organizations hurting the worst. Contributed revenue is able to float organizations now and in some cases it becomes a savings for organizations that have aed mole that's tipped that direction.

That's very strange. Some organizations, of course, really high fixed costs and not a lot of working capital like orchestras have something like two weeks of cash on hand on average. So this is not good for those organizations that have reliance on earned revenue and high fixed costs and very it is they felt like they could do in the world. But the question that came up right away and persists to this day and becomes more and more pronounce side how do we engage with our institutional family? What do we do to keep ourselves in the hearts and minds of our audiences and our donors during this time? When the first wave of this came, I really thought of this in terms of also being appropriate and staying out of the conversation where other charitable sectors needed some intense triage in society like health and other pressing needs.

Now, I think, you know, as this is extending, we really have to figure out what is our value proposition to our family of supporters? I see a lot of people grappling with that.

They're grappling with how do I actually ask people for money during this time. The institutions and people and I'll unpack that a little bit later I hope. And also the other thing I see is just this broken customer promise that we're pretty good at in the arts. One of the things we do really well is say a year and a half from now or a year from now, it will be this show and have this amazing artist and it usually happens as we plan by and large.

It's these miracles we do that.

That's been profoundly shattered in this environment. I haven't seen that either.

Here we are looking at how this becomes the new normal.

It's not a bridge strategy anymore. I'm seeing organizations, you know, say, well, woo estgot government funding for now. How can we rely on that, because what's the elephant in the room? Again, relevancy. How long can you expect to remain relevant in this time that will generate financial health? And as a profound aside, just quickly to say that artists -- these are the grass roots fundamental producers of the actual work that we take to the public, and they largely have been left out of those sweeping relief efforts.

>> Uh-huh.

>> Closing my thoughts here.

The last chunk of this, I'm seeing organizations looking at one of three doors.

They're contemplating at this juncture now, which they weren't before largely, a hibernation state.

Look at the Guthrie theatre in Minneapolis. They're saying we do theatre. We're not Netflix.

And we don't do film. So rather than change our mission, we are going to go into hibernation and come back when we can bring you beautiful theatre again.

It's been changing people's lives for thousands of years and we tend for this to be a break and we'll be back at it. Door number two is what we've been calling at the institute, digitized be as usual. We're saying OK, let's take what we do and keep it on a mission and try to shove it through this strange digital pen opy con. I can't see a single audience member.

That's what people are trying to do with their programming. Some of it's successful. Training has been more successful than programming. Some organizations are really now look at how do we deliver a product that actually has the values that are going to generate revenue and interest over time? The third door is just sort of like

something unexpected, like the sort of startling innovation, the things that are crazy that seem to be working like all the drive-in stuff that is happening. I saw one festival deploy concerts all over lawns and reach as many people as the full festival or the New York dance company that's doing a drive-in show where they dance over people's cars and you put on an MP3 track. And a children's they were going to do a backyard project. What can we do in this frame to shatter that frame and come up with something new? It all boils down to what are we doing within the lens of our mission? How can we deliver that value? And to whom? And I think answering that question is going to be really important in the medium term.

>> Uh-huh. Yeah. Ben, I really take a lot of what you said is what we're experiencing right now every day as we try to figure out how to -- well, first, survive this period, and then, you know, what do -- how do we want to emerge when the pandemic is over? And internally, we talk about it as taking a gap year and finding our heartbeat. And you know, as an incubator, we primarily serve artists who are developing new works. That's what we start with. In our soul searching, one of the biggest debates that's come up is should we use the resources that we have to try to preserve ourselves in order to emerge as strong as possible when whenever we can or should we share with artists what we have now? Because they haven't stopped creating. They need our support now. So you know, on the one hand is how -- we do need to survive. If we can't survive, we can't do anything in the future. On the other hand, if we don't support the art, why do we exist in the first place? And you know, as we debate this internally, I think one of the things that became really clear to me is the reason why we're even having this debate is that resources in the sector are so tied to productions. They're so tied to output.

>> Right.

>> If we talk about the revenue mix, it's public, private, and earned revenue. Public money, a lot of it goes towards projects, say, for example, Canada council for the arts, 50-P of their funding goes to a project and 50% to its operating for institutions. We talk about private sector. A lot of companies like to sponsor shows because that's visible. And that's a way for them to do a lot of other work to please their clients. In terms of earned revenue, box office only comes when a production is in place. So yeah. In our work of supporting development of new works, public funding tends to be small. Colleagues who also do commission for works, the commission varies a lot. It could be, you know, one year is living wage for an artist

or just one month. Comparing that to the period of time that a work needs to take. That really has a lot of discrepancy and gaps around it. In our experience, most of the works that we have supported takes on average between two to three years. Definitely also quite a few that takes longer. For example, one of the shows that we did in 2017 called secret life of a mother, it took five years. So they started at the beginning wanting to explore popportrayal of motherhood in popular culture. In that five-year development period, they became mothers for the first time. That completely changed the direct of the show.

What I am starting to really feel for all the artists, as you said, Ben, that's been left out of a lot of emergency funds that are available to the sector is the original model that we were working on already asked artists to shoulder almost all of the risks during the development period. They have to take all the financial risk up front, and then bank on money coming in through project funding or box office sales. Later when the project is almost done that.

Means artist his always had to find their own ways to survive development, and that immediately already shuts out a lot of people who can't afford to do that. And even if we look at, you know, through the equitable lens, it is not equitable, because if we look at artists, institutions, and funders as equal system and that supports the whole sector, we're asking the group with the least resources to shoulder the most risk. We're also on the other hand saying we do need a supply of new works all the time in order for the ecosystem to survive. Median income for people in arts and culture sector from the 2016 census, nationally, it's about \$25,000.

National low-income measure threshold which is used to gauge whether a household is a working poor family is just about \$22,000. So basically, even before COVID, half of these people already are either borderline working poor or working poor, and we know that with the pandemic and all the things shut down, it has just gotten worse. Also adding to that, we know for sure that the economic downturn from the pandemic is hitting bipock communities disproposately.

They're even more at risk than they were recently, and we have an urgent question to ask in terms of how do we keep as many BIPOC artists sustainable and have their talents stay in the sector.

I think COVID has really forced us to stop business as usual.

And start the soul searching and I think about what has been and not working.

What needs to be changed. So I just want to wrap my thought with two things. The

first thing is that cirque has given a life line to many artists and freelancers in the industry. I think Kirk is a form of universal basic income.

One of the ways that if we can manage to have universal basic income, we can basically more equally distribute the risk of creative work amongst the whole society, not just within our sector. And media institutions, one of the things we can lend is our voice and our platform to all the lobbying from all the different sectors that have been working on getting a UBI and plan for UBI in place. The second thing that's giving me hope is that our councils and the government has moved very quickly at the beginning of COVID and they have stepped in with a lot of emergency measures that's given institutions the ability to stabilize. That is very different from some other councils that are less friendly towards change.

When we had artistic director change last year, we were actually moved from multiyear operating funding to a single year. And that's for 10% of our operating budget each year. And now we have to apply every year and keep our fingers crossed that we will get the same amount. That's never been an issue for those that never had any change in leadership for many years. I'm hoping that with the pace that our councils were able to move at begin of COVID, we can see a different future in how we can all work together.

>> Thank you, Mimi.

>> There is one question in the thing now, whether we want to just -- Ben, if you want to answer this is whether emergency funds have been in existence in the past? I don't believe --

>> Well, there was -- not in this way, I think. I think that -- no. I would say after the 2008 crisis, there was a similar emergency, particularly south of the border in the way it hit private-sector funding.

I've never seen this kind of a response from government or major, major foundations before.

>> Yeah. The second half of that question, we'll talk about later. So I'm going to leave it for now. I'll continue in terms of future sustainability and the perspective of institutions and of course I'm using my own perspective at the school as well as on the boards I sit on, and also to fill up this conversation with some of the conversations that I've had with my colleagues who are also dealing with many of these same things. So in order for institutions like the school, for example, to build towards future sustainability, we still need to continue and invest in human

resource development and infrastructure development. And when I say human resource development, I'm talking about reevaluating the leadership models we have or the business model or training of staff and looking at the models and our processes, investing and continuing to do that, and also continuing to invest and contribute to mentorship, because when we get out of this whether it's three years or five years, we still need those skills to move forward. And part of doing that here is around challenging our notions and our norms and our assumptions, and it's very hard for institutions, we've been around for 50 years, and so there are quite a few assumptions that have allowed us to continue in the way that we have because stability brings grants. Stability equals grants. It doesn't allow for change. For you to challenge those assumptions. Now is the time. Especially with antioppression, Black Lives Matter, and in terms of safety in the workplace. That's all been a lot of the conversation over the last -- in the immediate and the last three years. There are some of the things we need to look at right now. I think that taking a pause as to what we're doing in your organization is important.

I mentioned at beginning that in three weeks, we accelerated digitally and delivered coordinating of our training program or the end of the academic year. We did that because we didn't want our students to fall back, and we were able to, because of that short period of time. But as we move forward, we're really thinking about does that make sense? Are we able to deliver our programs in a digital world?

Should it be hybrid? Should we, could we? Doesn't even make sense with the viability around all of that is under question, and I think it's a good opportunity, anywhere where we're pushed to take risks and challenge ourselves helps us innovate and come up with better solutions. So here is an opportunity for institutions and organizations that have a little bit of history to really think about how they can shift to become more adaptive, more nimble and more flexible, and to really challenge those legacy practices or best practices that may no longer be relevant even in the current context, but in the post pandemic world. I strongly believe as much as we all grapple and want to move forward and be normal again, that normal doesn't really exist anymore. Even in the short period of time for three months zEESHGS learned to go beyond our comfort zone, and we need to continue to do that in terms of future sustainability. I see this also as a period in term of challenging our assumptions is really you have the ability and people are expecting you to take risks and try new things out because you have to. I think there's more of

an appetite not to work but at least you'll learn something from that and learn from others. We can't all be doing the same thing and pushing out the same materials and content. Let's work together. Are there synergies to share resources and all those kind of things. Those are some things that I'm thinking about in terms of future sustainability specifically for the school. As we look deeper, we're looking at mission, vision values and how we should get rid of the clutter that doesn't allow us to do what our core mission is, and really focusing on those values, because that's what's going to push you forward. And your mission is the reason why you exist. Not all the other things that you're doing or the money that you're chasing to get into your organization. So in term of future sustainability, absolutely. Viability, I'm thinking about as well. Should we even exist? As a training institution? In terms of the arts ecology and the dance ecology, yes and no. Can we make space for someone else?

Can we make space for new voices? And we're thinking about all of these things and how we can contribute to the sector but also support the sector in that regard. And I think my final thing that I want to mention is that in terms of future sustainability is just around that it really is important for us now as much as to attest to test our assumptions and challenge them.

It's about really being honest about identifying the gaps that are within your organization, within the sector, and whether or not we're able as individuals or as an organization or a collective, as a community, can address those challenges. I think -- was it Anthony who said in the key note, when you unbirth these complexities, it becomes even more. When you unearth these flaws or gaps, it becomes more complex, and yes, it's easy to identify them, but how do we solve the problems.

And that's sort of what we're grappling with at the institutional level.

>> Uh-huh. I really -- this idea that the support structures we create in our society that say arts has intrinsic value and we're going to give it this nudge to exist of course calcifies the way we do the work and design our institutions and I'm hearing through line in everything that you're saying about the value of risk taking which of course we know isn't new.

Nonprofits are really just risk averse.

We think they're going to be risky ventures or for-profit folks think that. When you look at any tech start-up, they're willing to fail big if they need to or fail small and

learn and fall again and learn. It's that sense of remembering what it was like to have this huge appetite for risk taking and changes that comes with a crisis, and not that we would ask for this. I think that's really important and might be something that we can use to address some of the systemic, bigger issues that you've outlined.

The other --

go ahead. Yeah, please.

>> I just wanted to also add that as an institution, our structures are based on these, you know, euro colonial views and values around what art is.

If we relate that back to the granting and what Mimi was saying around we need to support artists and that we need to distribute that risk and take ownership of that, is that our current structures don't actually support that.

They want to support stability, which is great. There should be some stability, but they don't -- when there's stability, there really isn't a lot of room for innovation, and so when the innovation comes, and I think they mentioned this in the accessibility, innovation happens in the marginalized or the fringe.

>> Uh-huh.

>> So they're take all the risks, and so yeah. And in term of the current structure as to your point, Mimi, is around it becomes exclusionary.

>> Uh-huh.

>> That's one big thing we want to tackle and of course, Mimi, you also mentioned Canada council has moved to 50/50 project/operating.

What is the next step beyond that, right? I think we all have to work together and bring that voice forward to support these changes.

>> Yeah. And I'm actually quite excited to see what Canada council comes up with in terms of next phase of emergency funding they have promised to individual artists in the sector. I think that's very new. I've never seen that. At any level of arts council. So very curious to see their plan.

>> Yeah.

>> Yeah.

>> My brother recently applied for Canada council, his first, and he got it, and I was like oh, they actually are doing what they're saying. I know a person, and he applied for the first time and received a little microgrant. I said that's great. Sometimes it's hard to see the results of that, because we're so entrenched in our own work, and those structures.

>> Perhaps some thoughts on how it's great we have some thoughts of how we can approach individual donors at this time.

It comes up a lot. Maybe this will help. Maybe not. I noticed a stark difference between throwing your money into a flaming pit of despair asks and we all had those come to our indocs. They were very long e-mails from the artistic leadership that were unedited and everyone is panic and I'm not making light of that. It's not necessarily the most inspiring thing to open up your wallet especially at that moment when you're going through the triage wave of that. And you're wanting to donate to the red cross, etc. etc. Some organizations on the other hand have restraint and they did this in a smart way. This is what I think would be the smart way.

You would not send that message.

You would send a message that's very much not -- we meet you where you are. You are valuable to us. Something very short about this is what we're doing and it's all right. Then it was this whole come to build inner coalition first. Go to your org and show them the hairy details.

Come up with a plan. If it's the gap, turn it from a gap into a plan and then start moving outward in your spheres of influence, to your major donors.

Get a match going. A month and a half from now, you start to see these campaigns come out that are about future vision and future projects and resiliency and innovation and the continuance of the mission which is what people buy into. If I learned anything from Michael Kaiser, by and large, people want to buy into a success story in the arts. We're not the red cross. We're not a hurricane relief fund. I saw the most volume of that wrong kind of fundraising I've ever seen. I understand why it happened but I think we should learn from that.

Now that we're in this medium term, how did you approach people for money? I think there is starting to widen some light coming in and some space for going to individuals. I think you can do it this way. Think of your donors in four times.

Mission, access, social, and status motivated. I'll go through them again.

The mission oriented donor is interested in seeing your mission continue. They're interested in the long-term trajectory. We bring future projects, future initiative, exciting, innovative programming that's going to happen even if you don't know when it's going top H AchLT they can come in as early investors in this as we have always done.

By and large, we have forgotten that people are inspired to hear about those things and ready to hear about those things.

I'm noticing success happening in the background for things that are going to come out when we're back programming in person. So that's how we treat the mission donor.

Access, well, it's interesting, you know, that you can still provide really digitally intimate experiences with artists now, and you can do it with great ease. Get more famous people than you haven't before to connect with a small group of donors because they don't have to leave their house.

I saw things that I didn't think would work that they would get bored. They're still doing digital donor lounges that are work. Same for the minor that misses those overlapping circles of people. It's a unique joyous group of people that come together for the mission. If those peoples are provided with that. There are couples and friends you don't see unless you're around that mission.

Some people value that above all else. Let's give that to them however we can in this time that may become easier as small groups can gather.

The status donor is tougher during the digital period.

It's harder. Some might be interested in the kind of recognition we provide during this time. But you can't give the shoutout from the stage.

We have to be creative about what to do. And you're hinting at it earlier, talking about corporate funding that is the same thing were we want to be addressed in a public event. So I find that to be -- but just some food for thought that these conversations are convince advancing and people are looking to the future and it's important to look at what value you're going to be providing. Does that spur anything for you two?

Are you doing any of these things?

>> Yeah. I really like how you categorized into four groups of donors, and I wonder if there's a little bit more overlap between the mission donor and the socially minded donor and the access donor and status donor? Like a Venn diagram.

Because what we've been looking at in terms of fundraising is the yes, sir that if we build it, people may not come. But if they build it, they will stay.

That's the model that inspired us was the art centre in London.

They had a fire in a couple of years ago.

What happened was their community really came together to help them rebuild,

and have stayed on and really consider it part of the community, and so that is one way that we want to explore, and I think it probably ties better into the mission and socially minded donors that you listed.

>> Yeah. That's inspiring.

I think the theatre centre is a great example of having that kind of ownership the way it came to and continue, yeah.

>> Thanks, Ben, for summarizing that as well. Thank you you , also for validating what we're doing, inconsistent with the [not audible]

[Laughter].

>> I think when we first -- when we first closed, we decided we're really going to focus on our core programs and our core groups which is our students, and we weren't going to talk about whether we're a sinking ship or not a sinking ship. I think that that helped us prioritize how we were going to communicate. Students, our faculty, the artists that we engage with, and we allowed -- we shifted our fundraising plan and allowed for people to -- not to clutter the air waves with our ask because it was a lot of information going out at the time around safety and health concerns and all that, and then subsequently, we also shifted to support Black Lives Matter and those other very important messages that were out there.

We've been focusing specifically on our core donors, so renewals of our donors is where we're focusing and to maintain that momentum for the future. Really creating opportunities for us to engage with them and not so much asking for money at this moment but for continuous engagement.

We're fortunate in that we have access to relief funds, and we have a good mix that allow us to cushion those blows, but we're seeing this as a really good opportunity to focus on stewardship, and to bring people along to get and build for that future past 2023 when we hope to be out of this --

>> I think that's really smart.

>> Yeah.

>> So I think we were even in our team, we were chatting about, oh, well, if you look back 20 years, you remember those PBS telethons that were on TV, something like that to be engaged with and also something cheeky and fun. We're hoping to plan something like that for August. Who knows how successful it would be.

It's about engagement.

Because we're not doing performances right now, we take for advantage that engagement when people come to our show and access and feel, we're trying to recreate that through some onliege engagement and sharing of news in a more effective way, and we're looking at even -- OK, we need to start picking up the telephones again.

>> That's right.

>> And talk to people. Because we kind of push away from that when there's digital opportunity and people -- there's a lot of clutter and a lot of like --

you're competing for people's time. Now I feel that we don't -- have more time.

>> This is really profound actually. One of the things I kept coming to with clients is they should make a huge phone tree and reallocate staff and make it all about high touch ambassadorial work. Reaching people in their homes. If you can stay in someone's heart and mind that way, that's the next most powerful thing we other than the art.

It's not just fans tow talk about on panels like this. But this is still one of the best things, and everyone that was successful did that first.

Absolutely. They went through everyone. I think that has to continue. We have to make very high touch efforts. Yeah.

There was a question here about how to encourage artists getting paid in the digital realm? Do we want to touch that at all? I would say that training has been easier to convert to paid largely is what I'm seeing.

Why I'll leave to these other two to answer. And why it's difficult is that we're one of those industries that's in the awkward halfway place where we haven't really learned to monetize.

If you look at any of the platforms that serve the arts that way, we're in danger of ending up like newspapers playing catch-up. I don't have an easy answer other than I like step models that allow people to engage more deeply as they get more into what you're doing much there's a trial that's free and that it steps up very -- boil them one degree at a time until they're buying your digital membership. Those are gooded moells. Do you have any thoughts?

>> We haven't tried to monetize anything digitally in terms of content. Partly because we're unsure whether -- if there's too much content out in the world. And so can we make space from anybody else? Our core program is not presenting but we present as part ever training.

Training as Ben mentioned has shiftshifted quicker, I guess, digitally, but I think because in the training model, it's still part of your operating. It's not doing more, because we can shift in that way because it's not doing extra and beyond what you're already doing.

>> Yeah.

>> The monetizing thing is really interesting. I know Taaffe music is monetizing their concerts. I'm not sure how that's going. I don't know.

>> Yeah.

>> How you do it. So with so much clutter and content, are we just competing and then are people willing to pay when there's a free option somewhere else?

>> Yeah. We haven't tried to monetize it just yet either.

We're basically doing our same old model as in we're paying the artists, and we are pulling presenter fees and things like that from organizations.

Audiences tuning in hasn't had to pay yet. So I'm with you, Ben, on this one much I think we might get into the difficult position that newspapers are facing right now in that they started to ask for subscriptions but that hasn't really covered for all the losses from advertising. I don't quite know where we're land in terms of performing arts. But one thing that I've been seeing that might be interesting is some theatre companies have started podcasts, and they started using pa treon.

They have hosts, I think it's monthly meetings and have different levers of membership as you said. So some subscription lets you look really deep into their creative process and some is you just get to come to their monthly gathering.

>> That's great. And really an important thought comes to mind about all of this is there's something we're doing when we move into a digital marketplace is that we're moving the element of geography. I found that --

we've talked about quality which is so important, and I still think doesn't get talked about enough. I agree those are great examples of how you can try to fund it. It's so important to Meng there has to be a conscious sense that are we actually now in an acquisitional sense not just putting it out there to be discovered but devoting resources to a global market?

This is a profound shift of the mission.

If you look at what the mission is, what are we doing? For whom? And where? That's the third part of the mission. And the how should be flex and I believe that's what we're seeing with the medium change. But most of the time, at least in the

beginning of this, I've been saying you really should be beaming awful your digital stuff and a cone of light right over down the top of the people that might actually come back to your shows. It might be cool to have people from all over the world to log on to your livestream.

But what is that going to add up to later? I haven't found that's been addressed very well yet. My advice has been start with your core, and I hear that from Michelle. Development folks have that instinct, I'm sure you did with yours. What about audiences? Have you thought about that, either of you? What do you think about your audiences if you were to go digital and what that means in terms of the catchment area?

>> Yeah. We definitely have discussed that, but we started with at the point of what sort of content would make people want to stay with us for, you know, an hour on the screen if their own home in and shoutout to everyone who has been following us in this chat so far, because that's what you're doing.

So in terms of content, we've been throwing ideas around in terms of is there something that we need to do together such that it's interesting again and people feel like they're connected with people even though you're all in your own home looking at a screen. So yeah. In that sense, we're been thinking about who are our audiences at this moment of time.

>> I love that you put the art first and the quality of the product first.

[Laughter].

>> I work with a lot of theatre majors. It's very true to us, I think.

>> Maybe I'm being too colloquial, but we weren't Netflix before this. Right?

It's all moved so fast. When the Guthrie artistic director said but when we're not in film, something very profoundly simple hit me. We have to slow down and think about what we're doing that way. Your art form may not translate to those platforms, and Michelle, you say you're thinking about that. Some things will not translate and if that's the case, we should have a creative sabbatical and everything about the business and the employees. If this is what we do in the world, we shouldn't be doing it poorly.

That won't serve us in the long run. There was another question that came in about basically the idea that funders make you fill out so many forms and things, it's like you spent the amount of time spending their forms that the grant was worth.

It's a big problem and something that is hard to be brave to talk about when you're

trying to get funding.

It's something I get to be louder about now. I'm just going to say by and large, they're not doing at this time right way. They have to trust you to create deliverables. And make it as lean as possible to get to that. And we see like the Ford foundation, and I would argue the Canada council really striving for that. Where others really, it seems like there's another layer of bureaucracy every year. I don't have a long point about that, other than I think that's true. I think it's OK to speak up to funders and say these things, and OK to also charge for your overhead expenses. That's usually what gets us into trouble.

You don't have time to write the grant because you haven't built that in.

>> I think that's fair. A few years back, I participated in a focus group organized by Katie heritage. I'm not sure whatever happened to that. We didn't get it. It spoke about how they were trying to centralize and make more efficient the granting process, and one of the questions at the end of that focus group was around how -- if you had to monetize the amount of time it costs you to apply for a grant and do reporting, that whole process, what amount would you attribute to that? And of course, there were many different organizations from the many different heritage programs that were participating in that.

But in that graph where people just put their hand on this number line T ranged from \$5,000 to \$20,000. So for a lot of time, that is like half your grant, or a good portion of your grant could be spent somewhere else to really deliver programs or innovate or do something different or pay artists.

Right? So yeah.

>> Yeah. I am totally with you on that, Michelle. If you ever get the outcome of that consultation that you participated in, I would love to see it. I wonder if this is the moment where we start working together instead of, you know, funders doing a thing that feels like on the opposite side from institutions and, you know, institutions field like there's on a different side than artists and funders. This is something I've read in nonprofit. I don't know if you follow that blog.

Basically, the author of the blog said multiple times, this is a round table. We're not work on different sides of the table. We're trying to achieve the same thing. Let's try to work together, and you know, that might reduce some of the bureaucracy.

>> That's a great way to look at it. I find funders are more receptive to these questions than we think. They want those outcomes and your success. As perhaps

a point to end that on, I learned -- I'm reasonably certain that ivy league schools charge -- what percentage do you think they would charge in overhead when they fund raise?

I'm letting the crowd guess.

It's a shocking amount. 40%.

>> Wow!

>> Wow!

>> That's what I heard.

>> I said 5% to 10% to a donor the other day and they were shocked and appalled by that.

>> You have to frame at this time right way. Maybe that's practical advice. Maybe that's vehicle to folks. It's a huge mistake that's made in a smaller organization. Part of the sustainability question in this time or any time is to deal with that. I love the idea that we can create that change. Should we take another question or move to our wrap-up stage?

>> I've lost track of which questions we've answered.

>> I'm going off the ones that have been upvoted.

>> OK.

>> All right. I'll let you take it.

[Laughter].

>> I keep hitting the closed captioning button.

>> There's a question about how to be realistic with funders about the current financial reality. And then it lists --

Colleen, thank you for this question and lists the different types of stakeholders.

For me it's a very different conversation for each stake holdered. The conversation with the funder is very open and should be more open than it typically unless it's always about success. That's what we're hearing from institutional funders.

I think my advice for donors is back to what I said before. Be very careful who you bring in, at what time, and what information they're provided.

Not because you're lying to people but it's not time for them to get on the bus yet.

You're asking them too much the e-mails sent to everyone in the database. A show I went to seven years ago, I don't remember what company it is.

I'm not going to donate a huge amount of money. You have to think the time. The marginal buyer, and donor, we could lose them forever if we don't do it in the right

way. You need to know you found a way through and will deliver incredible programming to them. Does that make sense?

>> Yeah.

>> Totally. Absolutely.

>> Yeah. Let's see. I see one question here from Jennifer about can we have fundraising.

That's interesting for me. That is how I've been thinking about fundraising recently. I think so maybe crowd funding can be something we can explore.

Raising fund for film makers and trying to raise the capital for filming, they've had some success. I don't think we in the performing arts have tried a lot of that.

That might be a way to hack fundraising.

>> What do you think, Michelle?

>> I think there's been some success stories with crowd funding. One example that I'm going to share from dance, and I see Andrew Roberts is on. I think it's my Andrew Roberts. I don't know if anyone has ever taken a Gaga class, but the Gaga community has really come together to raise money in that crowd funding way to support those artists that teach Gaga.

>> Hmm.

>> And so -- and then I know there's also -- in terms of content, it relates back to monetizing content is that rather than charging an admission, there's a pay what you can model. So pay five bucks and take a class or whatever, and that seems to also be working as well in terms of the fundraising realm.

>> That's very cool.

>> Yeah. And then, you know, it's how you get that to translate to, perhaps, deeper relationships, and it has notions of generation, you know, generationality that perhaps younger donors are more willing to participate in that kind of a way. And then also, you know, can we keep them? Can we advance them closer to the mission if they're sort of just giving an upvote with 50 bucks or something on a crowd fund? I don't know. I think that I agree that we certainly haven't as in many other digital areas moved forward in the arts and tested these things enough.

Yeah, certainly.

I think it's a good time to go over to our final thoughts perhaps. Or we can take one more question. Let's see here.

Question about rural groups being at a disadvantage. It's kind of true, isn't it?

Where capital is present --

>> Absolutely.

>> Where capital is present, it's easier to fund raise.

>> Yeah. Although yesterday the keynote speaker, I think, a speakers from Scotland, he raised some really interesting point, because he was working with rural groups before COVID, and the difficulties and challenges faced by rural groups that he listed are almost a hundred percent what we have all been talking about since the lockdown.

Things like feeling disconnected from each other, having to work virtually all the time and virtual fatigue, and feeling disconnected from having to work on your own and not as part of a group. So there may be a lot of things that we can learn by looking at the challenges that rural organizations were facing and how they tackled those challenges that might inform us in terms of coming out of COVID.

>> Wow!

That's heavy. Yeah. That's another 1-hour talk, isn't it?

>> It probably is.

>> And the disparity around granting and fundraising.

It all exists, the further you are from the populace, the less funds that you'll have, and so whether -- I think looking ahead, whether distribution can be considered at the government level or even at corporate levels, how, you know, a dollar here is not the same as a dollar there. And so figuresin' out what that distribution should be.

>> I think we looks to the arts council to be the equalizers of geography and I think we take for granted they're doing that that.

They always have the magnetic poles to the city centres that produce the volume of art and the art that can push each other in different ways and forward.

Rural organizations need that equal boost because you can't do the private-sector fundraising you can do in a big city, to be the captain obvious.

It's really hard, and there they ask so many things from your community. All of a sudden, you become the community arts centre. You you've seen those places that are run by miracle workers that doe sewn many things to be the connective tissue for a community. That's something we should really think about. Thank you for that question.

>> Yeah.

>> Canada is humongous. It can be a challenge.

[Laughter].

>> We says as we sit in Toronto.

>> Yes.

>> OK. Final thought from anybody as we round the corner here? What do we want these folks to walk away think about or confused about?

>> I think in my own perspective and own world, I think my final thought for anyone who is a practitioner or anyone who works in an organization is to continue to push forward, because otherwise, we don't know where we'll be in a year or two, but to really think about what we were talking about at the beginning is around mission, vision, values. Those are the things that are going to push and you drive you forward.

We need to focus on that and that will tomorrow what --

determine what you should be doing. We do need to stop the cycle of doing more and more and more. We need to do less but do those things like amazing.

>> Yeah.

>> And I think that we have this time to really try to push that value forward about and thinking about the future of work and what this means for us as arts workers, practitioners and [not audible] to the community.

>> Yeah. For me, it's about, as we probably all would take time to reflect, because all of the current situations, and life events happening around the world. I want to think about how the risks of engaging in creative work is distributed across society at large, and how we as a sector can participate in making some changes that are crucial if we want to move towards more equitable systems.

I want to quote my colleague Anita who said whenever I think about action, I always think about what is my action. So it can be an individual who takes meaningful action on your own, and I think all of us has the power to affect how the group behaves.

>> That's a wonderful call to action. Here we find ourselves, Michelle, saying we have a stability problem because stability calcifies things and we can't create the change we need. We just became very unstable for the foreseeable future and a reminder from Mimi, we all have change to make and a sphere of influence in different ways in our professional and personal lives that intersect so much in this community and it's a time to really think about seriously about what changes we

can create while we have that malleablemalleability. My thoughts would be to remember what we actually do in the world is art, and that if that isn't really high quality and differentiated and valuable for people, the whole thing is going to fall apart.

And so I think it's really important to think about what kind of organization we are preparing to be when we come back, because we will come back.

We've gotten to the point we feel this is forever and it's not. For most organizations, this will thankfully be a blip in the past. Now it's really important to think about what is the vision for those projects that are going to be so unbelievably exciting that our audiences will rally back and be together again so we can build strong institutions? You have to figure out, are you going to be an organization that focuses on creating world-class art and that's going to lead everything, or you an organization that's going to make your art touch people in other ways? Are you going to work within that intersection between art and other social practices? Are you going to be part of the solution to all of the things that we need to do to heal society on the other side of this? I think both of those are valid. I've made another dichotomy out of something that maybe was a circle as Mimi said. I'm not sure we're there as a sector and really unpacking and showing the world we create positive change and social change and the financial and economic change, the way that we can be a solution provider to help heal society in the years to come.

Now is the time to reflect on that.

What are we bringing to people?

How are we describing that impact? And what impact is it going to have? Yeah.

Thanks, everybody. And hi, everyone, out there. We could just be talking to ourselves right now.

We have no idea.

>> I see 494 people.

>> That'sful wonderful.

>> That's -- wow!

>> Amazing. Thank you. We'll bring Mikita back to wrap us UT up. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thanks, Mimi.

>> Thanks, Ben.

>> It was really good talking with you.

>> Yep. Same here.

>> Cool. I don't know how to get out of this thing. OK.

>> Thank you so much. We we only need six more to reach our half a thousand.

Thank you for the panel. It was great. It was actually one of panels I would say you have to go back to and listen to again. Now we're going to have 15 minutes break, and we will meet again for our last session for today and for our conference this year, which is. See you there.