

## **The Gathering: Series 3 Episode 5: Am I Bovered: Members of The Dukes Youth Theatre in Conversation with Daniel Bye**

- [Narrator] Welcome to series three of, "The Gathering, "A podcast for Artists and Creatives" from Arts Lancashire. This series is all about exploration and features recorded conversations led by Lancashire based artists, discussing themes and ideas that are important to their practice and the future of their work.

- [Carl] Hello, I'm Carl Woodward, the Creative Learning Manager, at The Duke's Theatre in Lancaster. The Dukes is a national portfolio organization, that's funded by Arts Council England, Lancaster City Council and Lancaster University. I'm going to hand you over to Daniel Bye, to tell you what we'll be discussing today.

- [Daniel] Hi, everyone, lovely to see you all. So this morning, we're going to have the conversation about the future of the arts and the future of the arts that you are in the process of making. Really looking forward to hearing from all of you. We're also talk about the present of the arts in order to look at how that's going to be transformed over the next few decades, as you become the leading artists of your generation. Thanks for being here. I'd like to start with a really simple question, that hopefully everyone will be able to speak on reasonably briefly, so we can hear from everyone. Before we open out the discussion a little more widely. I'd like to ask everyone for one thing that you hope for the future of the arts, one thing only that you hope will come about over the next three or four or 30 or 40 years in the arts. It can be a small thing, or it can be a radical transformation. Keelan, could I start with you? And then we'll pass around the circle.

- [Keelan] Of course, so for future of arts, I would mainly say, I hope it becomes a lot more representative of the true community in terms of more diversity and inclusive of different people.

- [Daniel] Thank you. Elliot?

- [Elliot] For the future of the arts I would say that I would like to inspire people to live up to their dreams and their hopes for the future.

- [Daniel] Thank you. Martha?

- [Martha] Kind of. More like what Keelan said. More diveristy. People, being able to see who they are on screen, I think.

- [Daniel] Thank you. Ryan?

- [Ryan] More people getting involved and trying it out.

- [Daniel]

- [Woman] I think that there could be more opportunities when it comes to movies and on screen because sometimes when you see that, you think, oh, they're just famous people. But there should be more opportunities to be part of that, no matter if they're famous or not, to be part of that.

- [Daniel] Brilliant, thank you. Gabriel?

- [Gabriel] I feel like more diversity would be a very good thing to have in the arts. I know it is being improved upon, but in the past it has been quite heavily white men. It's good to have more diversity.

- [Daniel] Great. Thank you.

- [Woman] I think I would like loads of positive messages and role models in movies and on screen.

- Thank you. Jacob?

- [Jacob] I would like it to be more accessible to all people, because not everybody has easy to access the arts. So it should be more accessible to everybody.

- [Daniel] Brilliant, thank you. And finally...

- [Olivia] I think it's important for more people's voices to be heard out of the arts.

- [Daniel] Great, so there's a real theme there of access to opportunity and widening that access so that it represents everyone, not just a relatively narrow range of identities, white men that have tended to dominate, and I guess continue to dominate that. And here I am a white man, absolutely endorsing everything that you've just said. So one of the questions that I wanted to think about was what more Lancaster and Lancashire could do in particular to get more young people involved in making and experiencing arts and culture. And I suppose part of that question, and perhaps even all of that question is, what you've been thinking about that there. So we've identified one problem in the arts as it currently exists, nationally, internationally, also inevitably, locally. Is there anything that

you think that could be done here, not necessarily here at The Dukes, but in the wider region that would help improve accessibility or help to create more opportunity. Yeah, Ryan.

- [Ryan] One thing could be workshops in school so people can experience acting.

- [Daniel] Brilliant, thank you, Martha?

- [Martha] Kind of what I said before, but like, if someone were to employ, like more girls, or more women acting as strong characters on screen then they might be more likely to think, oh, I can do that, I could be that.

- [Daniel] Pretty good, thank you. Olivia?

- [Olivia] I think it's quite hard for a lot of people when it comes to accessibility of it, 'cause a lot of times it's something that you have to pay for. And obviously that's a whole issue around funding for the arts and stuff. And having more free opportunities for people who want to get involved so everybody who wants to can do that.

- [Daniel] Thank you. Over to you, Gabriel?

- [Gabriel] Giving money to schools to be able to, like, get equipment, instruments and music, and like paint brushes, and paint for art and get even workshops. So they be able to get things firsthand, for the students to be able to experience the arts. Schools with less funding - it's harder for them to do that.

- [Daniel] Jacob?

- [Jacob] Maybe more community projects that people can work on as a whole, not just like professionals but just people of the community.

- [Daniel] Yeah, so providing opportunities again. Absolutely everyone. Elliot?

- [Elliot] I feel like more performances, just all around 'cause it just, it brings people together. It shows people what drama is about. It shows people everything they need to know.

- [Daniel] So a theme has started to emerge in that set of responses as well about access to funding, provision of free opportunities, the provision of equipment, more performances, more accessibility. If opportunities cost money then it means that a number of people who can take up those opportunities, and that in turn limits the kinds of people who are able to take those roles. So I think it'd be really useful to think about what the arguments are that we can be making. You've identified the problem, you've suggested a way of addressing that problem. Now let's imagine that there's someone listening to this podcast who has the power to make a decision about whether or not to apportion more funding to the arts to provide a source of opportunities that you've been talking about already. What do you say to that person? How do you persuade them that this is where money needs to go? Keelan?

- [Keelan] So I was saying, especially in this last year, where we've all had spent lot of time in doors, and we've all realized how much the arts matters. That they're especially important because we've had to rely on those sources of entertainment to keep us busy, essentially. And we realized how much we've missed things like, cinemas and the theatres and just being able to meet in person. And like concerts and things like that. So it really shows how important those things are to everyday life.

- [Woman] The arts are very important to the entire world. Things like school would be boring- so if you take away the arts there would be nothing to do. It would be boring. If you take away the arts there would be nothing, really.

- [Woman] It would be boring. But also I think that, the arts also affect people in like really significant ways. Like they can improve its mental health like very significantly. Like they might feel like they're being seen by just seeing someone similar to them on the screen and that will improve people's mental health, which will reduce their need to go to the hospital.

- [Daniel] So it's saves money in the long room. Brilliant.

- [Woman] Also like the art is just like everywhere. You don't really think about it, but like, the clothes you wear they would be blank without art. Things that you don't think are art, are actually art, like gardening.

- [Woman] Drama and theatre that makes people like feel a certain way. When you cry at film out of happiness or sadness. You don't really get that without art. It's really good to make people feel certain ways at times.

- [Woman] And like, art can boost your self-esteem and confidence, and you can go on to have jobs that help people, like Doctors. Even if they didn't want to be an actor, the arts can still help you in your job.

- [Man] I feel like when I was growing up, I always loved that part of the day when I could act and could do the acting, but, like, a new school, it felt like, and my new school didn't have any sort of like drama or music in the below years. And I think that it would have been so much better for the students if they had that. And going to high school, like, loads of students, I just loved for the part where it was the creative arts, sections of the music, the art, the drama. I feel like the world would be brightened up.

- [Woman] I think people also learn a lot from art. Like in acting like you can learn how to express certain emotions. And it's really like educational in a way, because you just learn more about yourself as well as the world around you.

- [Woman] And give people an outlet for emotions. Acting, drawing, singing or whatever. They're able to express what they're feeling and that helps them create something new.

- [Daniel] Thank you all so much. I'd like to develop this a little bit further. We've had loads of big claims for things that the arts can do all of which, I absolutely agree with. A couple of you have shared little stories of personal experiences with that. So you started to do that earlier, Elliot. And I think it'd be really interesting to develop this by talking, if any of you can talk about a particular moment where either experiencing a work of art as a viewer or an audience member, or a listener has had a powerful effect on you, that has changed perspective for all arts, or that has made you feel something, or feel seen in a way that you haven't before. Or, a similar experience of participating.

- [Woman] When I was at my primary school, we had these shows every single year and I got the main part and it just showed me what I could do. And so it make me think this is the thing for me. This is what I should go and do with my life.

- [Woman] When I first joined the Dukes Youth Theatre, the playmakers in Year 6, we had an end of year play and me and friend were the main characters. I enjoyed it so much because when I lived in France, there was barely any acting. There was a bit of music here and there. But I realized just how much I enjoy it and how it just made me happy and I'm like, I can even express myself with this thing. Made me really happy.

- [Woman] Like documentary films and stuff, like, films telling you about people and what people can do. To give you an example, I watched a film about [-] And I already knew about her, about her story. But it was just her talking. I'm not sure how to explain it but it makes you feel like you can do something if other people have done it.

- [Woman] And just one thing, it's quite small, but it's still big at the same time. Sometimes, well, in our class we do a show and tell about things we've done or made. And just showing 29 other people, something I have created can be really nice.

- [Woman] I think there has to be something about seeing someone play yourself on screen, how they kind of like, changed things. It was a huge moment. But it was a huge thing that people were seeing it. It made me feel so much better.

- [Woman] When I was six or seven, and we went to see Matilda and I really enjoyed it and I was like, this is what I wanna do now. I want to be on stage. So I was going to like, that year, I went to summer school, like performing arts school and I joined The Dukes.

- [Woman] Two years ago, also at The Dukes, when we did a performance, and made it, like, dark humor, and it made everybody happy to like see that joy, this dark humor as much as we are creating it in as well as we were performing it. Just hearing the audience laughing, and you kind of couldn't see because of the lights, but you kind of could see them. And see the enjoyment they had for the stuff we had created. It was really like pretty amazing for myself, seeing stuff like that.

- [Daniel] That feeling of making a connection, the state that you thought was just you, connects with everyone else as well is one of the real thrills, I think.

- [Woman] Well, but we're doing a school play and it's just like, when I see everybody having a good time while we're rehearsing it, because like not everybody like has had that kind of experience, like my friend, who really hadn't had any experience. But like, she was really enjoying it. And like a lot of people have like lots of talent and they didn't really know they have that before because they hadn't had the chance to act.

- [Man] Recently, I watched a video, the Billie Eilish documentary, which is more like a movie. It's so amazing and it's really eye opening into the world of creating, not just art but like music, but it also like the dancing and everything and it's so the daily life of like musicians and how their lives are.

- [Woman] When I first joined the youth theatre. It was really inspiring being around other people who were interested in the arts, but don't really judge you for how you look but just concentrated on your creativity.

- [Daniel] About 10 years ago, I went to see a play called 'Apples', which was set in Middlesbrough, where I grew up. I was about 30 at the time, and this was the first time in my life I heard people speaking on stage in my accent, and that feeling of being seen, the couple of people that described that feeling, that it was legitimate to sound like this onstage. It really blew my mind. And it was the

first time that I felt as though I had been fully seen on stage. And I'm a white man and I'm represented pretty consistently. And yet, this still felt like quite an important experience, pretty far into my professional career.

- [Woman] Yes, so speaking to what you just said that, I think it is very important especially, when we are young and we're growing up, seeing people who we can identify with, who look like us, who can be those role models to say, yes, like kind of follow those dreams because sometimes it is hard especially growing up as a person of color, I didn't see many people that look like me on television. I didn't see many people that have families like mine. And so it makes you sort of feel a bit left out, when other people are relating to all these characters and you can't. It makes you feel like, there might be a problem with you. And so when there's that diversity, when there's that sort of variation in what you see on the screen, it can be very helpful, varied, sort of, give you that confidence to think that it's okay to be yourself and to express who you truly are, rather than fitting into the box of what the people want you to be, I think.

- [Daniel] Thank you, yeah, that's brilliant. And clearly there's a long way to go. Do people have a sense that this is something that's improving?

- [Woman] I think it is improving in parts. There's definitely a lot more diversity than there used to be. However, one of the things is, I think a lot of people are struggling now with, is the diversity genuine or is it tokenistic? Are people putting in like people of color, people with different sexualities, because they want to show their stories or just to say that they have it? An example is, I think a lot of shows are being remade and then like changing the race of a character that used to maybe be white and you have half the people who are excited because they find that if they see superhero that now represents them. And you've got the other people who are saying, well, we don't want you to change an old character. We want you to make new characters and provide new stories. We don't want to just be there for the sake of being there, we want their true stories to be told. So there has been progress, but there's also still a way to go.

- [Woman] And I also think like, similarly, like sometimes it's like, they just put people in and so the film is diverse and say, look, we have put diversity in. But not actually to like tell those actual people's stories. And I feel like it's become almost like, normalized. It's not yet become a thing. It's still, 'this film has someone who's gay in it'. It's like that is normal. Once that happens then we will have progressed.

- [Woman] I think it has something to do with ticking boxes and try to just be like, oh yeah, I've got one of those and some of that. It's fine, we've done it.

- [Woman] Also maybe we can inspire more people who really think of actually standing up to that kind of thing, like, and then it might inspire more people to actually stand up to that. And then you

know, just ticking boxes just because so you can say that like, that's just the whole movie ,or the whole play or the whole whatever it is.

- [Woman] And like I'm watching this program. And so well, two of the characters are gay but it's like you really would expect to see that kind of like genre of the film. It was like really nice to see that.

- [Daniel] What was the program?

- [Woman] It's called She Writes. It's on Netflix.

- [Daniel] A broad endorsement for that.

- [Woman] There's like characters, like, you were saying before have been changed, I feel like they are been changed but like we need to have...we need the storyline to be dead on not just like be messed up because there's like, things like, there's a black Superman now and actors are being thrown off the stage written because, like, the original one was being recast, which I feel like you can have these new characters, but you have to keep the old one as well. So it's like a mix of both because otherwise, I just thought I was gonna go mad. Like, I'm watching a show now, and it's about this character who's lesbian. And obviously she - this is the first time I'm actually seeing a character who is gay, who like freely came out without any trouble. And it was quite nice to see that 'cause it showed that the stages were gradually like, moving on.

- [Daniel] I must say, I'd love to see a black Superman, not just a superficial change for representation sake, but for that to be about the experience of blackness in that situation.

- [Woman] I would say on that idea, a good example, for my opinion would be, have any of you seen have seen Spiderman Spiderverse? Because it's got a black Spider-Man, but it's not Peter Parker, it's Miles Morales. He's his own his character. He's got his own family. It's not just changing that original character, just making him black, it's his own person. And I think that's the sort of thing that I think you were alluding that is, especially important. Making them their own person, to have their own identity.

- [Woman] I think films that are adapted from books should not just use famous faces to get certain films watched. It's like, an easy example, The Hunger Games which has, I've got a friend whose favourite grunt is the casting of Katniss Everdene. Because she's described in the book as being short with olive skin, but that's not how she's portrayed in the film 'cause they've got a famous face, so the film is watched.



- [Daniel] Was she famous before those films? I'd never heard of her before those films, but I think we've established that I'm very old.

- [Woman] She is now.

- [Daniel] Yeah, exactly.

- [Woman] I think that also, like, sometimes they put like characters in that are diverse. And then their only personality trait is the fact that they're diverse. But if they have their own personalities, then it's oh, by the way, they're diverse and stuff, then it works better because then, people feel seen and they don't feel like, oh, the factor they're diverse is the only thing people know about them. or things like that. That there is more to them than just their diversity.

- [Woman] There's films like, 'Love Asylum; where that's a big thing. But then there are also films like, I Care A Lot, where the main character just so happens to be a woman who likes a woman, but that's just part of it. The main plot is that's kind of evil. The second point is to do with famous faces, like the casting of James Corden in the Prom film which was an interesting choice, mainly because he was a famous face.

- [Woman] Maybe like, in films, don't just choose an actor because they're famous, but choose an actor because they fit the part. So don't just choose like some person who wouldn't get a role. But like, choose someone who actually fits the part.

- [Daniel] With apologies, we're gonna move on to the related topic. But let's just bring it back to what we can do as a group of people and as a group of young people, and one or two slightly older people. What can you do? What can we do as artists, as human people to make the kinds of changes that you've been talking about. Not just around representation but also access. What can you do to improve the world of the arts over the next couple of years? And then perhaps beyond that.

- [Man] I think certainly for when we cast these roles, so if we write a play if we cast roles, to write it in, so it would be normalised. Instead of, like, just putting in whoever, because that's what people want to see. Putting the people who you want in you play films or bands, whatever. It's also showing to people like who are gay or black, working class, less privileged just showing them that they can be in these things, that it's not all just middleclass white men. We should be showing people, that they can actually do these things if that's what they want.

- [Woman] If someone here did write a play or film, or TV show, actually keeping things in mind when writing it, like actually thinking more about it being right, like, oh, you know, he's got this person. It's better to think which person would be best for this character, because I'm thinking about

this character and how they would be in this story, and like just thinking more about the stuff you are writing like that...

- [Woman] I would say that it's always important to ask the people in those underrepresented communities, how they feel we can help them, rather than us assuming on their behalf. I think a lot of the time you have these ideas of these Hollywood execs, who say, yeah, we're gonna do this, this, this, to sort out all these identity problems, but nowhere along the line consulted anyone who they think that will be affecting. In the end that representation doesn't hit the mark, isn't appropriate. Just doesn't really work. And sometimes on the flip side is more offensive than helping. So I think it's important to get a wide range of opinions and actually do the research, get the knowledge instead of just going on the warpath just to fix the world. I think it's important to know why and how those approaches work rather than just trying to put them into place.

- [Daniel Thank You. Yeah, it's important not to end up doing more harm than good.

- [Woman] I think we should also be using the arts to educate people more. Like what you said is like, some people they just put it in and they try to actually fix the problem. They don't really consult the actual people. But if you use the arts you can educate people more about it. And you like these people, they're everywhere. You can just go talk to someone, and then you've already got the information for the story, it's not that hard.

- [Woman] When the movie, Hamilton, came out. I was like I love this so much, I watched it all the time. And I got like a book about it. And I read it and a man plays like, Thomas Jefferson. And he said, if, when he was young, he had seen a person of colour played a powerful historical figure, he would have wanted to change the world more when he was younger.

- [Woman] I think the main thing that could be improved and almost in every circumstance of the arts, is more accessible to let people be part of something which will inspire more people, until it's just normal.

- [Daniel] You've really brilliantly, kind of formed a link to what I was gonna ask about next. We're just over halfway through. Our allotted time has flown by. In those first few things that people identified as ways the arts could improve. There was a lot of talk about widening the range of opportunity. We can kind of focus on all that but so far we've focused on making the opportunities that are available more accessible to a wider range of people. What we haven't talked about yet is widening the range of opportunities and the kind of opportunities that people want to see. And again, like focusing on this area, in Lancaster, perhaps Lancashire, what are the kinds of opportunities to express yourself creatively, to create art in all of its many forms, visual art, music, theatre, film. What kinds of opportunities would you like to be able to have access to? And would you like others to be able to access, that at present there are a limited range of, or that aren't

available at all? What would you like to be able to do that is difficult to do at the moment? Or difficult to do as much as you like.

- [Man] Perform. Mostly because of COVID. We can't really perform on a stage and it's really hard to like keep your distance when performing 'cause like a fight scene, just two metres away. You can't just imagine fighting and just go, wait two seconds I've just got to measure this out to see if it's two metres apart. Just overall, just wanting to get back on the stage and that sense of hope.

- [Woman] For being able to watch outside as well because outside people tend to notice it more. If there's play going on in the round or something, you don't always know it's there. You have to know it's there. Many people don't know it's happening, but if it's happening in Market Square or somewhere, and it's interactive, people can just walk in and be part of the play and then that would be like really fun. And also people would be like, oh, we can do this! We can be part of this as well.

- [Woman] Maybe, like some setting like a gallery, but, not necessarily, but just a space like this in which people can express their art.

- [Woman] I like the idea of something along the lines of, sort of arts open day, where people have the chance to sort of try things like writing workshops and like technical workshops and all these behind the scenes, art things that aren't really focused on because a lot of times, you know, we are like, or, youth people here. But for the people that want to be involved in the arts, but not in front, there's not as many opportunities. So I think being able to have time where people can see the behind the scenes could be really fun for people to see acting that is not the only job. And, you know, that is something I could go into one day rather than it being sort of those invisible careers that we don't know about.

- [Daniel] When I was your age I didn't know my job existed. I'm glad it does.

- [Woman] Well, I guess it means that there may be workshops you don't have to pay for not many people know about, know that they are there, that you can be part of them. And we just have workshop with people who just want to volunteer and have fun and maybe other people get encouraged as well, then it just could be available to everyone and you could be part of it and just learn more and like be part of the arts and then maybe find out something they grew out of, something that brings them joy.

- [Man] So before lockdown, I think, it was the Christmas before lockdown. There was a show of the Christmas Carol at Waterstones- which has now closed down - they had these massive puppets. It was a big show and they had like massive puppet and it just walked into Waterstones. It was showing people about the show. And that's actually how I found out about it, so I just went to go and see it. So, like, when you have those kind of displays, and people acting short bits of it outside, in places

where people can see it, it would advertise the arts more as something that people want to go and see and experience it, rather than it just being there inside without people being able to experience it.

- [Man] Is something that people want to go and see things experience rather than just stay there .

- [Woman] I think one of the best places that more people access is schools, because it's a large community with a lot of young people who, well, and haven't grown up yet. You can just like one play they can do to the school, that anyone can access for free could like change someone's idea of what they want to do for their career.

- [Jacob] In performing that thing that's always in competition like, which means that everyone's pitted against each other in something that's meant to be fun and bring people together. I think if there were more opportunities for people to enjoy and do things when they are gathering together, it was less stressful in a way. I think it could be a lot better. People would enjoy it more.

- [Daniel] Yeah, I find the idea of doing a play as something you can win really quite bizarre.

- [Man] There's this example of workshop. A musician came into school to talk about being a musician, Now I didn't like his music at all, but he told us about making music. He started talking about he didn't get into it straight from school and went into the music industry quite late.

- [Daniel] And even though you didn't like music, you found the kind of... You found that you learnt something from his experience and his process so it was still a worthwhile thing to have.

- [Woman] Talking about workshops, I have this lady who goes to our school and she teaches us music. And last year we learned about we were learning the and we're still learning that now. We're also learning the ukulele now, because it's the free thing, because we are able to do. Because I didn't know like a ukulele existed until now.

- [Daniel] So I'd like to think maybe that fits into this, because it feels like we've just neatly segued into talking about schools. But I think you've touched on something really important here, the place of the arts in education is being eroded. Lots of funding is being withdraw from that. And that's something that's happening before our eyes. It's also something that was happening in the 1990's when I was a teenager. And I feel like I'm watching what's happening in schools at the moment and seeing history repeating itself. So I'm interested in what you're seeing at the moment, valuable experiences you've had in visiting teachers or people coming in to run workshops. I'm also interested in hearing from people, if either, there's something that you would like to see happening in schools, an opportunity that you would like to be made widely available through schools. And I'm also

interested in hearing if anyone has experiences to share things that used to be available to you that have been withdrawn, that may well be for funding reasons.

- [Martha] So I play the CELLO. When I was at primary school there were like, by the time I left, three or four people, playing double bass or something . Anyway, it was like, there were three, four, with like these huge instruments. And then I got to secondary school, and like now suddenly there's only two of us playing cello, in, I think, the entire school or something ridiculous. And kind of it's because they're our cellos. So, at primary school, we were given the cellos by the actual music service. And now we've got to have cellos, we've got to have the instruments.

- [Daniel] Which immediately limits access to those who can afford a cello.

- [Woman] When I was in year three, loads of people in my class did music lessons in school. but now in year six, and it's like me and someone in my class, and I'd say that's practically it. I think that's the only people who play instruments.

- [Woman] Not just with instruments but with all the arts, actually like from reception, or even before that, children are really interested in like making pictures and stuff. And I find if you start getting kids interested early, you know, I started drawing in, again, I was terrible, but I wouldn't be as good as I am now without that. And if you just get people interested, in like, in year four or five, I can't remember which, a woman came in and taught us ukulele every Monday for three or four weeks and everyone really enjoyed it. So, I think it can get people interested from a young age. I mean, you can't do that with all the teenagers in high school right now 'cause they only want to finish school and do this. But like the next generation, if you start them early with music and things they are really interested and already miss it and then if you get them interested enough, they continue being interested.

- [Daniel] So the key is to get them to start early.

- [Woman] And I think in schools, drama is just, like, acting. And a lot to time people may not be fully into acting and they're messing rounds in performance because acting isn't something they're interested in. There may be other parts of the arts and drama that they want to do, but they can't because drama is just performing. Like there's nothing like behind the scenes type of work that people might find more interesting.

- [Woman] Similar to what Jacob has said, my mum, she was brought up with a Steiner education in so she got me and my sister to do the same, so we practised like arts and music to like educate. And I admit it's because of that, I find normal things like in maths and sciences. I find that some things are that easier because like problem-solving because I learned it when I was younger through just crafty stuff. I find out sort of an easy way on how to do things. So, like what Jacob said. It is important to

start early I make people interested in it early, because it really does impact how they do in everything in life in general.

- [Daniel] That's the thing that drives me wild about some of the... I mean, one of the many things about some of the cuts to arts education at the moment. People who have arts education do better at everything else as well. You take it away, and the achievement, engagement, everything suffers. But there doesn't appear to be any interest in evidence. Elliot?

- [Elliot] So when I was in primary school, we had like two shows every year, one for the first three years and more for the second three years. And it was really good because it showed people at the youngest age from like starting of school, what acting is, and what drama is and what singing or dancing is. It gave you this opportunity to get used to it throughout the whole of primary school. I don't think that is at all primary schools, but I think some of them do do that. And then when I went to high school, my first drama teacher didn't do that. But when my new drama teacher came that year eight, she wanted to do a show every year, but it got cancelled in year nine because of COVID and all that. But I feel like if we had more time and more money to put on a show, it would feel like a really good show that people from all over Lancashire come and see.

- [Man] In my primary school, in year three at the beginning you were allowed to take up a musical instrument. And the main reason why I starting doing it, I started the flute in year 3, was to prove to my mum that I could keep at something for a certain amount of time. Now I'm working towards Grade 3 in year 8 and I feel like I've come such a long way and that's all to do with starting early and getting into the craft of it and instrument early on.

[Daniel] You must be glad you started flute rather than harp.

[Man] Yeah. When I started in Year 5, I started the guitar because you weren't allowed to in year 3 because you were too young.

- [Woman] With me, because my mum played a cello, I wanted to play an instrument as well. When I was young and I was like, okay, this is huge, it's way too big, it's really hard to carry around, so my reasoning to choosing something like a violin was that it was small and easy to carry around. Which was a kind of odd reasoning, but now I realize that was like why I did it because I kind of enjoyed playing it and I was like, I'm working on Grade 4 level and actually doing it more. Just before this, today. I was in the music centre group, which started up again, which used to be every Saturday morning, but because of COVID it had to stop. But now it just started again and was just a small group. And then to be able to play with other people again was so nice, 'cause I don't have to play by just myself.

- [Daniel] Yeah, music rehearsals on Zoom are impossible. You can do a lot of things on Zoom, but you can't run a choir.

- [Woman] Because you can only hear yourself, and not really the other people. All my mum did with her cello group is basically one person unmuted YouTube and the rest played muted and just kind of played along with that one person that was like conducting. So, it quite weird.

- [Woman] Like I started playing the piano four/five years ago and then like, I think, like a month ago, my piano teacher said, you know you've been doing this four or five years? And I was just like, what? 'Cause I didn't know that. But like I wanted to start the piano because I saw people playing and I'm like, oh I really want to play that. So I'm doing my grade two now at piano, obviously. And the pieces are really nice and yesterday I had to choose my third piece and they sound like so nice and it's just good music.

- [Woman] I started playing the piano in year three. And I started because everyone there was playing that instrument so I was like, sure, why not? But also, because my mum was like telling me I should start. And now I just really like, I really enjoy playing the piano. So just as an example, I think actually having, art in the community and like it's going to inspire more people to join that community.

- [Daniel] But it also corresponds to something you were saying earlier about if, if more people do it from a younger age then it becomes a little more normal. And if there's a cultural expectation that people might at least try to learn an instrument, or draw, or get involved in a play, and that's a kind of normal thing to do, then there will seem to be far more people who will be far more impassioned in defence of it as well. I'm not quite sure we're gonna have time to hear from everyone on this, before we start. So, if everyone could speak reasonably briefly, then we'd be able to-

- [Woman] When I was in year three or year four, we had this like a thing we had to learn a brass instrument And I don't why I would say that was really cool, it wasn't because the teacher was really mean, but also 'cause I think when people are forced to do things they won't want to do it. We were forced to learn a brass instrument and none of us wanted to do it. I think the same happens in drama. People are forced to do it and something they really don't want to do and it doesn't end well.

- [Daniel] Yeah, actually, they are kind of cultural expectations that people have the opportunity - they can opt in.

- Well, I feel like the music studio in my school, well, it could be put loads of effort it could be a place where people could get into the music industry more. I, myself, never really go into the music. Like I started from piano at a young age and I really didn't like it, so I stopped that. And then I went to

clarinet and I really didn't want that. So I stopped and I went to drums, I really didn't love that, so stopped that. So I went back to piano. Really didn't like that so stopped that. Now I playing the guitar and I'm like I don't know if I should do that because I'll end up not liking it and I'll stop. So I feel like the instrument chooses you not the other way round.

- [Daniel] Do you think -?

- [Woman] Do you think it's worth having that opportunity to try them, though?

- [Woman] Oh, yeah.

- [Daniel] Yeah, and then given a lot of work for we should probably also acknowledge how relatively fortunate and privileged you are to have a music studio in your school. Not everyone has that. So maybe we should also say that there ought to be a music studio in every school.

- [Woman] So what I was saying earlier, about the last point in the music centre. It's at a boy's grammar. So, it was a really nice thing because there was so many different opportunities and instead of just doing lessons and like practicing at home. You get to play with other people, you get to play with a group of people in the same level or people who are much higher level than you. And you just kind of try to play along and you learn a lot from just that. And I realized that my playing and my sound had improved so much from just being part of the group than with playing without other people. It's just an opportunity here in Lancaster.

- [Daniel] Thank you. With apologies to those of you who have things to say on this, but we have to move towards summing up, I'm afraid. So, in the context of the discussion we've had over the past hour, of all of the things that can be improved, locally, nationally, perhaps even internationally, all of the ways in which there can be more opportunities and those opportunities that there are, could be made available to a wider range of people. At the beginning I asked you for something that you'd like to see improve. I got to hear from people again, on that said subject having reflected on for the last hour. What's one thing that you'd like to see more of? That isn't to say that the thing that you said at the beginning.

- [Woman] Opportunities for people. Opportunities that are more accessible.

- [Woman] I'd like more art to be more diverse and like maybe share more art from different countries that aren't just American and Europe mostly. One of my favourite painters is Hokusai and like, maybe just not of course just show more people from around the world. There's a whole world of amazing art than just here, from Europe and America.



- [Woman] And I think that it should be definitely in schools more because people like, think of like acting, music, I'm not really interested in those kind of things, but they haven't tried it. So, in schools give more of what people would try and the people who say oh, I like this, this is what I want to do.

- [Man] I'd like to see more money. But then it's impossible because of the whole pandemic at the moment. But I'd like to see, in the future, more money going towards the art, to support making normal things, like art galleries, music, just anything to do with the arts just to support people learning in the arts and being able to access it themselves and learn what kind of things that they can do themselves.

- I think there should be more opportunities in schools. And instead of them just saying, oh, you have all these, you could join if you want, they actually explain it properly. So, you actually know what it is. Instead of just saying, oh yeah, we've got a play going. There are just like, this is a play it's like for anybody can do it, behind the scenes things and kind of like appealing to people instead of saying there's a play you can join.

- [Woman] And I think, like, you said, like, the diversity. People who might not ever have, ever had the experience to actually have the experience 'cause they have different colour skin – they should be able to have the same experience.

- [Woman] More opportunities for younger children so they're open minded about what they're doing instead of just having to act up and be cool.

- [Woman] It's hard for people to try things. You have to sort of commit to I need to buy this very expensive instrument. But be able to attend things like workshops, being able to attend things like venues, where they're putting on shows, where you can sort of get a taster, I think is important for people to be able to think from an outside perspective, is this something I'd like to go into rather than having to immediately take a plunge that they may not be able to access otherwise.

- [Daniel] Thank you, and thank you to you all. That's been a brilliant conversation, a really inspiring conversation. I'm really grateful to you all for all your input and the future is in safe hands. I've got two children quite a bit younger than you, but the idea that they would be able to look up to the next generation above - that's you lot, that feels really good to me. So, thank you all for your contributions, for your wisdom, and for your energy and your ideas. It's been really enjoyable talking to you all. Carl, I think you want to add to wrap up.

- [Carl] Yeah just, there's a lot of food for thought and also I'm proud to know you guys and to have you here today at The Dukes to represent The Dukes. You are ambassadors for the Youth Theatre

and for our engagement work and you are all so smart and so bold and so full of courage and keep it up. So thank you.

- [Narrator] Thanks for listening to The Gathering. If you liked this episode, let us know in the reviews and don't forget to share with your friends and networks. For show notes, links to the organizations and initiatives mentioned in this episode, and much more, head over to [www.artslancashire.org.uk/thegathering](http://www.artslancashire.org.uk/thegathering). You could also follow us on Twitter @Art Lancashire to hear when each new episode goes live.