

S8 Ep3: Lauren Mooney and James Yeatman talk to Susan Wokoma

Royal Court Theatre: You are listening to a podcast from

Royal Court Theatre: The Royal Court Court Theatre.

Royal Court Theatre: Please note the following episode may contain strong language.

Susan Wokoma: Hello and welcome to the Royal Court Theatre Playwright's Podcast with me, Susan Wokoma and the award winning theatre company, Kandinsky. Hello, hello, hello. Hi Lauren and James. This is the cringe bit where I read an intro actually you might love it. What I've noticed about playwrights is that they don't always like me talking about how great they are. I'm going to do that now.

James Yeatman: Cool. We'll see how we feel. [laughter]

Susan Wokoma: See ah, how you feel. Okay, so Kandinsky Theatre Company comprises of Lauren Mooney and James, Yeatman: yourselves. so you make new collaborative work. Your first show was a decade ago at the New Diorama Theatre and since then you have toured the UK and transferred internationally to Berlin and New York. Your latest project, More Life, has been developed at the New Diorama National Theatre Studios and the Royal Court Court and will debut at the Royal Court Court Theatre upstairs in February 2025. Welcome, welcome, welcome to the podcast. Okay, so I'm going to open the question that I ask absolutely everybody. I'll start with you, Lauren. What is, was your earliest memory of theatre?

Lauren Mooney: I guess it would have to be the incredibly classy world -shaking Postman Pat Live that came to the Odeon in Reading when I was like five.. six. But I, I mean I think we didn't, we saw like we went to the panto and stuff like that, you know what I mean? But we weren't ah, we weren't like, I mean I lived in Reading and then Northampton so the theatre going chances were smaller maybe than if you're from London. But I mean it's either that or it's like being in a school play, you know what I mean?

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: And being like. In fact I don't want to brag. but in year two, they had to come to me and be like one of the year three children is ill. You're gonna have to learn the part and go on stage today. It was like All About Eve. Like I pushed them down the stairs and had to learn it all in one day and go on. And I was then obsessed

Susan Wokoma: Can you remember what play, what part it was?

Lauren Mooney: No, it was a, ah, Christmas play, clearly written by one of the teachers. But I had to go on a magic carpet which was absolutely, really Christmassy. And I just like, after that I was like I'm gonna be an actor, you know what I mean? Like it was, I was bitten by the Bug. Which clearly has gone really well for me. [they laugh]

Susan Wokoma: What about you, James? What's yours?

James Yeatman: So it was like one or two. So my parents used to take me to the Little Angel Puppet Theatre in Angel, when I was a kid and we used to go there quite a lot actually.

James Yeatman: And I can't actually remember any of the plays that I saw there, but I just have a general experience of sitting there and it all being really magic and all that kind of stuff. and also my dad was really into musicals and he. Whenever we had like, family visiting us in London, we would always go and see this musical called Return to the Forbidden Planet, which is like, based on the Tempest and a B movie called the Forbidden Planet with loads of 60s songs in it. And, at the end they would always knock this giant asteroid around the audience. But I would always have fallen- we went to see it quite, quite many times- and I would always fall asleep. Apparently I was like a very reliable kid to take to the theatre because I'd always fall asleep and wouldn't make any trouble. And I'd always miss the asteroid. And my big brother would tell me that I missed the asteroid.

Susan Wokoma: Oh, so that was a giant, floating asteroid. People are hit.

James Yeatman: And you were. Exactly. And I was out. Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: You're telling us this, but we are. We only have your word for it. And you never saw it so.

James Yeatman: Quite easily could be my brother just going, there.

Susan Wokoma: Was a giant asteroid.

James Yeatman: Quite clearly.

Susan Wokoma: So how did you two meet? I'm obsessed with like, collaborations. I think that whenever I meet people in the entertainment industry, theatre industry, who

find their sort of person, I get intensely jealous. So just let you know, that's what I'm feeling. So how did you two meet and how did you, form Kandinsky?

James Yeatman: like Kandinsky kind of existed in a slightly different iteration before the first show that we were doing. And I was kind of like. We were making the show about dogs, about people and their dogs and about like, where a company of four people play all the dogs and their owners in a kind of park in London while, a dog serial killer is on the loose.

Lauren Mooney: Based on a true story.

James Yeatman: Based on a true story.

Susan Wokoma: No.

Lauren Mooney: Really?

James Yeatman: Yeah. Yeah. In Hong Kong, there's a dog serial killer. He's been killing people's dogs for many years

Lauren Mooney: and we've blown the whole thing wide open.

James Yeatman: Yeah. [they laugh]

Susan Wokoma: Oh my gosh.

James Yeatman: And so I was kind of partly into making that. All our early workshops

on that.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: And I needed a producer.

James Yeatman: And one of the actors partners was a producer who didn't want to work with us, but said, oh, you should meet Lauren. Because she had been working with Lauren on a different thing.

Lauren Mooney: No, we worked in an office together. I was a PA and I was really, I really, really wanted to work in theatre, but I couldn't really understand how to do it because

00:05:00

Lauren Mooney: this was like 2014, 15, post recession era. Lots of unpaid internships. You know, you remember it, you were there.

Susan Wokoma: oOh yeah.. I remember it very well.

Lauren Mooney: It was. I just couldn't work out how to do it. Like, I just. I was making people coffee and I was doing these kind of office jobs and I just. It felt like a door that I'd been like, trying to kick down for years and I'd done bits and pieces of weird stuff. And, I kind of thought, okay, well, I'll try and do producing because I'm already a PA and I already book everyone's trains. And that's what producing is, right? Just booking people's trains. I can book more trains, basically, is what I assumed. And I was about 24

and I was like, I'll just do that. And so Roxanne, our mutual friend, was like,

James Yeatman: match made us

Lauren Mooney: Match made us- and said. Basically said to me, if you work on the show, I will teach you how to be a producer. And so she kind of mentored me through us making the show for which we couldn't raise any money, maybe because I was not an experienced producer. And, ended up, like, having to do the lights ourselves in the evenings. It was a real, like, fringe kind of nightmare. I mean, it was at the New Diorama, It was David Byrne That's where we met David. Exactly. But, yeah.

Lauren Mooney: And then out of that,

James Yeatman: as we were developing that, we got into kind of panic meetings just after tech and like writing new scenes together. One set in a pet shop, I think, with a Great Dane- called Jerry

Lauren Mooney: Yes. Yeah. [they laugh] we went to the pub

Lauren Mooney: After a preview.

Lauren Mooney: And wrote a scene in a pet shop.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, it was,

James Yeatman: And..

Lauren Mooney: Jeremy,

Lauren Mooney: Beagle.

James Yeatman: Jeremy Beagle, yeah. We had an actor have to transform.

James Yeatman: Into a million different dogs.

James Yeatman: And so then we'd like gradually. and then we made another show and

Lauren Mooney: And I sort of crept out of the producing and into the writing.

James Yeatman: so, yeah, so we still kind of run the company together and then write, like make the shows together. and I guess Lauren's background is a bit more from a writing background and like kind of dramaturgy background. And then mine is a bit more in directing, but also it's kind of all hands to the pump.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, yeah.

Susan Wokoma: Awesome, so in terms of, how you, Your process in creating work, I know that you're sort of. Actually, I'll ask this question first. I read that you're sort of steering yourself away from being, you know, using the word devised. Why. Why do you feel like you. You need to kind of step away from that?

Lauren Mooney: Yeah. Ah, I think it's not that we're changing our process so much as that we are, just kind of changing how we talk about it.

Susan Wokoma: Okay, fine.

Lauren Mooney: I think devised theatre, people think people have an image in their mind of what it is. And then it's like everyone's gonna be in a jumpsuit. I've actually reserved the right for everyone to be in a jumpsuit in this show because we haven't decided what the costume is.

Susan Wokoma: Why is my image so immediately visceral [they all agree]

James Yeatman: Jumpsuit covered in Vaseline.

Lauren Mooney: It's like, it's. Yeah, exactly. And everybody's like, miming or everybody's, you know, they're all crawling over each other and you just think, oh, God, I can't be bothered. and I think we have. We're quite story and character led in the way that we make work. And people don't marry that with what they expect from devised theatre. And so you're not necessarily getting the right people to come watch it.

Susan Wokoma: Right.

Lauren Mooney: You know what I mean? So it's about how you kind of.

James Yeatman: Yeah, I think it's more. I think there's something more about the word. The word devise and the. And the associations it brings up. And, And I think Lauren and I have quite a kind of authored process.

Lauren Mooney: Like, I guess it makes it sound really egalitarian and like everybody is, you know, whatever. And actually we like to get final say and so you should be honest

about that.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, yeah, yeah, absolutely. So describe your process. I mean.

James Yeatman: Yeah, so I mean, it varies a bit from show to show and stuff, but like, in general, we would come up with the subject matter that we wanted to pursue or something like that, and that we've done shows about the discovery of dinosaurs and also the Luddites in 19th century Manchester and psychosomatic illness and all sorts of, things. but we kind of find a subject that we're interested in and we also, like, really look for. I think there's something that we're always looking for at the beginning of our shows, which is like, is there a, like, interesting playful theatre game to play with that subject matter?

Lauren Mooney: It has to have a

Lauren Mooney: reason to be a show and not like an article or a TV show or whatever. You know what I mean? There has to be a kind of theatrical. Something to do with the relationship to audience.

James Yeatman: and so, So with the dogs. With the dog show, there was something of like, this would be great to have four acts of playing dogs and humans.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: And that, And that you could say something about people's relationship with nature and the city and all that kind of stuff.

Lauren Mooney: And the pleasure was about watching the actors transform.

James Yeatman: Yeah, exactly. And we spun a whole show out of that. [they chuckle] So there's always, like. That's what. That's what we're always looking for in a. In a show, basically. And then. So from there you, like. You have a kind of idea of what that might be. And then we try and have quite a kind of early workshop where we would work with actors and.

Lauren Mooney: Musicians and designers and-

James Yeatman: Musicians and stuff. And then. And then try and make a scene that feels like that it's got the germ of a kind of theatrical idea.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: behind it.

Lauren Mooney: We often try and make the opening. That's usually quite. That's

00:10:00

Lauren Mooney: kind of the most useful thing to do because it's. I think the opening of a show is really hard to get

Lauren Mooney: right.

Lauren Mooney: It sets up the relationships, the audience, how you teach them how to

watch the show, what kind of thing it is. And so, there's something really useful about trying to make that. And then.

James Yeatman: And then once you've done that, that should contain like, Yeah. And that opening should contain the theatre game that you're going to then explore for the rest of the show.

Susan Wokoma: Can you expand on that? The theatre game? Because I'm game!

James Yeatman: Yeah. So, I mean, I guess so with the dog show, like, there was a scene, like, we had an idea for a scene which was like, I guess a kind of single camera shot of a park.

Susan Wokoma: Right.

James Yeatman: And then four actors who would, like, change costumes and stuff like that, and then be dogs and people. So a bit like the beginning of 101 Dalmatians, we see, like, loads and dogs going past. So there was like, something about that that we wanted to set up, in Still Ill, our show about, functional neurological disorder.

Lauren Mooney: Say that ten times fast.

James Yeatman: which are kind of like, very hard to understand why they're happening. Physical, problems like seizures and tremors and things like that. A lot of my family are, medical people and my dad teaches doctors and he always told me about these exams that doctors have to do, like trainee doctors have to do, where you get actors in, who have to pretend to be ill with things.

Lauren Mooney: I was gonna say. Have you ever done it?

Susan Wokoma: Yeah. Oh, yeah. I've done those.

Susan Wokoma: Good quid.

Lauren Mooney: My husband also did it. He has a memory of like having to pretend to be in a diabetic coma. And they would either have to give you a shot or a biscuit. And the biscuit would be bad and the shot would be good. And he was like, every time I felt them forcing a biscuit into my

Lauren Mooney: mouth I knew I was dead.

Lauren Mooney: Surreal.

James Yeatman: But there was something about that which was like, about an actor. so the show was about an actor who is pretending to be ill for medical exams. And we'd made this kind of slightly bonkers scene where there's a million trainee doctors coming in who are all differently anxious about what they're doing. And, and you have the actor kind of lying on a hospital bed having to pretend to be different levels of ill and stuff like that. and then she starts to develop, ah, like, you know, and then as the show goes on she starts to develop an illness that lots of people incorrectly think is a kind of performed illness. Like a kind of, like something like that. Yeah. And so there was just that there was something interesting that felt that was about theatre, it was about illness, was about the body and it was all kind of contained within that idea. so that's, I guess that's, that's what we're kind of looking like. We're looking for something like that in each of our shows that feels like there's a theatre game going on. And that's about

something.

Susan Wokoma: Okay, so let's talk about the show that is going to be here next year, More Life. So I mean, how would you describe it? I do have a synopsis here, but tell us a bit about what it's about.

Lauren Mooney: Ah, yeah, so we. More Life is a sci fi gothic horror show. that is. What a mouthful. about a woman who, from now, from the present day, who dies in a car accident and then wakes up 75 years in the future in a body that's not hers. So it's just your classic boy meets girl, naturalistic kitchen sink drama. But yeah, so it came out of, we've been working on this show for about two years and it came out of a kind of initial interest in the, I guess transhumanists and people who are kind of interested in the idea that the human body is. Is. It's got us as far as we can. You know what I mean? There's a kind of set of people that are really interested in the idea that we can transcend the limits of our physical bodies through technology and that that is the Next stage of evolution.

James Yeatman: It's like really desirable thing to do.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah. And that. That's what we should all be trying to do.

Lauren Mooney: Exactly.

Lauren Mooney: and so it's quite popular. It's quite popular. I mean, there's varying degree, like levels of it, you know what I mean? And there's some people that are just kind of interested in cool implants. Cool implants. Bionic arms. Or put your oyster card chip in your hand. Oyster card chip.

Lauren Mooney: How old am I?

Lauren Mooney: We don't have this anymore, but then there are. There's quite. It goes to quite interesting kind of depths. So it's quite popular in Silicon Valley. A lot of tech billionaires are investing huge amounts of money into research into life extension technologies and death prevention, basically.

Susan Wokoma: So, so scary.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah. [they laugh]

Susan Wokoma: Living forever?

Lauren Mooney: Who can be bothered?

Susan Wokoma: I'm knackered on 36.

James Yeatman: Yeah. [more laughter]

Susan Wokoma: I can't do three times more of this.

Lauren Mooney: No,

Susan Wokoma: Sorry. Carry on. But yes, so, So yes, it's kind of. It's sort of rooted in what is being explored now. Again.

Lauren Mooney: Yes, yes, it's rooted in tech that's. I suppose it's inspired by technology

that doesn't exist, but that people are working very specifically to create.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: So it's like Tomorrow's World, the TV show.

Susan Wokoma: Yes!

Lauren Mooney: exactly.

James Yeatman: Yeah, yeah.

Lauren Mooney: but it's, it's using that as an

00:15:00

Lauren Mooney: inspiration. We didn't want to. You know, we got into the idea of making it a kind of future set, sci fi, because we thought this is a really interesting, rich subject matter. And it's really interesting that the people that. The same people that, you know, created social media and the iPhone and all this stuff are now investing loads of money into this thing. And nobody's asked us if that's what we want to happen in the future. Nobody's asked us.

Susan Wokoma: No one really asked us about the Internet.

Lauren Mooney: You know what I mean?

Susan Wokoma: It just arrived and we were like, all right. Not knowing we were opening a portal to

Lauren Mooney: horrors.

Susan Wokoma: Hell [laughter] be useful if you're watching this on Instagram.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, we love Instagram and we love the algorithm.

Susan Wokoma: We do click away. but yeah, so, I. So how did you. Okay, so you've described it as a sci fi gothic horror.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah.

Susan Wokoma: So I hear that term and my brain goes straight to screen. It goes to tv, it goes to flying. So how. What were the challenges in terms of bringing that to. To the stage?

James Yeatman: Well, I think.

Lauren Mooney: Well, we'll find out.

James Yeatman: Yeah, exactly. We're in the middle of all those challenges. [laughter]

Susan Wokoma: Missed all the Challenges before we come and see it.

James Yeatman: but I think there's like there was something interesting to us about it as

an. As a subject matter because.

James Yeatman: A lot of the desire of the people who we were reading about was this kind of desire to transcend the body and be out of your kind of meat sack is what they say kind of word for Which was an early title of this play that was quite disgusting,

Lauren Mooney: It was deemed too disgusting, quite reasonably.

Susan Wokoma: I think it's just visceral in it [they all agree]

James Yeatman: and, and that we felt that. And I think there's often a lot of anxiety in theatre about like film and TV pushing like the need for theatre out the way and that sci fi often feels like quite a kind of filmic medium. And also in this desire to rid oneself of the body, you might also be ridding yourself of like. Theatre is a very, very meat sacky medium, isn't it? Everyone turns up in their body to watch people in bodies, perform on stage. It felt like there's a kind of interesting conversation to be had about like kind of formally in the show about about that really. About kind of like there's something fundamental in the form that is embodied versus this, this. This desire to escape it. And that's also there in a kind of sci fi thing.

Lauren Mooney: and like as you were saying earlier that we try to I suppose the reason to have the process that we have. We could just write it and in some ways that would be easier. But. But we, I suppose there's something about. We like it all growing up together, you know what I mean? The music, the design, the performance, the text, the direct. It all grows together.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: And so there's something about you know, finding that we tried to find that form or that kind of formal game or that, you know, that style or whatever that is in an early workshop and as early a workshop as possible. And I think for us there was something immediately about telling a story that's sci fi. That's about the need to transcend the body. That's about like the desire to do that. That's about, you know, this kind of future world where we're going the way that we live is becoming obsolete.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: And doing that through a really embodied style, you know, a really ensemble led style that it's all about. Like we can't compete with Netflix, you know, because we can't. We don't have the budget to make a huge sci fi.

James Yeatman: Yeah. Wide shot of the city, [they are all agreeing]

Lauren Mooney: flying cars.

Lauren Mooney: And all of that stuff. But you know, we can't do it. So. But. So why try, actually? And why not enjoy the fact that theatre is a, collaborative imagined medium, you know what I mean? It's. It's created in your mind as you watch the show that it's like it's a.

James Yeatman: And in your body somehow.

Lauren Mooney: Exactly. Yeah. It's a collaboration between you and the audience. That's where it comes from, you know. And so we got really interested in having a kind of ensemble LED style that it's just about these. These performers in their bodies

making this world of the future for the audience. You know what I mean? Through singing, through voice, through performance, through all of this stuff, rather than, you know, trying to pretend we doing a.

James Yeatman: Like, shoddy 1960s Star Trek set. It's all made of polystyrene.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, exactly.

Susan Wokoma: Don't throw that out just yet

Lauren Mooney: I know. Really sad we can't do it actually.

Susan Wokoma: So can you talk about, a little bit about the importance of collaboration when it comes to the kind of artists that you get involved? So for instance, I know that there are some actors who are very much like, hit your mark, say your lines.

Lauren Mooney: That's it.

Susan Wokoma: But I'm guessing, especially from reading, the script and you know, for instance, you've got the chorus and so you need kind of performers who are much more kind of willing and engaged to kind of explore what transcends just their role or their character or their sort of function. Would you say that that is applicable to every aspect? So in terms of the music, design.

James Yeatman: Yeah.

Susan Wokoma: yeah. So it's not just kind of like.

James Yeatman: Yeah. I mean, basically you try and avoid, like you try and trap everyone in a room and make them all implicated in the In the making.

Lauren Mooney: It's everyone's fault [they laugh]

James Yeatman: Blood on everyone's hands.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

James Yeatman: Yeah. I mean, sound

00:20:00

James Yeatman: design is really important to us. and so the sound designer and composer on this, this guy, Zach Vertzman we've been working with since. Since, the dog show actually. And so he.

Lauren Mooney: He's like a magician. He can play every instrument.

James Yeatman: Yeah. So he sits in the rehearsal room and has like a million instruments.

Susan Wokoma: The kind of sort of. You kind of have to be limitless in your. you have to be very talented to work with you guys, basically.

James Yeatman: But actually, I think people like. I mean, I would say this, I guess, but I think people like it. I think a lot of actors don't get asked, ah, a lot of, like, what they

want to do and a lot of things like that and that, I think there's something. There's something that I find, like writing stuff is that I find it. I find it really hard to believe what I have written.

Susan Wokoma: Okay.

James Yeatman: But if I am with an actor and they are like, and we're making it up together and you can immediately hear it in the voice of a person, then you can immediately.. It kind of gathers a weight and I can take it seriously in a way that I kind of can't take myself seriously. I think

Susan Wokoma: God, that's a really good way of looking at it.

Susan Wokoma: I've never thought about.

James Yeatman: And.

Lauren Mooney: And it comes out of then the real voices of the performers who are really going to do. You know, I mean, you're not like coming up with a character and finding somebody who might be able to live up to your imagined version.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lauren Mooney: It's like you. You make the. You can only make.. the show can only be made by those people in that room at that time. You know what I mean? And you have to discover it together.

James Yeatman: Yeah. And then whenever we like, like so often you can't hold on to the same performance.

Susan Wokoma: Of course.

James Yeatman: Across a workshop process. But then we're really happy to change what we've got. Like what we've got is important.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: It has to fit the people.

James Yeatman: It has to fit the people who are in the room. and it's good. Yeah. I think there's also something. So we do a lot of improvisations and trying things out and stuff like that. And there's always just this feeling or the feeling that we try to maintain is that we don't need to get it right Obviously, in the endm you've got to get it right.

Lauren Mooney: And you have to eventually [they laugh]

James Yeatman: It's kind of a fear based medium

James Yeatman: with with a very clear outcome. But like that there's. That we're kind of try and just try things in an atmosphere of as little fear as possible. And that's where we discover what we're doing.

Susan Wokoma: Amazing. Okay, so you both have a relationship with the Royal Court previously.

Susan Wokoma: You...

Lauren Mooney: I did the writers group.

Susan Wokoma: You did the writers group. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Susan Wokoma: And you..

James Yeatman: so I work. I worked a lot with Complicite Theatre Company and so I worked on a show here called the Kid Stays in the Picture, which was in 2016 or 17, which was a biography of this Hollywood producer Robert Evans. And so I was the co director, and kind of co adapter with Simon McBurney on that.

Susan Wokoma: cool. So you have a relationship with this building.

James Yeatman: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Lauren Mooney: I read scripts here all also for many years.

Susan Wokoma: Did you?

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Back in like 2015, 16, when the scripts were still done by hand.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: So you would have. People would come in and drop them off by hand.

And you'd have to come and collect a set of them and take them on the bus. I used to feel so much fear that I was going to lose them because I'd be like, oh, my God. And then you think, well, it's probably not their only copy, but it really stressed me out.

James Yeatman: Handwritten vellum.

Lauren Mooney: Why would you do that? [they laugh] But, yeah, how has the experience of reading lots of new work and, you know, work in sort of its early stages, how's that kind of, affected or influenced you as a theatre maker?

Lauren Mooney: Do you wanna answer? [to James]

James Yeatman: I've done less reading.

Lauren Mooney: I felt you go to answer.

James Yeatman: No, no, I was really interested in yours.

Lauren Mooney: I think for me

Susan Wokoma: if it has, that is.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, no, it has. I've done. I've done so many different jobs in theatre, partly because I was a PA for ages and was just trying to get to do. Just get in the door.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: And then, you know, I've. I've actually, like, written about theatre. I've done reviewing, I've done, like, script reading. I've been a producer. I've, you know, like, I worked for Clean Break for a few years. I've done a bit of everything. And for me, I think I like to understand it from every angle and I think that helps. Knowing how the sausage gets made. Yeah, I like. I think that informs my practise as an artist. But also, like, there's something like, if you're trying to write a novel and you just read acclaimed classics from the 20th century, you're going to be like, God, the novels I'm writing are just not as good as War and Peace. You know what I mean? But, like, actually, you should read work, you should be seeing work by people who are learning how to do it. And while you're learning how to do it helps you to be kinder to yourself. I think it helps you to judge how you're developing, what you're developing. You know, I was, I think also everything that you, you know, learning how to read scripts and do script reporting and, review theatre and all of that stuff gives you a language for talking about. I think we're really good at saying when something is bad.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: Like, we all know how to be. Like, that was rubbish. His hat looks stupid.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: You know, classic thing you would say after a play. And, like, we can say. We can articulate when something doesn't work, but it's quite hard for us to

00:25:00

Lauren Mooney: say when something's brilliant. Why does it work? Why is it working on you? Why is it effective and I think, particularly for the work that I do with Kandinsky, but also beyond Kandinsky, I work quite a lot as a dramaturg and scripted processes.

You're only as good as your ability to articulate what you think. You know what I mean? And so I find anything that develops your language around that and gives you a way to say, this is good because this doesn't work on me, because. You know what I mean? That is what makes you a useful collaborator.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

James Yeatman: I think there's something, isn't there, which is that, I don't think either of us particularly believe in, like, obviously moments of inspiration and stuff like that do happen in a rehearsal process or when you're writing or thinking about things and stuff. But in general, it's. It's a. Like .. And in all the work that we've done, lots of work, like I've done in different things, it's a. It's, A process of making things a bit better.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: One step at a time.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

James Yeatman: And we don't really believe in, like, genius as a. As a thing.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: And so I think always, like. I mean, basically. I'm basically saying what

Lauren said, but, like, in all that kind of process where you are on a. Where you're working, like as a kind of constructor on the building site of a play.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah.

James Yeatman: What the hell is he talking about? [they laugh] Exactly. You're carrying the hod of bricks and, That. Yeah, yeah. I think, yeah. There's something where you, like. It's not a, It's not these, like, The, like, actors and writers and directors are people who are all doing a job that has, like, functions where things can either get better or get worse. You know what I mean? And I think that that's not. We're not all kind of, shamans doing things. And I think that there is a, That. That is the nice thing about working with lots of other people's scripts and things like that.

Lauren Mooney: It's all craft. It's all practise.

James Yeatman: Yes.

James Yeatman: Craft. Was the bloody word I was looking for.

Susan Wokoma: Yes - you talking about building sites.

Lauren Mooney: Exactly. [they laugh] That's it.

Lauren Mooney: It's just.

Lauren Mooney: It's all practise. It's all craft. It's all work. And anything that you do of any kind gets you better, I think, at those things.

Susan Wokoma: Okay, to finish, I'm going to ask you the question I ask absolutely everybody. How does it feel to have your work here at the Royal Court?

James Yeatman: Absolutely fucking great.

Lauren Mooney: Great.

James Yeatman: If I'm allowed to swear.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, yeah. Swearing's allowed. Theatre, innit?

James Yeatman: It's amazing.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah. It's the dream, isn't it? What a place to be and, you know, for us, I don't know, like, when I used to come to this building in. In 2015 to collect scripts to read or to do the writers group or whatever I was doing around that time, it felt like this unassailable mountain, you know what I mean? And it felt like I couldn't imagine how to be more involved with the life of the building or how I would ever work here or how I would ever be, you know what I mean? It just felt like so far away from what I was doing in my life. And, I think we're not just here and being like, great, we're in. And that's great. We're here at a moment where I think they're working really hard to make it feel more porous and feel more like an open door and feel more like, you know, we're not just part of a season of plays, we're part of a season with an open submissions festival, you know, and so that is like, to me, you know, that's. That's the dream.

Susan Wokoma: Yeah, absolutely.

James Yeatman: Yeah. It's got such a. Of all British theatres, you just know the history it's got and that somehow it's responsible for so much of the theatre culture we live in.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah.

James Yeatman: like in the best possible way. And, And it's mad. It's mad going up in that room up there and that you'd, like, blasted was on here and like,

Lauren Mooney: Rocky Horror Show.

James Yeatman: Rocky Horror, like, Far Away and all these, like, shows. So, I mean, it's this incredible privilege, basically.

Lauren Mooney: And we feel really lucky.

James Yeatman: Yeah, and we feel really lucky. Yeah.

Lauren Mooney: Just hope we can make a good.

Lauren Mooney: Show

Susan Wokoma: with flying cars, please.

Lauren Mooney: Yeah, yeah. Okay.

James Yeatman: Yeah. [laughter]

Lauren Mooney: Just for you. Do you want to come in and fly the car?

Susan Wokoma: Please!

Susan Wokoma: I'll build it. I'll build it. Lauren James, thank you so much.

James Yeatman: Thank you very much.

Susan Wokoma: Thanks for listening to the Royal Court Theatre Playwright's Podcast. If you'd like to listen to more, then make sure you subscribe. If you're interested in what you've just heard, you can book tickets for this and other plays in the Royal Court Court's new season at royalcourttheatre.com follow us [oyalcourttheatre](#) on Instagram and [royalcourt](#) on X. Tune in next week for another episode episode in this series of the Royal Court Theatre Playwright's Podcast. See you soon.

00:29:43