

## Compass Festival Podcast Transcript

### *Episode 3: Drag, Dance and Disco: What is the future of queer space? With Lucy Hayhoe, Ray Larman, Amelia Cavallo and Cassie Leon*

#### **Elle Money**

\*Light drums and music play\* Hello, welcome to the Compass Festival Podcast. If you didn't already know Compass Live Art is the driving force behind the biennial Compass Festival. We present playful and interactive encounters across the city of Leeds in all kinds of places and spaces. Previously, we've held medieval animal trials, collected 1000 stranger's handshakes in clay, and even let a chicken answer your innermost questions. Normally, we bring all these projects together in a 10 day festival, but this year, we're spreading them out over 2021, and, to give you a taste of what to expect for the next four weeks, we'll be chatting to artists, makers and local folk all about the themes of concerns of some of our upcoming projects.

#### **Yasmin Goodison-Braithwaite**

This week, artist Lucy Hayhoe and panel of Ray Larman, Emilia Cavallo, and Cassie Leon discuss the future of queer entertainment, performance and space.

#### **Pam Johnson**

Great. Hi, everyone, and welcome. My name is Pam Johnson. And I am wearing a grey jumper with some round rim earrings and my hair is pulled back, but parted to the left hand side, which is quite new for me, I'm trying something different this week! Just to give you a little bit of background to me. So, I've been in the creative industries in the creative sector for... Gosh, probably over 30 years, and my journey... It's been a fun long and windy journey. And I think actually the best creative journeys are windy. So I started life as a dancer, I worked with DV8 Physical Theatre, and my last job was with Phoenix Dance Company here in Leeds. I then retired at the age of 30. And as you do in this career, you know, you've got to go and find another job. So I went into outreach and education working with a couple of companies, one in Birmingham, and then I came back to Leeds to work at the Northern School of Contemporary Dance to launch its new outreach programmes. And then in 2003, my my journey took another turn as I applied for a role with Arts Council England, I didn't expect to get it. In fact, I wasn't supposed to get it. But by the time I taken the journey back from Manchester and arrived in Leeds, they called me to say "you've got

the job!". So I had five years with the Arts Council in Manchester as Dance Officer, and then five years in our Yorkshire office as Relationship Manager - Dance. And then I left Leeds again and went to London for six years where I was Senior Relationship Manager, strategic partnerships. And I've never been able to say that whole title in one breath. So that involves me working with local authorities. But then I also worked quite closely with the dance portfolio. But the most exciting bit was working with combined art, which is you know that that part of the sector that is everything that isn't music isn't dance isn't isn't visual arts. But it just came with a rich and diverse mix of practice and practitioners, which I absolutely loved. And now I'm back in Leeds in a new role as Head of Culture Development for Leeds City Council. That was quite a long, kind of intro, but I'm really keen to hear from you guys. So Lucy. Hi, welcome. Thank you. Nice to be here with you.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

Yeah, so my name is Lucy Hayhoe. I am a live artist primarily. I make interactive installation based work or performance interventions. So usually, I work with kind of recognised or lived environments like libraries or national parks. And with my work, I kind of try to recreate or reimagine these environments in some way, but usually adding a kind of a playful twist. And the work is very heavily participatory involves lots of audience interaction. I am co director of a project called Home Sweet Home, which has been going for several years in which we create a model town with participants. So it's kind of a huge scale model and everyone comes and gets to build a miniature city together. My latest project is at Ccompass Festival this year, it's called One in, One Out: Leeds' Smallest Gay Bar. And I think we'll talk about that a bit in a moment. And my other job is I am currently working as the General Manager of the Queer Arts Consortium, which is a collaboration between the Cocoa Butter Club, RAZE Collective Fringe and And What? Queer Arts Festival, and we're looking to build resilience in all four of our companies, but also kind of hoping to strengthen the kind of queer arts and culture sector in the UK. And that's me shall I throw over to someone else?

### **Pam Johnson**

Yeah. So you've convened a really fantastic group of artists to be part of the conversation today. So do you want to bring them into the conversation?

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

I will do. Before I do that I'll just say that I am currently sitting in a white room study. I am a white woman with long ginger hair and wearing a green jumper which I hope is complimentary to the ginger hair! I will throw over to Amelia to introduce themselves first.

### **Amelia Cavallo**

Hello, I am Amelia. My pronouns are they/them. I am slim white human with freshly buzzed brown hair, got it buzzed yesterday! And I have quite prominent facial features including a rather large nose that has a blue septum ring in it, today. I'm wearing a quite a fetching, if I do say so myself, Lucy&Yak boilersuit that's got like, I think the undertone is bright turquoise. And then it's got like big, pink, yellow and black swirls all over it. And I'm in my office, which looks quite bare behind me. There's a Clavinova piano and then a really crammed shelf full of just knickknacks and stuff. And next to me is my very fancy microphone that makes it look like I'm about to like sing you some like, really like balad-y style rock song or something. And some big headphones to go with that. And so I am here because I am one half of a company called Quiplash. So I run that with my wife, and partner in life, crime and business. Their name is AI. And they're here. You're not going to hear their voice, but they're very present. They're helping me with access. And Quiplash is a performance project that looks to take space for deaf, and disabled, and neurodiverse people who exist across the LGBTQIA plus spectrum or queer Crips or quips, hence: Quiplash. And we do that through two different mediums. So, one is a creative output where we make performances. Prior to the pandemic, this was in live physical spaces. So we had a show called Unsightly Drag that we've run once in a physical space and once digitally with the Bloomsbury Festival. With support from companies like extent and some support from Arts Council England and things like that. We've been very lucky. And then the other side of it is a consultancy and training branch where we come in and we work with organisations, such as the RAZE Collective, and a bunch of other ones that where we go in and we basically can provide training on disability awareness, or queer awareness or both depending on what's needed. And approaching a kind of office culture of performance practice, whatever venue is space, with the idea of having a sort of what I would call a Disability Justice perspective, which is a perspective that has roots from queer, qtbipoc, disabled people from the states which is looking at disability from an intersectional space, and basically coming in and helping people think about how to make their work accessible and inclusive for lots of different groups of people. And also just as a sidebar with Quiplash and also in some of my independent work some people might know me as my Drag King

Alter Ego. So Tito Bone is your average blind, non binary bisexual Drag King. That's also me. So yeah, I think that's everything.. I'll pass over to to Cassie.

### **Cassie Leon**

Hi, my name is Cassie. My name is Cassie Leon. I am currently in a room with a white background. And above me is a shelf full of old DVDs that nobody's ever going to watch again because nobody has DVD players anymore. But I feel like I can't throw them away. And I'm wearing a red jumper today because I forgot that I'd be describing what I was wearing. And I currently have single plaits in my hair because we're in lockdown. So I've had the time to plait my hair. And I am an Arts and Cabaret Producer, focusing on the experience and care of the queer community and specifically queer performers of colour. My practice revolves around representation, inclusion and participation of marginalised people within arts and culture. So I'm the producer of the Cocoa Butter Club, which is a cabaret collective dedicated to celebrating and showcasing performance of colour in an industry which doesn't represent queer bodies of colour. And I'm also a producer with RAZE Collective, who are a charity who support the development and nurture of queer performance. And we're called RAZE because we're an organisation established to respond to the disappearance of queer spaces around London and the UK, and kind of what that means. And we act as a commissioning platform to make sure that we can get chunks of money to give out to queer performance to make sure, that again, we're represented within the arts and culture industry. And I'm also an Arts and Culture Producer for Mighty Hoopla Festival, which is a great queer day of joy in London. It's got all the sequins and all the glitter. So yeah, that's who I am. And gonna pass over to Ray.

Hi, so I am Ray Larman. I'm sitting in my bedroom with some books behind me which is appropriate because I'm a bookseller, and a very big bright light, which is making me look ridiculously pasty I've just realised! So I am a white middle aged woman, I've got short grey hair with a bit of a grey quiff. I'm wearing big glasses, and a blue jumper, you can just see a little bit of. And so I run The Bookish Type, which is a queer independent bookshop in Leeds, which I set up with my partner Nicola, in September 2020. Prior to that, we'd be doing lots of pop up bookstores. And I've also been involved in West Yorkshire Queer stories, which involved collecting oral history interviews from queer people across the region, which is a fantastic project. And I've been part of Leeds Queer Film Festival as well, which is a local independent DIY Film Fest.

### **Pam Johnson**

That is fantastic. Gosh, I look forward to hearing more about Quiplash and Cocoa Butter Club and The Bookish Type, really, as we go through the conversation, but actually, the catalyst for us all being together in this space is is Lucy and One In, One Out. So Lucy, can you tell us about about the work? What inspired it? And what's the experience for audiences? Yeah, sure. So

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

One In, One Out is kind of exactly as it sounds, it's a miniaturised experience of a gay bar. So, it's kind of all of the typical things you might expect to find in a gay bar. But it's physically the size of kind of a telephone box. So it's for one person at a time. And the kind of the idea around the piece, I was doing a Master's and I was researching the erasure of queer spaces in London. And so I guess, kind of initially, the kind of the physical metaphor of it kind of being very small, reflects a kind of a decline in the presence of queer spaces. And then I was thinking about all of the different ways in which we kind of all recognise that the value of queer space, but also it is a very problematic space. And it's not always as welcoming as we would like, or is it as accessible? Yeah, so the experiences away for one person at a time to be in that space, which seems slightly counterintuitive, when we think about queer spaces primarily as kind of community spaces, by wanting to experiment with what it would mean to be in a queer space on your own, and having like your identity and forming your relationship with that space, but also kind of exploring ideas around how identity and space sort of interact, and what it means to kind of be alone and be queer. And how does that work? Like, are we only queer in relation to other people? Yeah, so those are the kinds of things and hopefully that's, that's all quite serious. But it's wrapped up in a kind of a huge smattering of kind of camp and joy and silliness. So, the experience itself, there are two kind of performers with the with the with the booth. They are kind of security guards, so you know, you have your ID checked when you go in, you get your hand stamped. And inside, there's still the kind of things that signify the journey of a bar experience. So there is a cloakroom, there is a bar where you do get served to drink. And there's obviously a dance floor and some of the kind of all of the kind of slightly dodgy but familiar signifiers that most of us recognise as being part of a kind of a queer nightlife experience. Yeah, so that's, that's kind of it in a nutshell. Yeah. And hopefully, so it will be coming to Leeds later this year.

**Pam Johnson**

That's that sounds amazing. And especially when you lay out you know, you say it's a phone booth and then you lay out all of these experiences that one will have in in, in, what two square feet. It sounds incredible would I have to identify as queer to experience it?

**Lucy Hayhoe**

No, not at all. We won't be checking, you know, people's gay cards on their way in! No, I think I think I wanted to make sure that that this experience was mainly speaking to queer audiences, like it's prioritising them. I wanted to make sure that it wasn't, didn't become a kind of kind of novelty experience for a non queer audience. But certainly, like, everybody is welcome. And I think it's a different experience, I think, give if you're queer you'll recognise some of the kind of little elements of it that are sort of an in joke about how naff we know, a lot of queer spaces are but also the kind of the joy of that.

**Pam Johnson**

I'm really keen to unpack this idea of, of a, or the concept of queer space or a gay bar. So I mean, what is a gay bar? Is it a single thing? Is it a body of spaces what, so just tell me, or just introduce me to a gay bar, it'd be great to, to hear other people's perspectives of what a gay bar is, or a queer space.

**Amelia Cavallo**

I mean, Amelia here, I can just jump in and say that usually when I hear the phrase gay bar, I don't associate it as a positive thing. I would prefer a queer space to a gay space, even though I quite actively use the word gay in and around my bisexuality. Because I think I'm getting gay or as I get older, basically, which is great... highly recommend! But, my experiences as a non binary person, as somebody who would situate uncomfortably with the word lesbian, for example, or just in spaces that because usually when it's specifically gay bar, I tend to think of the spaces that are mainly run by and for cis gay men. And so and then alongside that, being a disabled person with very specific access needs, that are very dependent on a venue and how it's maintained. And not only the physical layout of it, but the way people are expected to behave in it and the way the staff kind of enforce sort of potential, I guess, rules of the space. Most of the time, my experiences with those spaces are quite negative. It's actually one of the reasons that Al and I started Quiplash because we realised for us to be able to have a space that we felt comfortable being in we basically had to start creating them. Because we were struggling otherwise and because also there's things like you know, I think about a certain spaces and I go, Well, I can get in, but I have

wheelchair user friends who are also very queer, who want to come in and they can't come into this. And I want my friends there, you know, all that stuff kind of, unfortunately puts the word the phrase gay bar in a more negative than a positive light for me.

### **Cassie Leon**

Yeah, I think I think there's there's kind of different versions of it. And I also realised that I didn't actually describe myself, so I'm a mixed race Black woman and my pronouns are she/her.

I think yeah, there's differences of what a space can mean. So like a gay bar. I think for young queer people can be somewhere where they flood to as soon as they're allowed to go out and they can drink and they don't know anybody else. They identify as queer or gay so they go to meet loads of other people. And it's usually quite alcohol heavy. And lots of kind of dancing around the disco we type of music, which I actually still love. So there's there's certain gay bars that I still really love going to like Dawson Superstore because because it's so shiny, and it's quite camp, and you always have such a range of kind of personalities in there. But then you get things like the Cocoa Butter Club, we kind of take over a space with our cabaret, and it becomes our queer space. So it could be anywhere it could be. It could be a pub in Layton, but it could be Underbelly Festival on Southbank, and the fact that we're in there with our queerness and our audiences and our invited family, we've decided that that space becomes our queer space. So yeah, I think it really is really dependent on who's running it and why you're running it. So if you are the company coming in to take over a space for two nights, it becomes your home. But if it's a place that has a fixed address that is accessible for people to go to, because their community might not exist where they are, I think you've got both of those places. And yeah, I was right. You have to be able to take over the space or like, almost dominate the space to make sure that it's where you want to be otherwise you're in somebody else's gay bar, which sometimes is not safe if you're in certain really famous gay bars, they're not particularly safe, they're not particularly attractive. The floor is sticky, and they have no tops on... yeah. You've got to kind of choose the space that you want to frequent, or that suits you as a person.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

Yeah, and I think despite some kind of similarities, like gay bars, and like they're not, they're not all the same thing. And I think some kind of a gay bar in a sort of in a pub in a, in a more suburban area, not in London, there's something kind of, you know, you kind of take a bit of

joy in, in how kind of DIY is. And I think that can be very different to like, yes, super commercialised spaces in Soho. Yeah.

### **Pam Johnson**

So how far does the creation of the space or the making of the space really determine what it is? Or, versus how far it's determined? Or informed by the people that use it and how they use it? What's it? I mean, is it more one thing than another? Does one tag a queer space? Sorry that's really deeply ignorant question, but it's, you know, what makes a queer space identifiable? Or does it, you know, does it need to be identifiable?

### **Cassie Leon**

I personally think that some spaces really do need to be identifiable, even if it's by like, an annoying rainbow flag or whatever it is, because I think that if you if they're not identifiable, then you don't have the representation that you need on a high street. And I think without seeing that those spaces exist, it means you almost kind of ignoring that the people exist. But if there's a space that says, or a bar that says this is who we are, and we exist next to a deli, and then next to us is a cinema, it means that you are present on a high road. So I think it's really important that things are represented, then you can see people, and you can just see that actually is part of the infrastructure of somewhere. But I do also think that whoever has opened that space, it appeared like that could be people who really don't care about queerness at all, they just want to make loads of money off of teenagers. So it depends on who's who's built the space, who's put the space there and what they believe in. Because then that ethos boils down into the DJs, you have the security, you have the music that you play, because I know that like Black people and People of Colour are often not invited into those spaces, because purely by the music that they choose, or the music. So in Soho about 10 years ago, Soho as an area banned, R&B and Hip Hop. I don't know how you were allowed to do that, or who signed that off. But they banned a certain type of music, which ultimately means you're banning a certain type of person. So it meant that the Black scene had to move and find a new home on and put signs on the wall saying like, I don't know... "No 50 Cent" in that. But why so why do we allow Britney Spears? So is that like, the spaces decided what kind of queerness they want, which means that the organisers have decided what that gay bar is going to be like. So the representations definitely needed but the you have to have kind of people at every level, supporting the cause. Otherwise, there's just no point you might as well just be added. Yeah, I don't know.



### **Amelia Cavallo**

Um, yeah, I was just gonna say, like for my purposes, there is stuff that does need to be in the building to allow for the the people that I want to be around, which is, first and foremost other queer disabled people. So if there are steps in if the building, if a toilet isn't accessible, those are problems for me. So some of it's been, you know, if it's the space itself is accessible, but it's really difficult to get to by transport that like accessible transport, that's a problem for me as well. The flip side of it is, though, that like, specially depending on where you are, you know, it's, it's a privilege for me to be like, "Yes, I've been to many gay bars, and I had bad experiences", because I still got to go to many gay bars, you know? There are loads of people depending on where they are and what their situation is, don't get to do that either. So that one space, as flawed as it might be, is still going to be super important. And as Cassie was saying, needs to be visible needs to be whatever, in whatever way that means and visible could mean a big rainbow flag up front. It could also mean how it's kind of presented on social media. So like that digital space, queering that space is really important. And that's a you know, obviously a big thing for the pandemic this year as well. Then the rest of it for me is often like, AI talks about this a lot when we do training where they kind of describe a, like a physical solution, a tech solution and a human solution. And a lot of times in the kind of culture of a space, if I can kind of describe it that way, it's the people that make that space accessible or not for loads of different people. And, you know, if I can go into the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, for example, which is not a physically accessible space for anybody who's like a wheelchair user or anything like that, but I go to bar, or whatever. And I know that there's audio describers there that have been set up, and that the MC will have been told to tell the audience not to police the describer for doing their job, suddenly I go "Cool, that's a human solution where I'm really safe there". And then, I can be there, and then I can have the conversations about how to get others in the door. You know, if I have my Quiplash hat on anyway, if I'm just there for a night out, I might just, I don't know, drink a lot of beer and hang out. But you know, like, yeah, there's sort of there's so many ways to think about accessing a space. And some of that is the physical thing, which could be a computer that somebody is using to get into a digital thing. It could be a physical building, and like how you get to it, and then I think a lot of the rest of it is the people and what they do with it, and how they make it and the two very much go hand in hand for me.

### **Pam Johnson**

Gosh, I'd love to explore that a little bit more in this conversation around, you know, the digitization, God as a big word for me.... digitization of queer space and how you do that, especially given where we're moving toward, you know, more blended platforms of, you

know, digital and live kind of platforms for, for our work and planned and adopt practice. And so for validating both of those spaces. I'm really keen to explore a little bit about you know, how one creates a queer space on a digital platform. But before I do that, Ray, I know that you recently created The Bookish Type, which is a queer bookshop. So when you were creating that space, what did you think about what were your considerations in terms of who would use it and how they would use that space?

### **Ray Larman**

Yeah, well, we wanted it to be a very comfortable welcoming space somewhere that was very accessible somewhere that was kind of central to Leeds. So we're in we're in this really functional 1960s Shopping Centre, which seems like a bit of a weird place for a queer bookshop. But it has some queer heritage, which I found out about recently, which is lovely. So there used to be a nightclub in the basement called The Phonographique and they would have Tuesday nights as "gay night". So and because of the like the oral history interviews I've done with queer people, I've had many kind of gay men talking about these great nights at The Phonographique, and Marc Almond and from Soft Cell used to go. So that's so it's kind of nice that although we're in the shopping centre, there is this bit of heritage. Yeah, which links in with the bookshop. So we wanted the bookshop to be, you know, somewhere for queer people of all ages. It was really really important to me and Nicola, that it was multi generational because often queer spaces, gay bars, they can be, you know, for one particular age group, you know, often often younger people, but I think it's, it's important if we want to kind of dialogue conversations within queer communities that we have multi-generational spaces. We wanted it to be a dry space, because again, so many queer spaces kind of revolve around alcohol. And although it's a bookshop, and you know, obviously we're, we're selling books, you can come and you don't have to spend any money. So you can be completely skint and come into our, our bookshop and have a look around and explore queer literature and talk about, you know, get some recommendations, talk about queer culture. And it was also important to us that it was somewhere that's open during the day. So again, you know, lots of queer spaces, it's about nightlife, isn't it? But, you know, that's the time when we're not open. So there's not many places in Leeds that are that are like that. So yeah, it's kind of it's a supportive place for people who've just come out. It's somewhere you can feel validated, you can see yourself represented in literature. And it's yeah, and also, it's, I suppose, it's not just for queer people as well. It's for people who want to understand LGBT culture maybe wants to help out, you know, that their Grandson who is just come out and they're kind of looking for resources for him. So it's important that lots of different people can come through the doors.

**Pam Johnson**

Gosh, I've just awakened to exactly where your space is because Phonographique was part of my my youth!

**Ray Larman**

Oh, okay. Right! \*laughter\*

**Pam Johnson**

Yeah, if we wanted something just slightly different a bit edgier, sort of in my teens when we go to Phonographique. So I know exactly where you are. So I'm going to come and find you. That's fantastic. And could I ask a question about intersectionality? You know, diversity is growing, and it's becoming more rich and intersectionality of the population is in itself also growing. And I just wonder whether, you know, the, the growing breadth of diversity, that we identify with, does that threaten queer space? Or the need for queer space? Do you think?

**Lucy Hayhoe**

I think it just means we need more of them, and more different types!

**Amelia Cavallo**

Here here!

**Lucy Hayhoe**

I think so often, when we're talking about gay bars and queer space, we will we get to a point where the conversation can get a bit stuck, because we think that there needs to be one answer. And they're just, there doesn't need to be one. Like, we're not going to reach the pinnacle of having one queer space that works for everyone. Like, I think that's definitely kind of a mission that should be looked at. But I think we just need more of a multiplicity of different kinds of spaces. Because obviously, you know, the queer community is made up of multiple identities, as well as us sharing a commonality of being queer, and, you know, all of our identities are constantly in flux, anyway. Yeah.

**Ray Larman**

I think of there have always been different sorts of queer spaces. So, you know, way beyond just the idea of the gay bar. So, you know, in the 70s, and 80s, lesbians and bi women in

Leeds, well, and all over the country, were kind of creating their own spaces and having their own their own house parties, hiring places for one night a month to have women's discos, doing fundraisers for things like Lesbian Line. And that's fantastic. So you know, that the gay bars clearly weren't for them. I guess they were getting more involved in feminist politics, lesbian feminist politics, wanted to create their own spaces. When I was talking about The Phonographique, I mean that I guess that's quite common to have sort of one night a week, which is maybe, you know, the gay night. So it's not a gay bar, but it's a general venue that will do that one night a week. I mean, in in Leeds, well Saltaire as well, they used to have these to have balls, gay and lesbian balls in the 1990s. These are called Victor/Victoria balls, which is, you know, fantastic. I wish there were still going on now. That's a very different sort of queer space or queer entertainment. So I think, you know, that they've always been nice alternatives. And we're a very creative community, I think and if things aren't right, aren't kind of catering for us, then, you know, as other people have already said, we will create them; often, you know, even when we don't have very much money. In fact, some of the best things I kind of feel that kind of grassroots DIY focus.

### **Amelia Cavallo**

I would, I would agree with that. And and to add on to it, I would lovingly and politely challenge the idea that intersectionality is something that is kind of newly growing. And that's not to challenge you directly, because I think a lot of people use that phrasing very, a lot. And I think that in certain, like, if people are going for, say Arts Council funding, that's language that's literally embedded in the application process and stuff like that. So it's just a kind of signal that a lot of these, a lot of people who sit within multiple marginalised identities in one time, will have been around and fighting for this for a long time. And I think what's happening, the thing that feels new, is that the digital spaces to go back to that, again, have allowed people to find different avenues to have a voice so. So there's ways to get recognition and to be heard, seen, smelled, whatever, you know, in ways that I think when it was much more directly about you go to a physical space, and you're either there or you're not. For whatever reason, like that, that started to shift the landscape. And I think that's a really good thing because I think queer people need to identify that within various iterations of queerness and queer spaces, there is a hierarchy there is oppression that exists there, and we need to challenge ourselves and address that and do better and and so this this the the exciting thing about this, this push for thinking about different types of bodies, sensory makeups neurology ease financial brackets classes, you know all anything like, like getting thinking about that more actively means that the spaces, well hopefully we'll get more of

them. And hopefully they'll just keep getting better. That's you know, which is the thing that I feel super excited about when I think about it.

### **Cassie Leon**

Yeah, I think I think intersectionalities of people influenced the spaces completely, because I think the more the more people you have, with more intersections that they would have known about or they're discovering or other people know how to talk about them, the better, because it just gives you more more content to work with more ideas, more more things to really explore. And also it kind of gives people less spaces to feel alone, because I think there's a massive thing about people just saying, how they feel or who they are or who they're representing at a certain time. Because it doesn't matter what you do somebody out to be like, "Oh, yeah, me too". Because I think this is such a huge, such a huge terms that are just like, oh, queer is "this". So this is what happens there. Lesbian means "this". So "this" is what happens "there". But then all the people within that have, however many different stories that they're working with, at the same time, or like code switching between who you are in what place and when. So I kind of think that intersectionality, is I think, is a great thing, that people are using that term, and we're talking about it because it means that people have to think a little bit more about who they're talking to them when they're talking to them and what space fits, because is that is that one space isn't going to fit all at all. So if you think about intersectionality whilst you're planning an event, or whilst you're like dreaming up a space or a bar or things to put on, you've got to think about what you are, how you're going through it, and how you're putting that on for somebody else. Because I think within the Cocoa Butter Club, because we are we're a collective who celebrate performers of colour of all performance of colour bodies that aren't white, it means that that is a huge range of people, queer bodies of colour is so vast, that the stories are so widely spread that like, if you were to if you were to cater to Black queer bodies, again, that people are all over the world, the stories are never going to be the same. So I think, yeah, the more people start to think about that, the better and it just creates wonderful creative spaces because people are embodying and talking about all the things that they believe in.

### **Pam Johnson**

Right? Yeah. Now I agree with that. And it's, I think I relate to it in terms of spaces created for my whole self, where I can be my whole self. You know, I'm a, I'm a Black female, with a disability. And, you know, on my life journey, I'm now in my 50s on my life journey, there are spaces that have been more welcoming. Oh, and did I add working class so you know, different spaces, different doors are open to different parts of me at different times. And,

and it's, I feel that I'm heaving a sigh of relief, almost as I get older, because it's as much about me but as much about the world that, that all of me can show up in a space so long as it can accommodate. You know, me, you know, I'm currently without crutches, but I was on crutches for quite a while. But as long as it can accommodate all of me and give me access, it's about being empowered to bring my whole self to a space and feeling that I belong.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

And I think it's for setting up spaces and creating spaces, like approaching that with a kind of an excitement and a joy of like, how can I do rather than rather than a feeling of it being a kind of a thing afterwards? Oh, but how are we going to do this? And how are we going to make sure those people are welcome. And I think a lot of the time, people can be very well meaning when they say something, well, it's open to everyone. And it's like, it's not enough to say that you have to signal that with your building with your behaviour with your language with your with everything.

### **Amelia Cavallo**

Can I just say massive red flag I guarantee you for every single Deaf, disabled neurodiverse person I know about any event a venue is: "We are fully accessible" or "We aim to make sure this is accessible for everyone." That is almost always a performative statement. So I always I would much rather, and this is very much how Quiplash rolls, just stay what you have, including the barriers that you know that you have. So we are in the Glory in Hackney, there are however many narrow steps down to the basement to get in, and no accessible toilets, then I can make a decision about whether or not I can go, you know, and that kind of stuff. And like, we do that as Quiplash to curate a space. So anybody's welcome to come in. But that space is primarily for queer disabled people. And we make that really clear. And the way we run a performance or a training or consulting sits within that. And then we kind of go well, if you're not used to working in this way, sit with your discomfort a little bit, and learn some stuff because this might actually be nicer for you. And if it's not, that's cool, we can have a conversation about it. But otherwise, like there are other ways to be.

### **Pam Johnson**

That is amazing. Now I'm going to throw just some several personal questions that you so let's shake this up so. Alright so what was your best night out? Ray.

### **Ray Larman**

Oh God. Okay, I have been thinking about this a bit of a bizarre night out, but I went to Helsinki Pride about six years ago maybe, I don't know, I don't think this is my best night out, but it was just a memorable night. So, they had in their programme, a women's coffee and Sherry night. And I was like "What is this?! Who does that? Coffee and sherry?" So we went along, I went inside at 7pm so it's like ridiculously early. And it was in this sort of civic building so not a town hall but kind of similar, so we went into this massive room and there was sort of paintings of like local dignitaries on the wall, but they're all this Finnish women just dancing to really cheesy Europop, like Viva Espana kind of level, sounds. And this was like you know we got there just after 7pm so people didn't know they'd started early, though, I don't even remember there being any coffee and Sherry, but it was just this kind of raucous night and yet very early on it was kind of aimed at slightly older women. And it was just brilliant. I had a great time. And then because we were in Finland when we left, and it was like kind of almost midnight sun we're kind of walking home and it was still, you know, fairly light. So that was that was definitely a memorable night.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

I don't know how you contend with that. I think some of my best nights out have been, actually, I went to a very, very small festival with a housemate that was organised by some friends of his from Brighton. And when we turned up I was like, this is like an unofficial queer mini Glastonbury, it was kind of one of the first times I was like, oh well I made a space, which is predominantly queer women, and queer non binary people like this is, this is kind of the first time I think I've ever been in a space which was completely dominated by those people. And, yeah, I mean, ours was just tents, dancing until very late in the morning and then campfires. I think that genuinely is my best night out. And that was, yeah, 40 people in a farmer's field.

### **Pam Johnson**

Wow from the almost wacky to the almost serene. Okay, all right I'm gonna throw one more out for, for Amelia and Cassie. So, we are you know one year in lockdown. So, What places and spaces have you missed or what places and spaces do you miss?

### **Cassie Leon**

Well, I, personally, obviously, because I'm the producer of it, but also, I think, because of our club, honestly, puts on such an incredible such an incredible inclusive show, and take over a space where people honestly know that they are inside our space where we really, really are

celebrating performance of colour at all abilities. So you could be somebody, and it always surprised so you could have somebody who's practice playing guitar in their house and have never been on stage before, and they've come up to us they found us and they're like, "Please, could I show you this thing" And we're like, "Well don't show me it go and do it"... So then they are on the stage. But then you have like sword swallowers who tour the world, and a part of the like Vegas showgirl troops, and then you have like fire breathers and you have the whole of you because you have all these such incredible performance. That, I think this, that type of space doesn't necessarily exist in other formats, I haven't seen the Cocoa Butter Version of the Cocoa Butter Club before, so I feel like that's something that I'm really really excited to see because it is a space where..... And so, originally the Cocoa Butter Club started because white producers are basically saying that bodies of colour weren't in shows because the bodies of kind of didn't exist, and that's obviously not true, you're just not looking for them. So the Cocoa Butter Club, Sadie founded the Cocoa Butter Club to be like, "Here you go white producers, I've put on a show where there's loads of bodies of colour, so come and see them and book them". But what actually happened instead is that Black people and people of colour came instead. So then all of our spaces were full of all these Black people who, people assumed that they don't like cabaret, and I don't know who told them that I don't know. I don't know who is the authority on audiences, I don't know. But, but it's just incredible to see like, you can have a show where there's 500 people and 80% of them are Black and people of colour, or you can have a show at RVT where like, 100, people come, or 50 people come but they are always the people of colour dominate those spaces, and sometimes there's people who don't like going to parties and they know that Cocoa Butter Club can finish at 11 o'clock and then they can go home. Or sometimes it's people who want to carry on the party but that space is so unique and so positive that I can't wait to get back out to a show where we can all just congregate together again. And like, make sure that our spaces are special. So yeah, I think the Cocoa Butter Club. And then a, like a disco-housy R&B party after, that's what I'm going to do.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

Cassie, do you get 10 pounds every time you say the Cocoa Butter Club? You should!

\*laughter\*

### **Cassie Leon**

Honestly I should, but I'd pay myself!



**Pam Johnson**

Amelia, what do you what places and spaces do you miss?

**Amelia Cavallo**

I think, I'm thinking about that question it's really driven home for me that it's about what people do with the space that makes it exciting and comfortable to enter in and really joys to be in. So the two things that I thought of were one, Lads, which is a drag burlesque cabaret night, and like I was thinking about what's my best night out and the first thing I thought of was the Lads that happened right before the first lockdown, where they took over the Vault space, and they had loads of access provided into it they had audio describers sign language interpreters, it was step free building, there were like 1000 people in there, it was complete mayhem. But it was beautiful mayhem. And like, there's something about that particular show, I've been in a couple times and I've been to it a bunch of times and every time. There's something really comfortable in it that now like the people who perform in it, and the people who go to it are my friends because I've seen them, you know so much. And, seeing a space improve and get better and better and better also is something really enjoyable to see that's coming out of queer people, that that feels like an act of resistance that feels joyful to me. And so I think I really love that space, I love whatever space they're in, whether that's the RVT or the Vaults, or the Bush Theatre or, you know they've been all over the place. But I have a lot of love for that show and really want it to happen again as soon as it's safe and possible. And I would alongside that a very different feel of that is Trans Pride in Brighton specifically, the last one that was able to happen was, I only went to the day events, because we travelled down to go to during the day and then back in one day. So we didn't stay for the evening stuff, but that was such an easy Pride for me to be at and that's another kind of queer space or queer thing that, especially for folks in London right now as a lot of contention around it that's probably not worth going into but, but that that particular one there was something so easy, about being a disabled person in that, and like you know it's Trans Pride, to me being non-binary was already kind of, you would hope a given to be easy, and it was, but the fact that the staff had clearly been trained, and they, they like however they'd set up the the park after the march. There was something about the way that people around were kind of lovingly facilitated to behave where like if I went to use an accessible toilet and there was a queue people would give me the right of way to use the one toilet that was accessible to me, for example, and that's not something I'm used to and it's really simple. But it makes such a big difference to kind of go like, I don't have to fight for stuff that I need here. It was kind of like what you were saying, I got to bring my whole self to that day. And, and I think they do a really good job of that and I just really like, I love a

good March, I love a good sit in the park with some, you know nice snacks and friends and good music and like, Yeah, it's like that whole day felt really wholesome even though the reason we were there was obviously quite political and I, I want that space back so badly. It was amazing.

### **Pam Johnson**

I thought away from this just, you know, snapshots of, of very different spaces and very different experiences. I am going to, The Bookish Type, not to relive my Phonographique years but really to experience that space. And I will go to One in, One Out, it's, you know, listening to everybody's descriptions of spaces, and also hearing how people make space. So it's not just about a physical thing but actually about the people and their identity, kind of, you know, creating that culture and and the experience of a space is absolutely fascinating. But it intrigues me more about the One in, One Out experience. So Lucy just finishing with us so where, where can I experience that?

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

Well, in Leeds, where we're relying on COVID restrictions so we don't have exact dates but we're hoping for early in the summer so, May, June, possibly, and it will be for a weekend so hopefully for three days. Yeah, and you know come and find us. There'll be a glitter curtain, there'll be a neon sign... you can't miss us! You'll hear us probably before you see us.

### **Pam Johnson**

Yeah, that sounds just fantastic. Ray, Cassie, Amelia. Thank you so much for joining us and for contributing to this this conversation. But Lucy, special thanks for you, for convening this space, and these invited guests. It's been an absolute pleasure and really great to learn so much more about your work. Thank you everyone.

### **Lucy Hayhoe**

Thank you!

### **Elle Money**

\*Light drums and music play\* If you enjoyed this episode of the Compass Festival Podcast, you might like what else we're up to. Head to our website [compassliveart.org.uk](http://compassliveart.org.uk) or follow us on social media @CompassFestLDS for more live art and interactive encounters in Leeds. This podcast is produced by Sable Radio, hosted by Pam Johnson.