

Meet the Team: Season for Change audioblog transcript

Sholeh Johnston (SJ): Hello everyone, I'm Sholeh, and I'm the producer for Season for Change. And this is our first audio blog actually, and an opportunity for us, the Season for Change team, to share with you about who we are, and why Season for Change means so much to us. So I'm joined by Octagon Norman and Salome Wagaine and we're just going to spend about ten to fifteen minutes sharing with you who we are and why we're excited to be on this project. So just a bit about me. I've been working in the culture and climate space now for about eight years, and mostly for a long period of that with one of the Season for Change lead partners, Julie's Bicycle. And with them, I've been involved with the development of programmes about cultural action on climate change, skills development, knowledge sharing, innovation and leadership development. And I came to Season for Change the end of 2018, just after the first pilot programme, which brought together 72 organisations across the UK, running one hundred and twelve events in the lead up to COP [United Nations Climate Change Conference] in Katowice, the UN's climate talks, and really creating a platform where the cultural sector can come together to have a shared voice on climate action and be heard about what's important to us in the climate fight. So that's a bit about me. And I'd really like to invite the team now to share who are you, what's your background and what's your role in Season for Change. And before I do, I'll just say again, my name is Sholeh Johnston and my pronouns are she/her. Over to you Salome.

Salome Wagaine (SW): So yes, my name is Salome Wagaine, my pronouns are she/her, and I'm the Programme Manager for the Season. So I have a background in producing and arts administration. Most recently I worked on a project called Diverse Actions, which is a three year initiative, championing people of colour working in Live Art. So my background is mainly in developing artist development opportunities, working on shows, that sort of thing. But I have previously worked for a sustainability charity,

doing some research to see how much littering people get up to you when they don't think they're being watched. So the opportunity to work on the Season has been really exciting. In terms of the programme itself, my role is around managing relationships between the various different organisations, partners, and artists and also the processes day to day. Octagon. Would you like to introduce yourself?

Octagon Norman (ON): Yeah. Hi, I'm Octagon Norman, my pronouns are they/them, and I am the Season for Change Communications Manager. So I've got a background in communications and digital marketing particularly, previously working at an animal welfare charity and I've worked in creative writing organisations and as a freelancer as well, and I'm also a performance artist. So I am based at Artsadmin in this role, which although it is Season for Change, it is led by Julie's Bicycle as Sho mentioned and also Artsadmin. So I'm based at Artsadmin, which is an organisation I first came to as an artist, and now I'm working at in the comms field, which is pretty nice. Um, yeah, so that's me, and I'm really looking forward to seeing what comes of Season for Change this year and beyond.

SW: Great, and, obviously we're launching this in the unexpected conditions of a pandemic. I'm interested to know what the rest of the team feel are the opportunities for creating appetite for climate action in this context?

ON: I mean, we're part of the lucky ones, right? We still have jobs to go to during this pandemic, which is, which is a huge privilege. And I think it's really a space for us to explore what activism and climate climate action means, in a place where we can't physically gather to take action for climate justice. Which is a real challenge. It's a really unique challenge. And I think now more than ever, with people realising how we can forge communities remotely, and how we can have a sense of, like, solidarity and a sense of momentum, without being physically co present with each other, opens up a whole world of opportunities for refiguring what not only climate action might look like at times like these, but also how arts practice

and cultural practice can look at times like these as well. So I think we're in a really fortunate, privileged position to be able to be doing some thinking around this and to be able to actually make spaces whether they're digital or co present, or however they might manifest in the future. I feel really lucky to be in a situation where we can actually be implementing some sort of new models for working and creating and taking action. Yeah, I don't know. What about you Sho?

SJ: Yeah, thank you Octagon. I think a lot of that resonates with me as well. I think this is a really wonderful opportunity to, yeah, look for the silver lining in what has been a very difficult and stressful time for many people. And to see how we how we can use what we have at our disposal differently to find new ways of connecting with each other, and the issues that we care about. And I think the pandemic has been, not from a personal perspective necessarily, but from a kind of bigger picture perspective, a really interesting moment in, you know, recent human history. It's the first time, despite being told for years and years with climate activism that it just wasn't possible to stop the way that the system we're in functions, suddenly we've seen that happen. In the space of a month everything's changed in the sense that pollution is clear from the skies. And there's more birdsong. People are really rethinking the way that they live their lives, particularly in cities, because they feel distant from community, they feel distant from food. And the other thing that's so interesting about it is that it's affecting everyone. And I think a lot of those provocations from this pandemic, and the invitation really that it is giving us all to think deeply about how we care for one another on the planet, have parallels with with climate action and that it's also, you know, indiscriminating. It affects everyone everywhere and also has a disproportionately harsh effect on communities that are less privileged and have less access to resources. So I think it yeah, it offers us many kinds of parallel points with the ways that climate is really kind of calling for us to change the way that we live. How about you, Salome?

SW: Yeah, I completely agree. I think for me, the fact that there is this unequal distribution in the way that people are being affected by the virus reflects the environmental inequalities that, I think as a programme we've always been interested in and feels even more important now. And the measures that have had to take place in order to protect populations have reminded us of larger fights that are ongoing and need to be questioned. And things like access to the public space, green spaces, clean air, all of these things are things that have an environmental impact, a public health impact, and are things that, as you mentioned Sho, are things that culture and the arts can take some form of leadership of. And I'm also just going to go back to that question that you put Octagon around how we're changing the way in which we're meeting. And this could be an opportunity for us to rethink the ways in which activism is done, how we have in the past not let people in possibly because we've not had the resource or funding so as to make online mass-meetings happen, these sorts of learning sessions. So there are ways in which this has sped up certain things that I know activists have been hankering for for a while.

ON: Yeah, I think that one of the really interesting and exciting things about what we're doing here is to think about access to art spaces, cultural spaces and activism spaces, and how the acceleration of this digital spectatorship and digital gathering is accessible isn't accessible to different people. That's a thing that I'm excited about working on for sure. What else are we excited about for the Season? Sho?

SJ: Personally, I'm still excited about one of the core principles of the Season, which is really about coming together. And I think as you've both said, it feels even more important in this time to find ways to come together. And so you know, the fact that the Season is being delivered by two lead partners and a core of 15 partnerships across the UK through our commission's and events that we have over 800 signups for already. And even more signups kind of coming in this period of lockdown, which honestly was a, you know, has been a slight surprise to us, we really felt like

people might have their mind turned to other issues. But it's fantastic to see that there's still this desire and appetite. And that really excites me, it really gives me hope that there is ultimately still this will and this desire to come together and to co-create. So yeah, for me, the excitement really is about, you know, the opportunity to reimagine the way that we that we live and think and relate to each other in the environment, and the opportunity to do that together in new ways. How about you, Salome?

SW: Yeah, I'm really interested in the ways that we as individuals could retain a sense of hope and agency, even if we do sometimes feel as though we are just a drop in the ocean. And for me, there are quite a few sort of moments in the open programme that have that opportunity. So I'm really excited about having an open call for artists to make work that responds to the crisis. And I'm also interested to see what sorts of angles we will be taking, and there will be an opportunity for people who are often not centred and mainstreamed within the larger climate movement to have their say, have their perspective. And I think that's something that's really exciting, and the fact that we'll be developing tools that can be adapted and used in different arts organisations. So being able to be part of something that facilitates that at this moment is yeah, a real privilege really.

ON: Yeah, yeah, I agree. It's gonna be awesome. And so exciting and stimulating and yeah, it is a real joy. And it's a privilege to be able to look forward to spending our time developing stuff like that that is so important to us and to this time. I think I'm really excited about the grassroots nature of what this opportunity sort of has as well and to see how people working at all different stages in their arts practice or cultural practice are responding and coping and living in these times, and also doing so while thinking about the environment and climate action, and still striving for the action and justice at the same time, because it's pretty powerful. I think as well, for me personally, something I'm really excited about is I'm - I'm like an audience nerd. I love audiences. And I think that's why I've ended up working in comms to be fair because that's sort of the driving force behind

what I do, is to understand what audiences want. I'm super excited to see not only artists and cultural organisations but I'm also super excited to see what are the audiences that they in turn will bring in and how we can engage with them and how they navigate access to these kinds of works and these kinds of spaces. That's super exciting for me. And also we're aiming to reach I think, 10 million people with this, which is wild. That's a lot of people. And yeah, I'm excited to learn more about who those 10 million people are and how we can best provide them with access to the Season for Change programme. And maybe not even the programme. It's just the core principles that the programme operates on. So I guess we're ending on a nice sweet note there. I feel like it's about time to wrap up. As I said at the start, this is our first audioblog so who knows, we might not have even been recording this whole time. I'll get to find out in a minute when we finish. But for now, thanks for listening and it was - I'd say great to meet you personally - but I hope that you didn't mind meeting us digitally this time around. And hopefully in the future we'll be in a place where we can be co present with you. But for now it is goodbye from us at Season for Change, and we will see you soon. Bye bye.